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29th July 2015

Dear Sirs

WOKING 2027 DPD Consultation

I am writing in response to the above consultation and to register my objections to any reversal of the current Woking Green Belt policy for the following reasons.

I have been a Mayford resident for the past 28 years. I believe that Mayford is a jewel in Woking's collection of towns and villages. It features an eclectic mix of houses, cottages and bungalows, of varying styles, both old and new. It has a committed and vibrant community that demonstrates a real sense of pride and enjoyment of the amenities present in and around the village.

Its heart sits back from the main traffic corridor of the A320 enabling it to retain its sense of place and rurality.

The part of Mayford in which I reside, to the west of the A320, sits between the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) that is Smarts Heath and the Hook Heath escarpment which has previously been recognised by Woking Borough Council as one of three sites worth protecting for their "important ecological, environmental and heritage" qualities.

Commenting specifically on the sites identified in the consultations, I would like to make the following points and observations:

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

I am sure my fellow village residents will have already commented on travellers being well accommodated within the environs of our village as it is and we have already played our part in providing such facilities.

Moreover, as I earlier alluded to the SSSI of Smarts Heath, any further development can only threaten the delicate balance of ecology and wild life in this area.

GB8 (Nursery land adjacent to Egley Road)

GB9 (Woking Garden Centre, Egley Road)

The A320 is an important link between two of north-east Surrey's principle conurbations: Woking for its extensive rail links to London and the south-west and Guildford for its status as a cathedral city and one of an increasingly important commercial one, including its status within the IT industry.

It is critical that traffic movement flows easily between the two. Unfortunately there are already areas of congestion along the route, particularly for commuter traffic. The biggest bottleneck for traffic outside these two towns is the Mayford roundabout, which I have seen almost gridlocked at times. This route is often used as a traffic alternative when the A3 and M25 are blocked, further exacerbating the pressure on our local roads.

Development of these sites in Mayford will put further demands on this important link. Most of my fellow residents already avoid travelling through Woking in all but its quietest hours. Traffic queues and hold-ups have become almost untenable. Motorists are now finding crafty alternatives to by-pass this town putting pressure on other parts of the borough. This does not give confidence that Woking Borough Council will be able to reassure residents living south of Woking, particularly in and around my village, that there will not be a significant and catastrophic impact on the network of roads around this area.

GB10 (Land to the north east of Saunders Lane, between Saunders Lane and Hook Hill Lane)

This triangle of land is already being used to produce biofuels and has done for a couple of years now. There have been issues, namely water run-off, causing problems with water on the road and also running into properties.

Secondly, neither Saunders Lane nor Hook Hill Lane are capable of supporting any further increase in traffic. They are both narrow lanes with difficult accesses, principally due to the railway line and the two, single-track road bridges over the railway. The railway bridge on Smarts Heath Road (end of Saunders Lane) is already a congestion zone at rush hour. On the occasions it has had to close – and there have been a few – there are few easy options. Alternatives include using Hook Heath to go north or Goose Lane and Kemishford

(Worplesdon) to go south. The road under the bridge by Worplesdon Station is inadequate and impassable in certain weather conditions. The subsequent right turn onto the A320 is petrifying.

GB11 (Land to the north west of Saunders Lane)

This particular proposal causes me most concern as it is directly opposite where I live. This is the escarpment mentioned in one of my earlier paragraphs.

It is a well loved series of fields that have been enjoyed as a local amenity for more years than I have lived in this village. It supports a wide range of flora including some well-established, broad-leaf trees, including oak, and a range of wild flowers. This escarpment also provides a habitat for numerous species of wildlife, including badgers, deer, foxes, native reptiles (adders and grass snakes to name a few), bird life (Buzzards and Red Kites being some of the larger specimens). All of these play their part in supporting the local ecosystem, an ecosystem that has been slowly, but consistently, eroded.

Whilst I am very concerned about the wildlife, my bigger concern lies in the ecology of this area. The land comprises largely Bagshot Sand which lays over a base of clay. As minerals, such as iron, are easily leached through sand, some find it difficult to penetrate the dense layer of clay below and that causes what is known as an iron pan. The net effect of this is that rainwater and run-off rainwater are unable to penetrate this layer. This, in turn, causes the water table to sit very high or to run-off into the road and properties nearby

Flooding has long been an issue along Saunders Lane; there are known 'spots' along the lane which regularly suffer such fate. Sitting water in winter quickly becomes hazardous when it freezes and this does make driving along the lane quick treacherous at times.

A look at an Ordnance Survey map of this area will quickly highlight how this area is riddled with streams, above and below ground. There are many houses along Saunders Lane which have ditches to help drain excess water away but at times they prove inadequate. Extensive works have been carried out to the western end of Saunders Lane and Blackhorse Road to try and remedy the flooding and ice problems that have blighted this area.

This area sits on a knife-edge as a result of its topography; the soil structure and the fact it sits downhill of the escarpment provide the perfect storm. Woking Borough Council (WBC) have just spent an eye-watering amount of tax payers' money on alleviating the problems of the Hoe Valley and it is astonishing that they are now proposing to cause new and significant problems just a mile or so to the west.

New homes, widened roads and increased traffic will have a disastrous impact on the area, this road and our homes. I cannot believe WBC are seriously contemplating making the same mistakes that other Councils have made in jeopardising the environment and people's properties and businesses.

We are already suffering from 'road improvements' on the A322 at Brookwood where the traffic light system has encouraged motorists to use Blackhorse Lane as a rat run even though there is a single track tunnel at the end and also the resultant impact on the junction with Brookwood Lye Road.

Regarding Woking's housing policy and its responsibility to create new homes, the town has seen a significant development of flats (albeit on brown field sites) over the past few years, which is to be applauded. However, these flats have largely encouraged people to move further out of the capital and into our borough, with the railway station and access to London being a huge incentive. Perhaps Woking should have concentrated more on providing real homes for families on these sites rather than letting the money-hungry developers put as many units on these sites as possible. How many of these have satisfied the local demand particularly as they cost as much as a small house to buy and how many are empty at any one time?

It would be disingenuous of me to suggest my objections did not include being opposed to any significant development in this area. However, my overriding concerns should be ones that concern the council. I do not want to see Mayford become engulfed by Woking as just another suburb. I do not believe the roads could or should support any further self-induced increase in traffic. This area is already landlocked with the railway, the canal, bridges and tunnels and it only takes one road closure to make getting anyway very challenging. This area is poorly supported by public transport and barely has any pavements.

I would also draw your attention to a recent comment made by the current Business Secretary, Sajid Javid, that there was "no need" to build on Green Belt land to meet the Government's targets. Please reconsider your plans, the devastating impact it will have on my village and the loss of an attractive, semi-rural treasure.

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

Yours sincerely

MAGGIE TREANOR