

Proposed Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2015

Release of green belt land in the West Byfleet Ward for housing development

The current Local Development Plan published by Woking Borough Council runs to 2027 and is periodically updated by various 'supplementary' papers and established local planning measures such as the identification of sites within the Woking borough that could be suitable for industrial or residential development. The largest 'allocation', borough wide, is land surrounding West Hall, West Byfleet. The Council propose to allow developers to build 550 new houses, starting in 2022 in the period to 2027 and will retain further land for development of 42 new houses in the period 2027 to 2040 - a total of 592 new dwellings. [The area in question is shown in diag.1]

The 'Broadoaks' site is also recommended for release and a plan is about to be submitted (July 2015) by Octagon Developments for 157 new houses and a private/fee paying secondary school for, ultimately, 900 pupils.

Both developments will have direct access to the A245/Parvis Road. Both developments will rely on the provision of public services such as health and community care, school places and the utilities - provision of gas, electricity, fresh water and waste water and sewage from existing services in the West Byfleet area.

In public consultation, the West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum has established that local residents (+95%) do not want to lose any of our green belt but accept that the Broadoaks site is in need of a firm and viable proposal - in the Council's own words 'employment led, mixed economy'.

Woking Borough Council has agreed with the Government to build not less than 292 new homes, borough wide, each year throughout the period of the Local Development Plan. The Council say that there is enough existing land, brown field land and 'windfall' sites to meet this target until 2021/2022. Thereafter, it will be dependent on the release of green belt land. Green Belt land is nominally protected by statute which was first enacted to allow 'green spaces' to be preserved on an enduring basis and also to stop one community from growing into another.

These are some of the relevant issues:

1. Other than Broadoaks which is already partly developed, the green belt land surrounding West Hall is the only substantial area we have in West Byfleet. The issue here is 'when it's gone, it's gone'. We are told that the green belt land 'removed for development' is approximately 45 hectares or about 38% of the total - not 5% or even 10%! The additional threat must be that once a development has been started, it will swallow the rest of the land over time.

2. Both of these projects will have entrance and exits onto the A245 / Parvis Road. The last major traffic study for the relief of traffic congestion along the A245 took place in 2002, headed by Surrey County Council. The Head of Traffic Management, Surrey County Council, told the enquiry that 'the A245 was 'over trafficked' and 'burdensome to the local communities' - year 2002!

The Transport Assessment, published June 2015 by Woking Borough Council, confirms that flows along the A245 regularly exceed the measure used for determining 'congestion'.

Woking Council says the road can take more traffic!

If Woking's proposal goes through, the Parvis Road will be subject to additional traffic movements from 749 new dwellings and from a day school of 900 pupils and an undisclosed number of staff. In addition, there will be a steady stream of 'visitors' - suppliers, traders, maintenance personnel. The Royal Institute of Planning estimate that for a large development such as these, the effect is to increase movements by 10-15% per annum.

We believe that with the Parvis Road already being in a critical condition, Woking Borough Council is simply turning a blind eye to the problem in proposing a huge development at West Hall.

3. There are three General Medical Practices within the West Byfleet Health Centre. We have been told that there is now very little lee-way in terms of health care for our existing population and, in particular, our 'new' building is already close to working at maximum capacity.

The concern of residents is that a large influx of new patients will overwhelm the existing facilities. Woking Borough Council has offered no solution.

4. Buildings at both West Byfleet Infants School and West Byfleet Junior School are currently being extended to meet a critical demand for school places for children living in the West Byfleet area. The additional form entries will allow sufficient places until about 2021. The statistics are available from Surrey County Council.

They do not allow for children coming to live at 'West Hall' or Broadoaks.

We do not have a state secondary school within the West Byfleet area and none is currently planned by either Surrey County Council or in conjunction with Woking Borough Council.

5. Examination of the state of the utilities that supply gas, electricity, fresh water, waste water and sewage collection within the West Byfleet area suggests that a fine balance is being maintained at the present time. The companies involved could rightly claim that there have been few 'stoppages' in the last ten years but, off the record, will admit that it is taking a lot of work to stay ahead. A new electricity sub-station is to be built adjacent to the Wey Navigation and there are persistent rumours that the principal sewage main is close to capacity.

None of this has been subject to challenging scrutiny in light of the two developments bringing an additional 1782 men, women and children* to live in West Byfleet . Woking Borough Council tell us they have asked the utility service providers to comment and have been told there is no problem.

In conclusion, we believe the proposal from Woking Borough Council at West Hall is opportunist - the land is there and the Council have a need to find land for housing development. This allocation happens to be green belt land but that doesn't seem to matter. We point out that the Council does have the necessary powers to make this proposal and carry it forward - even against overwhelming opposition. **But**, the rules for the release of green belt land for housing development also require the authority to take into account the siting of the development, the ready access to and availability of health and community care services, ready access to and availability of school places and the provision of utility services.

We believe that for a development of this size, Woking Borough Council has not met these criteria.

*using WBC statistic: 1 household = 2.38 persons