

PRESS RELEASE

KEY GUILDFORD RESIDENTS GROUPS WANT WIDER SCOPE FOR REOPENED LOCAL PLAN HEARING

Guildford, Wednesday 31 October 2018: The Guildford Society (GSoc) and Guildford Vision Group (GVG) want the reopened public hearing into the Local Plan to consider the council's proposed new town centre policy wording, not just the housing numbers. Both resident groups fully support the reopening of the Local Plan hearing to consider new housing numbers in the light of revised, lower ONS projections. Examining inspector Jonathan Bore has asked the council to propose dates for another hearing session.

GSoc AND GVG are both keen, however, to see any new hearing encompass a discussion on Policy S3, following their submissions under the public consultation just closed. This Local Plan is about land use allocation – where development should take place. The policy, covering the town centre, is therefore inextricably linked to both the housing number and housing location issues.

Both groups are unhappy with the wording and scope of Policy S3. They suggest S3 and related policies are currently inadequate and need meaningful commitments to provide an effective framework for development. Both groups have lobbied for the town centre to accommodate much more housing, thus freeing up one or more Green Belt sites currently in the frame for housing development. Town centre homes represent more sustainable development than congestion-creating homes in the Green Belt dependent on major A3 improvements as yet to be scheduled, and acknowledged by GBC to be outside its control. Town centre homes would be good for the town's economy but would again focus attention on the centre's inadequate infrastructure.

GVG and GSoc say regeneration of the town centre must be masterplanned in a holistic way to address failings in the infrastructure (transport, flood prevention, public realm/facilities etc). A high quality, functioning town centre with a proper balance of housing, commercial and retail space, is not achievable otherwise. Policy S3 should designate the whole of the town centre as a strategic site - or at least the regeneration area identified in the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy - delivering homes, retail and commercial space. Such development could then come with the same obligations the council wishes to impose on private developers of the strategic green belt sites.

Policy S3, as currently written, allows for a piecemeal ad-hoc approach which will never deliver the infrastructure upgrade the town needs. The emerging impact of ad-hoc planning can already be seen, with opportunistic developments of nine storeys or more – up to fourteen - either approved or under application.

Both groups have also complained at the poor response from the council regarding consultation with key stakeholders on the important issue of the town centre. As an example, GVG and GSOC submitted a Draft Statement of Common Ground to the council as part of the hearing process. It was never acknowledged by the council.

- Ends -

Notes for Editors

- GVG is a group of concerned residents with very relevant skills and experience
- The GVG Masterplan flythrough can be found at <https://youtu.be/SExTozSKB-A>
- For more information, contact Bill Stokoe on 07768 124685
- The GVG Masterplan provides around 2,500 more brownfield homes in the town centre than the number included in GBC's draft Local Plan

- The GVG masterplan delivers more pedestrianisation , in a safer, healthier environment plus a reinvigorated riverside