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The Planning Policy Team

Woking Borough Council

Civic Offices

Gloucester Square

Woking.

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GU21 6YL

Dear Sirs

West Byfleet Green Belt Site Allocations

The proposed allocation of West Hall and Broadoaks is of major concern as it takes little account of the capacity of the infrastructure to cope with the additional pressures that will be placed upon it.

Broadoaks

I accept this has already been lost from the Green Belt following the Secretary of State's appeal decision to allow a business park. The stated intentions of Octagon as prospective developer for the site include provision of some 150 dwellings and a Free School for 900 pupils. The business park consent was primarily for a data centre and the number of employees would therefore have been limited to a few hundred. The majority of the space being used for unmanned data storage equipment. The proposed uplift in usage is maybe three times that envisaged by the Planning Inspector in permitting the business park. When the Council agreed to relax the planning uses as part of the Core Strategy review what was the anticipated level of increased traffic.

I have assumed a Planning Consent for a development such as Octagon propose will contain legal requirements, s106, to include considerable contributions to infrastructure improvements and stringent measures on the school to mitigate traffic impact at the cost of the developer/land owner. The site owners will be in for a substantial uplift in value if the Octagon development progresses, the end value of the development being in excess of £200m, and can well afford to make an 8 figure contribution to infrastructure improvements.

West Hall

It is proposed 592 dwellings will be built.

This is Green Belt land so designated because it performs the prime functions of the Green Belt which I would like to remind you are set out as follows:

The five purposes of Green Belt in the NPPF (March 2012) are:•

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas.

The resultant small green wedge between the urban area and the M25 will become ineffective and easily attacked in the future despite assurance the new Green Belt boundary is defensible. We were told this about the existing Green Belt boundary.

- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another.

The green gap between West Byfleet and Byfleet will become ineffective and the two villages will be coalesced.

- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

The green gap between West Byfleet and the M25 will be substantially closed

- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

Not relevant here.

- To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Further attempts need to be made to encourage the recycling of brown field sites within the Borough and increase densities. This will relieve pressure on the Green Belt and revitalise the Town Centre and its satellites. The release of Green Belt is the easy option whereas the efficient use of brown field sites requires detailed site analysis. Well designed high density development raises costs but the net land value still increases due the increased number of units to be sold. To some degree this is demonstrated in the Victoria Square proposals.

No evidence has been provided by the site owner or Woking Borough Council that the west Hall site can sustain the proposed level of development apart from amount of land that can be made available.

The capacity of any site to accommodate development cannot be measured purely by its size but must take into account the ability of the infrastructure to serve the intended uses.

In the case of West Hall this means that it is necessary to show the proposed development will not be to detriment of the existing community and the improved infrastructure will serve the new inhabitants to an acceptable standard.

The key infrastructure elements are:-

Traffic.

Access is only proposed to and from Pravis Road which is already overloaded with continuous lines of vehicles at peak times from the A3 to Woodham Lane causing considerable delay. Not only is the travel time along this route unacceptable to road users but is damaging to the businesses in West Byfleet. It also creates dangerous situations with traffic entering from side streets and the use of secondary and tertiary residential roads as rat runs.

At a recent public presentation by WBC it was admitted that studies used as evidence were either outdated or founded on false information. eg It was assumed Broadoaks is developed with the original planning consent and not the intended much more intense proposal. This is totally unrealistic as the data centre would have had generated a fraction of the traffic produced by the current proposals. Earlier studies of the 1990s, demonstrating that Parvis was already at over capacity have been ignore despite mitigating measures being implemented.

Schools

Existing schools are fully stretched.

Health

The Medical Centre at West Byfleet has some 30,000 registered clients and is struggling to provide adequate services.

Utilities

There is no known assessment of the ability to provide gas, water, electricity, drainage and sewers. Certainly existing water pressure is inadequate at peak times.

At the public meeting the Planning Officers admitted that no reliable assessments have been carried out to establish what measures are necessary to accommodate the proposals or if the required measures would be feasible. They relied on vague statements from various authorities and providers saying mitigating measures would be required and possibly provided. No one knows what these measures are, if they will work, how they will be funded, or if they are implementable.

It seems to me it is impossible to designate a large site which will increase the population of West Byfleet by 25% to 35% (including Broadoaks) for development without knowing if the overall infrastructure can be made to cope.

WBC should be looking to improve services to meet the needs of the existing community first.

It also appears in proposing 592 dwellings on West Hall no account has been taken of the use of Broadoaks as a housing and education site with the additional strain it will place on the roads etc.

West Byfleet is being asked to provide the bulk of the new housing required in the Borough by Central Government without the alternatives having been exhaustively examined. Vague statements have been made about the unsuitability of other sites but no substantive reasons given for their dismissal. Some inefficient industrial sites, now unsuitable because of modern logistics, commercial requirements and changing road patterns, such as Poole Road and Camphill Road, are excellent opportunities to provide housing. Fringe town centre sites could be used more intensively. Other Green Belt sites with easy access to the

M25 and other major roads need to be investigated where existing traffic levels are more acceptable.

Woking Borough Council is to be applauded for its policy of high rise, intense development in the town centre but it's vision needs to stretch further to the encourage the more efficient use of brownfield sites. Woking is one the UK's best served transport hubs and it needs to build further on this privileged position by providing more accommodation within walking distance of the bus and railway stations. New town centre dwellers will also be available to serve the increasing growth of Woking's business community and alleviate the need for some employees to travel into Woking.

We have not been given a reasoned analysis of why West Hall is being suggested for large scale development, what other sites have been considered and why they have been rejected. We have not been told what mitigating measures are proposed.

Yours faithfully

R D S Nevett