

79 Saunders Lane
Mayford
Woking
GU22 0NR

The Planning Policy Team
Woking Borough Council
Civic Offices
Gloucester Square
Woking
GU21 6YL

28th July 2015

Dear Sirs

Re: Woking 2027 DPD Consultation

I have been a resident of Mayford for 21 years, having moved here principally because of its rural and peaceful character, and unspoilt surrounding countryside. I am aware of the Woking 2027 planning proposals that will impact severely on Mayford. My comments are not specific to any of your documents, however I refer to the specific site references that concern me.

Site Reference: GB7 (Ten Acre Farm, Smarts Heath Road)

I **strongly object** to this proposal which would increase the number of Traveller Pitches on this land, because:

- (a) traveller sites are supposed to have safe and reasonable access to schools and other local facilities, neither of which exists in Mayford.
- (b) there are already three traveller sites south of Woking so further expansion in Mayford cannot be reasonably justified.
- (c) a traveller site is supposed to have "*adequate amenity for its occupiers, including space for related business activities*". Smarts Heath Road is a residential area and such business activities are inappropriate in this area.
- (d) I see no evidence of any urban sites in Woking, or those on the urban fringe, having been considered for travellers.
- (e) the site in question is adjacent to Smarts Heath Common, (and Prey Heath) an SSSI area used for recreational purposes by local residents. Increasing the number of pitches would affect the local flora and fauna, devalue the visual amenity of this area, and modify its character irreversibly.

Site References: GB8 (Nursery Land adjacent to Egley Road)
GB9 (Woking Garden Centre, Egley Road)
GB10 (Land to the north east of Saunders Lane, between Saunders Lane and Hook Heath Lane)
GB11 (Land to the north west of Saunders Lane)
GB14 (Land Adjacent to Hook Hill Lane, Hook Heath)

I **strongly object** to any housing or change of GB designation on all of the above sites, because:

- (a) the 2014 Central Government guidance to Councils includes the statement that "*when planning for new buildings, protecting our precious green belt must be paramount. Local people don't want to lose their countryside to urban sprawl, or see the vital green lungs around their towns and cities to unnecessary development.*"[sic] The guidance also explains that "*once established, green belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional cases*". I do not see any evidence presented for these site references being "exceptional cases". National Policy states that "*housing need - including for traveller sites - does not justify the harm done to the GB by inappropriate development*". This proposed large-scale development would definitely be classed as inappropriate by any standard.
- (b) I see no independently verified evidence that all existing or prospective brownfield sites in Woking have been considered and rejected.

- (c) removal of the above sites from the GB may only represent a small fraction of Woking's GB, but it would comprise something like 50% or more of Mayford's green space, changing its character irreversibly.
- (d) the key purpose of the GB is to prevent urban sprawl and the joining up of adjacent communities. Release of this section of GB would be one step closer to Woking and Guildford merging. Only a couple of miles separate Slyfield and Mayford roundabout.
- (e) there are several inaccuracies, omissions and inconsistencies in the Green Belt Review prepared by Brett & Associates, for example:
 - (i) the land north of Saunders Lane includes "Escarpments and Rising Ground of Landscape Importance" (1999 Local Plan Policy NE7 - referred to as CS24 in the Woking 2027 submission), and should therefore not be considered for development.
 - (ii) some land which is recommended for release from the GB (Mayford included) has constraints which have been ignored by the Review report.
 - (iii) the report seems also to ignore the *Character Assessment of Mayford Village* document presented to Council officials in 2009.
 - (iv) the report only considers sites that have been offered for development, while ignoring those that might be available either now or in the timescale of the 2027 proposals. In this connection, the ownership of land is irrelevant in determining whether it should be in or out of the Green Belt.
 - (v) the local transport assessment clearly has not been done by anyone who is familiar with the actual situation.
 - (vi) Green Belt land in Mayford is fundamental to the physical separation of Woking and Guildford. The report only classifies it as "important", which is patently incorrect.
- (f) no consideration whatsoever seems to have been given to the problems of handling surface water from the sloping land in GB10,11 and 14 if development were to take place. Currently Saunders Lane in particular floods in places after prolonged heavy rain, and it would require a major change in routing flood water to the Hoe Stream to avoid flooding a large number of houses. There is no evidence that this has been acknowledged.
- (g) Mayford's road network is unable to support any significant increase in traffic. There are single lane bridges, some with traffic lights on Smarts Heath Road, Hook Hill Lane and at Kemishford. There is a tunnel under the railway with alternate single line traffic on Blackhorse Road . Egley Road is often overloaded. Creating even marginally suitable access to and from the land described in GB10, 11 and 14 would be very expensive, disruptive, and in itself would change the character of the village.
- (h) development on GB8 and GB9, should the current proposal to build a school, leisure centre and running track on GB8 be approved, would add yet more traffic to an already overloaded A320. Adding several hundred more houses on GB10,11 and 14 would make the situation for residents and those travelling through the area intolerable. Access to Worplesdon railway station is impractical on foot for most people even now due to unlit footpaths, and with increased traffic would be unrealistic.
- (j) Woking BC seems to be inconsistent in its consideration of the Brett report, since it accepts the recommendations in respect of releasing land in Mayford for development, but does not accept the report's recommendation to reject the land at Ten Acre Farm as an expanded travellers' site.

In view of the above comments, the Council is requested to reconsider its plans, which would have a damaging and irreversible effect on the village of Mayford and its surroundings.

If these current plans are accepted, the consequences in terms of the infrastructure necessary to support such developments, and the destruction of visual amenity, would cause a major change to the character of Mayford, which essentially would disappear as a village. The Green Belt is precious and every effort to preserve it must be made. Once it's gone, it's gone.

Please also refer to the response by the Mayford Village Society who I am happy also to represent my views.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Punch

cc [REDACTED]