

# Cobham Conservation & Heritage Trust

Registered Charity No: 282389



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Planning Policy,  
Guildford Borough Council,  
Millmead House,  
Millmead,  
Guildford GU2 4BB

By email to [planningpolicy@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@guildford.gov.uk)

Dear Sirs

## **Cobham Conservation & Heritage Trust - Guildford Local Plan Consultation Response**

The Trust writes to comment in this consultation. The Trust has more than 1100 members, some from within the Borough of Guildford. Most of that membership that resides in the Cobham area uses and enjoys the resources of the Borough of Guildford, including the villages and the countryside for recreational purposes.

The Trust is concerned about the implications for suggested development in nearby villages but in this response intends to concentrate on the implications for the Green Belt generally and the suggestion of development on nearby Wisley Airfield specifically.

The Trust is concerned that Guildford Borough Council, in preparing documents for consultation, has not to this time liaised sufficiently on Green Belt issues with neighbouring councils (including Elmbridge Borough Council) and with other stakeholders. The Green Belt was established by and is protected by Acts of Parliament. If it is suggested that there is any direction from central government that obliges Guildford Borough Council to re-assess the Green Belt land then the evidence for that should be made clear. The understanding of the Trust is that it is Guildford Borough Council that is taking upon itself to do that.

There is considerable concern locally about protecting from unwarranted development, within the Borough of Guildford, Effingham and the Horsleys and the Ripley, Wisley, Ockham and Hatchford areas. Proposals that are floated by the consultation document to change the washover concept for the Green Belt to a system of inseting villages within the Green Belt would fail to sufficiently protect these villages and the countryside in these areas. Development should not be other than from small windfall sites. Local roads are dangerously narrow for the present volumes of cars and lorries, generally unlit and already hazardous for pedestrians

and cyclists without the suggested additional population locally providing additional vehicle movement. Given how main roads (and in particular the M25 and A3) become jammed at various times, adding to the number of motorists with development in this rural area would result in the use of more local roads as rat runs. The Trust would be particularly concerned for the additional traffic on the very narrow and winding Ockham Lane and Plough Lane locally.

Research available shows that there should be no need to build on the Green Belt. The Green Belt has saved precious countryside from urban sprawl, saved village life and conserved wildlife. Once any part of it is destroyed it is lost for ever and letting any part go in other than very exceptional circumstances, risks opening the floodgates for further encroachment. It is owed to succeeding generations to preserve it. There are brownfield and other sites in and around urban and semi-urban Guildford that must be looked at and used first. Development in that area would ensure that such new infrastructure required would benefit existing properties.

The Trust is very concerned about protecting, and indeed expanding, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Special Scientific interest (SSSIs). The Trust supports the position of Natural England and the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) that studies show the need for the Green Belt to be protected as an integral component of England's ecological network and the additional views of the RSPB as to protection of biodiversity. While there may be scope for a developer to suggest Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) in an area, it is impractical to find any sufficient such sites in the Borough or adjoining boroughs.

The disused Wisley Airfield is in Green Belt land and just 2 miles from Cobham. What is suggested is building 2175 houses on 167 hectares and much more in envisaging with a new settlement all the infrastructure required, supposedly so that there is no need to travel far for everyday needs of a new population. However, there would still need to be reliance on vehicles for work and other needs and for delivery. This development is suggested amid beautiful countryside which is also a haven for wildlife some of which is already endangered. It would mar important views. If there is here a residue of 17 hectares of concrete runway and hardstanding, that can be returned to agricultural land or nature, as was promised when it was requisitioned during the last world war.

Given the proximity of this suggested development to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, Guildford Borough Council should conclude at this stage that this is not a suitable site for housing or other further development. Following development, land that is presently safeguarded would see substantial increased use including disturbance to wildlife by dogs and cats together with pollution of all sorts that accompanies development. In outline at this stage the Trust opposes further development at this site because

- there would be a loss of Green Belt and countryside used for leisure purposes and biodiversity. The land is within 400 metres of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and rare species would be endangered.
- the land is close to the M25 and A3 junction and may increase the number of vehicles using these busy roads on a daily basis. Surrey is very poorly served by public transport. Any new residents would be reliant on the private transport.
- a new settlement here would absorb the hamlet of Ockham and be part of a process of creating urban sprawl.

To the Trust it appears that Guildford Borough Council view the suggested development as an opportunity for meeting a housing target in an easy manner. There is no evidence base for it. There is no case for a new town in the Borough. There is little need for additional housing within the Green Belt as much of any required additional housing could be located in or adjacent to Guildford where there is existing infrastructure.

David Bellchamber  
Planning Officer  
Cobham Conservation & Heritage Trust.