

## Objection to Planning on Green Belt Land in Pyrford

jackie wheeler [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 24 July 2015 10:34

**To:** Jeni Jackson; Planning Policy

**Importance:**High

Dear Ms Jackson,

Re: Proposed Housing Development on Green Belt land in Pyrford

As a resident of Pyrford I am writing to you, as the representative of the council planning department, to express my severe concerns regarding the proposal to build 400+ new houses in Pyrford. If you live in Pyrford, Old Woking or West Byfleet you would realise how horrific this proposal is with regard to the impact on traffic congestion; school places and access to medical care - then take into account the fact that the land allocated is green belt land and the whole proposal reaches another level of atrocity.

Let me deal with each major issue individually:

**1. Green Belt Land:** Woking Borough Council have announced their proposals for meeting housing requirements in the period 2015-2040. This predominantly impacts the east end of the Borough and earmarks the two Pyrford fields, either side of Upshot Lane, for 423 new houses in the 2027 - 2040 timeframe. This blights land in the current Green Belt and endangers heritage views from the Pyrford Escarpment to the North Downs. Additionally one of the fields was not recommended as appropriate for use by the councils' own planning consultants, PBA, in the Green Belt Review published late in 2014. Green belt land is essential in protecting our environment, species of plants, insects and animals as well as providing us with a healthy living environment. In addition, it creates clear boundaries between villages and towns, rather than creating huge conglomerations of housing. In addition, the Borough Council have ignored the Pyrford Neighbourhood Forum's 2 letters raising concerns about the Green Belt Review and their advisers attempts to address the Borough Executive were repulsed with the Executive proceeding to take the decision to publish the DPD, apparently, without reviewing valid representations. The Borough (WBC ) have substantially departed from their own independent advisers, Peter Brett Associates, recommendations concerning Pyrford: this is not acceptable. It is contravening the basic rights of the community to remove Green Belt land that has already been protected in perpetuity by the government.

**2. Traffic:** The state of the local road infrastructure is currently appalling. It is impossible to get down the Old Woking Road into Old Woking after 7:30 am; the road is blocked by cars going to the A3; Hoebridge School; SJB school and Woking College, not to mention people trying to get to work in Woking and beyond. If you try and travel to West Byfleet the Old Woking road is also at a standstill down to West Byfleet and beyond it all the way down to Cobham. With the development proposals, and in reality the possibility of an extra 800 – 1000 cars on the roads, we would be in a state of permanent gridlock. In addition to this the road between Pyrford Shops and the proposed housing is gridlocked every morning. None of the roads affected by the new

housing can be widened as they lead to narrow lanes or are roads through housing that would have to be removed, which would negate the purpose of building in the first place. The proposal to build new homes is therefore ridiculous just on the basis of the traffic conditions and lack of road infrastructure.

**3. Schools:** Currently there are not enough school places in any level of schooling from Nursery to Sixth form and adding more families to the mix means that new schools will have to be built or class sizes will become unacceptable. Pyrford Primary School is about to be re-built ( with a 50 year lifespan expected ) and the number of pupils will slightly increase to meet current demand however, there is no planning in this rebuild for 423 new houses and the possibility of 800+ children needing school places. Where will these children go to school? There are currently not enough school places for the children in the Borough and the Borough relies on the fact that there are many families that opt into private education, this option is becoming increasingly difficult for many families and this means that there will also be a greater demand for school places from people already in the Borough who will be opting out of/not be opting into the Private system. How can the Borough Council propose new housing without a proposal for schooling attached?

**4. Medical Facilities:** what provision has been made to provide medical care? Currently the local hospitals cannot cope with the demands made on them, as indicated by A &E waiting times and waiting times for basic treatments. Should you need a doctor's appointment at Parishes Bridge, our local surgery, you will have to wait 6 weeks until you can see a doctor – will there be a new surgery built to cope with the current demand as well as the new demand from a possible extra 1,700 people in the village? Will Woking Hospital and St Peter's be expanded to cope with the current demand as well as that of a further increase in community numbers? How will the elderly, disabled and vulnerable be catered for? Will new facilities be provided for them? These questions need to be answered satisfactorily before any further building of housing can be considered.

**5. Infrastructure:** the infrastructure in Pyrford is old and the Water and Sewerage systems are already overloaded. Gas works currently underway are causing chaos and are not planned with the addition of further housing and demands on the system. How will this be managed? How will the water and sewerage systems be upgraded? Has this all been planned for?

**6. Pyrford's charm and character** are important and maintaining the natural landscape and views as well as footpaths is vital; Pyrford is unique in Woking Borough in enjoying its relatively unspoilt countryside and this forms an asset for the entire borough. In addition Pyrford is renowned for its well-maintained historic buildings and conservation areas. Heritage assets are highly valued nationally, why would ours be destroyed so readily? Removal of Green Belt status from our 2 threatened fields could cause irreparable damage to these assets as it would severely affect all of the surrounding countryside. Our Village is a community where people want to live and much of this revolves about the pleasant environment and community spirit. Safety is of paramount importance and the character of the village and its wide blend of facilities is something which, once destroyed, cannot be re-created – Pyrford will no longer be a village, it will just be a mass of housing with no community focus.

It is time that the Borough Council looked at other methods of developing housing. There is a great deal of empty office space in Old Woking; Woking and West Byfleet. This could be converted to housing providing mainly flats to provide affordable housing for the more elderly, who need to downsize and the young who need to get on the housing ladder, as well as social housing. In addition there are Brown field sites in Woking, such as on Boundary road, where the Borough Council can acquire the land and build a mix of housing – flats and houses to meet the needs of the many. These options may well have less impact on traffic as the locations are central, where the station, schools and buses are more frequent and readily available, so reducing the need to use cars. In addition, regenerating town and village centres by using flats above the shops, or converting empty shops to dwellings would also help to alleviate the housing situation without the loss of Green belt land. However, school places and medical facilities would still need to be expanded. Finally, it is unacceptable to take away Green Belt Land from the future generations of our country. We have a duty to protect it as intended when it was created. There must be more innovative and realistic proposals to address the issue of housing in the Borough and these proposals must also address the associated need for the entire infrastructure of the Borough to be developed to cope with an increased population.

I hope that you will forward my letter to all of the appropriate departments and I look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

Ms J Wheeler

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