

Representation to Woking Borough Council - Green Belt Site Allocations

We are writing to you with respect to the proposed development at the end of Upshot Lane in Pyrford. However, before itemising our concerns specific to Upshot Lane, we would like to be assured that your deliberations also include the effects of other proposed developments within the local area, involving both Woking and Guildford Borough Councils so that an coherent, sustainable plan covering both jurisdictions is generated. Turning to the Upshot Lane proposed development, we believe that, if this goes ahead, it will be to the overall detriment of Pyrford and the surrounding areas. We base this on a number of factors:

- 1) **The economic environment** is ill-prepared to absorb such an increase in population. Currently, the transport and utility infrastructure is heavily congested.
 - Another 423 homes will create up to 1000 additional cars which will increase air and noise pollution, let alone increased times to car journeys, increased accident rates and higher demands on the already over-stretched A&E department. The adjacent roads of Church Hill and Upshot Lane are particularly narrow and together with the new, single track Newark Bridges, any significant increase in road traffic (including emanating from the proposed developments in Send and Wisley Airfield to the south) will further exacerbate the problem of congestion with increased concerns over safety. We have already seen significant increases in volumes of traffic following the development of Brooklands. Both Parvis and Old Woking Roads have reached capacity and the proposed Broadoaks development will only worsen this. Additional traffic from Upshot Lane (or the Send and Wisley developments) will surely create grid-lock.
 - The roads outside the controlled zone surrounding the West Byfleet Station are already full of parked cars, left all day by commuters. A further increase in houses will lead to an even greater need for parking and further congestion. This coupled with the illegal parking (on yellow lines and on the pavements) associated with the two schools at either end of Oakcroft and Coldharbour Roads, at school drop-off and pick-up times, will effectively constrict traffic flow and lead to greater safety issues.
 - The water and sewage network is under severe stress. Generally, the water pressure in Pyrford is pitiable and the storm drains are unable to cope with the current rainfall. Transforming agricultural land into hectares of additional tarmac and buildings will increase run-off and create more flash floods and this in an era where changes in our climate are creating more frequent, violent weather.
 - Oakcroft Road has been prey to several sewage flooding incidents over the last ten years. A number of houses have been given non-return valves by the Water Authority to stop sewage flooding onto their properties, whilst others have purchased and installed their own. This has simply pushed the problem further along the road. Larger sewage pipes need to be installed to service the current residential levels but currently the water Authority considers the cost prohibitive. Additional demand placed upon the sewage network by another 423 houses would increase the frequency of these ghastly floods.
 - We are already suffering from a major upgrade to the provision of gas for the village. Has the expected increase in demand afforded by the Upshot Lane development been absorbed into this upgrade or must we suffer the inconvenience of roadworks once again?

- 2) **The social environment** will be adversely affected. The construction of 423 houses within Pyrford amounts to an increase of over 20% in the total housing stock. Such an

increase will totally alter the character and social dimension of the village. Impacts will be felt on the provision of local education, health and policing:

- The Pyrford primary school is currently undergoing expansion for the existing population. Is there capacity for even more buildings on the current school site to accommodate the Upshot Lane children? The same applies to pre-school numbers which is at full capacity already.
- The proposed 900-student independent school at Broadoaks will further add to congestion whilst not providing the necessary additional state school places. These places are required now and the proposed site in Mayford will not only increase traffic flow but also will be insufficient to meet any additional demand.
- It is already difficult to obtain timely appointments at the local health centre (at West Byfleet). Is there provision for increased capacity to cater for the additional 423 households?
- Police coverage of Pyrford is already sparse with just two PCSO's covering the three villages of Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford. Will the 20% increase in households (plus those considered for Byfleet) be matched by dedicated, additional police resources?

3) The physical environment will be severely degraded.

- Pyrford enjoys relatively unspoilt countryside with extensive views over the Surrey Hills to the south. The Green Belt here provides recreation for all of the borough; much of this will be lost with the proposed development on the highest land in Pyrford.
- The proposed sites lie on the edge of the Pyrford Common Site of Nature Conservation Importance with several other areas of ecological importance nearby (Wheeler's Fields SNCI, Ancient Woodland site SRY 3378, and the Priority Habitat of deciduous woodlands)¹. Increased access of these sites by a large local addition of people will threaten the wildlife as well as reduce the biodiversity of the entire area.

4) The political environment. Politically, the incursion of developments onto Green Belt land is something that should be agreed upon at national not local level, after all it was a national policy decision to create Green Belts around our major conurbations. To quote current National Planning Policy

“The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence².”

Can the WBC expect to overturn this policy with a compromised submission? Should it not be encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land rather than developing areas of prime agricultural value and of scenic beauty.

Finally, we were very disappointed that you have so far ignored the wishes of the local people as represented through the Pyrford Neighbourhood Forum, part of a Government initiative to allow the local voice to be heard; and astounded that you have not accepted the recommendations of your own independent advisors (Peter Brett Associates) but have

¹ <http://pyrfordforum.org/14138%20Final%20Report%20Revised%2020141009-%20Pyrford%20Biodiversity.pdf>

² <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/9-protecting-green-belt-land/>

added an area they deemed unsuitable for development with no apparent justification on your part.

Nevertheless, we do appreciate that village life does have to evolve with the times and merely refusing any development within the locality is neither in the national, nor indeed Pyrford's interest. Therefore, we suggest that rather than adding 423 homes at the edge of the village on the Green Belt, you pursue alternative locations and strategies. We believe that in order to give the village a viable future, we need to address a fundamental aspect of Pyrford's demographics, namely its aging population, with over 50% aged over 50 years old. The housing stock reinforces this trend in two ways. First, over 30% of households now comprise one or two over 65s as their children have moved out of the family home. Many of these more elderly people desperately want to stay within the area amongst friends but there are very few opportunities for them to downsize. This lack of smaller properties is blocking the release of large, family homes. The very homes that are being proposed for the Upshot Lane sites. Secondly, within Pyrford, there is a paucity of starter homes and affordable housing; the very type of dwellings that would attract younger families or individuals into the village. Again, not the type of houses that are planned for the Upshot Lane sites. Perhaps if these two needs were addressed a much better overall solution could be found. Alternative locations do exist and these should be reviewed far more thoroughly than hitherto. Examples include a site on both the Pyrford Road and Martyr's Lane.

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