

Comments on the Sustainability Appraisal Report UA32 - Sheerwater

I apologise for the length of the first section but I feel very strongly that this aspect surpasses all others in importance, so have tried fully to explain my reasons for this opinion.

SA Objective 7 - Public transport and cars.

You have probably been told that "Sheerwater has four buses an hour" and, unbidden, one immediately has a mental picture of a clockface with a bus leaving on the hour and then at 15, 30 and 45 minutes past. Wrong! Firstly, there are four buses an hour only if one wishes to go to Woking (our buses all terminate there), but in the other direction they terminate at Weybridge (436) two-an-hour; Staines (446) or Kingston (459) each one-an-hour. Anyone wishing to return from Woking in the evening will be lucky to find a bus at a convenient time - or, indeed, any bus, if returning later: Monday to Friday the 436 and 459 service both finish around 19.00, with the 446 maintaining an (approximately) hourly service to 23.02; on Saturday the 459, 436, and 446 finish at 17.45, 19.00 and 23.02 respectively, whilst on Sunday the 436 runs just five buses, with intervals varying from 1¼ to 2 hours, terminating at 18.16, the 446 runs to 21.00 (but with a gap of 1¼ hours between the final two), and the 459 does not operate. This demonstrates why the Council saying that they are hoping to encourage more people to use public transport, will have no effect unless drastic action is taken to provide a comprehensive bus service.

To illustrate the point from a personal perspective, may I say that although I write as a car-owner, my current car is only my second since passing my test in 1973, and I bought it in 2003 (three) after an interval of 18 years without one, and earlier this year the milometer crept over the 20,000 mark (twenty thousand), from which you will infer that I don't exactly over-use it, especially on long journeys when my preference is for trains and buses. However, without it there are two local leisure pursuits that would be closed to me, namely an exercise class one-morning-a-week in Knaphill, which takes about 15 minutes to drive but would take at *least* an hour (each way) using the two buses necessary to get there, and Scottish Country Dancing in Byfleet one-evening-a-week: the latter takes place between 20.15 and 22.15, so with the last bus to Byfleet arriving about 19.40 (and possibly nowhere near the venue anyway) and the last one *leaving* at 19.39 !

Therefore, in my opinion, the most important aspect of all in this whole proposal, is the lack of parking on Sheerwater and if this matter is not taken seriously and properly addressed, it will be to the detriment of current and future residents. It is totally unrealistic to think that people are going to give up their cars and, as I have found, it is actually the short, local, journeys where it is most necessary, but even when I'm not using it, it has to be somewhere. I rent one of the pitifully small

number of garages available from the Council which is, effectively, behind the new ASDA, with access from Albert Drive, on the brow of a curving 'hill': my usual approach necessitates turning right, which has always been a bit tricky, but I've noticed over the last month-or-two that more-and-more vehicles are parking on the verges, including some large-ish vans / small lorries, and this has the effect of reducing the already short sight-line of vehicles coming up the hill, whose path I have to cross – it feels distinctly dangerous - I may even have to re-route in future, so that I can turn left into the access road.

Parking along Dartmouth Avenue (where the shops are) is also getting worse, frequently with several vehicles double-parked, even opposite the entrance to Dartmouth Green, so that driving along the road is bad enough, but crossing it is even worse. With many people now setting up in small businesses that require a 'work vehicle' in addition to the family car, plus young adults at home *also* with a car, this problem can only get worse.

I would ask that members of the Planning Committee (not to mention Councillors) visit the estate (if you don't already live here) on weekdays, weekends, daytime, and evenings, to see the current state of affairs and to judge for yourselves whether not only failing to take drastic action to address the current problem, but planning to exacerbate it by the addition of up-to 500 new dwellings, really is the way forward to achieve the best for Sheerwater in what was purported to be a plan to improve the lives of those who currently dwell here.

SA Objective 3 - Flood plains.

I think that it is irresponsible to build on a designated flood plain, whatever the latest technology is supposed to be capable of. The foundations of the Secondary School (now Bishop David Brown) sank eight times, and I believe that the block of shops with flats above has some sort of underground support. There is reference, here and elsewhere, to 'mitigating measures', but to mitigate means "to lessen the severity, violence or evil of; to mollify, appease; to make more easily borne; to temper": it does not mean to cure or avoid. Floods of any severity will not be easily borne and the temper of people affected will not be mollified or appeased: the sometimes terrible consequences of continuing to build on flood plains should not be under-estimated - or ignored, and it's time that councils (everywhere) stopped putting homes and lives at risk by wilfully continuing to build on inappropriate land.

SA Objective 4

Sheerwater continues to be described as being “one of the most deprived areas of Surrey”, but the impact of a minority of residents on the statistic is disproportionate. By their own admission, the Council made matters worse by housing “people with problems” here (Ray Morgan, *Woking Advertiser*, 05.06.15): these unfortunate souls were, primarily, uprooted when Brookwood Hospital closed, and re-housed in the flats on Sheerwater, and it should come as no surprise that the statistics for the half of the estate in which the flats are situated, show as being between 90% and 95% deprived in all categories, whereas the other half of the estate is less than 50% deprived in all-but-one category (education). The Council’s earlier policies and continuing neglect should not be used as an excuse to knock-down several hundred perfectly sound homes. Appropriate measures should, instead, be taken to bring properties with actual deficiencies, up-to-scratch, with demolition being a, limited, last resort.

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