

Byfleet Ward

The recent Site Allocations Development Plan Documents (DPD) includes a number of Greenfield sites and one site of an Urban Area with Byfleet.

The DPD seems to wish to demonstrate the need to release Green Belt and to rely heavily for justification on an 'independent' review, the whole tenor of which is finding Greenfield sites to release, see, for example-

3.5.10 Following the Green Belt and Sustainability Assessments, we can therefore identify a series of parcels which we can say are 'preferred' in terms of further investigation for suitability for removal from the Green Belt

There is a strong feeling that by selecting an 'independent' reviewer with published views on the Green Belt that show his dislike for it, the council has spent money seeking 'independent' confirmation of what they wish to do.

The very first question to be asked has to be 'is there actually a need to build so many new homes in the borough?' It has grown enormously in recent times and has, perhaps, reached capacity. If we are to break to onward drive of the population towards the South East should we not be making other parts of the country a more attractive proposition? Whilst I am concerned about the ability of future generations to continue to live where they have grown up, the way that the property market works means that simply building more homes locally won't help ease the problem.

If there is to be more building in the borough then I would suggest that Byfleet has reached capacity. It is already very densely filled and has hardly any green spaces left. There is very real upset at the prospect of removing the rest of it, other than that which floods too often even for developers, or is too close to the motorway. Perhaps there is an argument for a new community to be built within the borough, with proper provision for its underlying infrastructure (as happened with Goldsworth Park some years ago)?

Why is it considered reasonable to remove most of the green space from Byfleet and West Byfleet whilst leaving almost all of the rest of the borough untouched? It almost suggests a desire to keep development, and the associated problems, as near to the borough's boundaries as possible.

There are already huge problems in the Byfleet area which are not being addressed and these will only be exacerbated by building more houses on the green fields.

Flooding

These problems arise regularly and are well known. Building more will only compound the problems.

Traffic

The A245 is already hugely over capacity and even worse when there is a problem on the M25 or A3. This will be exacerbated when there is further development, compounded by more development to the west of Byfleet, all needing access to the A3.

Past reports have indicated poor air quality on Parvis Road (A245) and the monitor on the M25 bridge still does so. This is an issue gaining a raised profile in Europe and will need to be addressed soon.

Health facilities

Byfleet has no health facilities meaning that people have to make their way to West Byfleet – along the Parvis Road adding to its congestion. A larger population will add to this problem.

Schools

Over the years there have been many occasions when the lack of school places has meant the use of temporary classrooms and a rising population will, no doubt, increase the problem.

A major part of the problem seems to lie in the definition of the purpose of the Green Belt, which is given in the report as follows-

Green Belt is a strategic policy tool which is used to restrict development around and between

Towns and Cities. It has five main purposes which are identified in the National Planning

Policy Framework (NPPF)

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
5. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Whilst these may be the specific checkpoints, surely they are there to support the underlying purpose of the Green Belt, which I see as maintaining the wellbeing of individuals by allowing them to feel part of a discreet community and with access to green spaces. This report seems to go out of its way to demonstrate that it adheres to these detailed principles (ticks the boxes) whilst ignoring the overarching purpose of the Green Belt, allowing it to conclude that Byfleet would be better off without any green spaces as it would then have the great benefit of a well defined boundary (the M25 / Wey Navigation)!

It is very difficult to accept that most of the proposed Green Belt release is concentrated in a few areas, removing most of the usable Green Belt in Byfleet and West Byfleet, but leaving almost all of Woking's Green Belt untouched.

The Urban Area under consideration for development is UA1, Byfleet Library. There have been many suggestions for this site over the years, all keen to make greater use of the space available. Any detailed proposals will be looked at with interest but there is strong feeling in the community that the facilities currently offered by the library and the Heritage Room should not be lost.

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