Elmbridge Local Plan
Strategic Options & the effect on the Green Belt

20th February 2017
St Andrew’s Church, Cobham

www.cobhamgreenbelt.org.uk
Introduction

Sir Gerry Acher – Chairman
Cobham Green Belt Group
Agenda

• Introduction
• The Elmbridge BC Proposals
• The Issues for the Community to Consider
• Parcel 20 – The Fairmile & Chippings Farm
• Parcel 14 – Knowle Hill Park & Polyapes
• Next Steps
• Q&A
The Elmbridge BC Proposals

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The Issues for the Community to Consider

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The Issues for the Community to Consider

- We are asked about 2 issues in particular
  - Why is the predicted figure for housing so large?
  - Why has our area been singled out for more than a proportionate share of housing?
Housing Need (1)

• Elmbridge say 9,480 homes needed 2015 to 2035 or 468 p.a. – say shortfall is 5,780.
• South East Plan said 5,620 was the projected figure for 2012 to 2031 or 281 p.a.
Housing Need (2)

• Core Strategy placed the figure from 2011 to 2026 at 3,375 or 225 p.a.

• Core Strategy allocated 575 to 625 new homes to Cobham, Oxshott, Stoke D'Abernon and Downside area. Proportionally - double the share based on population.

• Target has been delivered to date.
Who challenges the housing figure and how? (1)

• The 9,480 figure comes from documents running to many hundred pages.

• Organisations can examine them.

• Elmbridge must be robust in examining them.
Who challenges the housing figure and how? (2)

• Considerations include:

  1. Elmbridge’s birth rate has plateaued.

  2. 40% of Elmbridge’s population growth has been down to migration from other places.

     This is not international migration which has decreased. It is mainly from London.

• Crudely calculated - without migration the target could be 60% of target - 5,688 or 284 p.a.
Why our area?

• Ove Arup Report dwell on 5 purposes.
• Elmbridge suggest these are the “statutory reasons” for assessing Green Belt.
• No – they are only a material consideration to be weighed against all other material considerations.
• Disagree with Elmbridge saying that there should not be an environmental and landscape designation.
• Ove Arup value judgements are wrong.
Approach to GB Review

What is Green Belt?

Not an environmental designation or a landscape designation

Green Belt is land kept permanently open in order to:
- check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Review tested how different defined areas met these purposes
Other material considerations

• How Elmbridge have had and continue to have an obligation to plan positively to enhance the Green Belt - Paragraph 81 NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework).
  – Use opportunities to provide access, outdoor sport and recreation.
  – Retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity.

• Green Belt must remain open and permanent - Paragraph 79 NPPF.
Boundaries can only be changed in exceptional circumstances

Paragraph 83 NPPF

- What could those exceptional circumstances be?
- Housing need is not on its own a good reason.
Recent Government White Paper (1)

1. Reinforces defence of Green Belt. Talks of “High Bar“.
2. Commits to leave the natural environment better than found.
3. Commits to offset any loss of Green Belt by improvements to the environmental quality of remaining Green Belt land. BUT Elmbridge’s Green Belt is all of high quality - very little enhancement possible.
4. Council must examine fully all other reasonable options.
5. Local communities must hold their councils to account.
Recent Government White Paper (2)

Dominic Raab MP now says

“We have secured the retention of the existing Green Belt safeguards”
What else needs to be questioned? (1)

• Sustainability and Infrastructure seems to be an afterthought – Look at those now not later.

• Other Land Use. If we do need to find space for extra homes can Elmbridge also find room for other uses such as Warehousing, Office and Retail Space?
What else needs to be questioned? (2)

- Even if an increased housing target is needed, can Option 1 work?
- Is there too much emotion in the Elmbridge presentation on Option 1?
- Option 1 can well work provided:
  1. the housing requirement is fairly shared.
  2. brownfield and small sites are properly looked at.
  3. there is some creative thinking in design.

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1. Increasing urban densities

Maintain existing Green Belt boundaries and deliver all development by concentrating development within the urban area by:

- Significantly increasing densities on all sites in the urban areas; and
- Identifying open spaces such as allotments and playing fields for redevelopment and relocating these uses within the existing Green Belt.
- Using the Duty to Co-operate to enquire as to whether other authorities have the potential to meet some of our need.
Is Government intervention a reality? (1)

• Elmbridge will proceed with current timetable to put the draft Local Plan to the Inspectorate in 2018.
• Inspector can find the Local Plan unsound and refer it back with reasons.
• Any option adopted by Elmbridge could be rejected.
Is Government intervention a reality? (2)

- Many years before government will interfere.
- Example - Guildford has a Local Plan from 2003. It has seen off applications like for Wisley Airfield. Attaches importance to getting new plan entirely right before submitting it.
Am I a NIMBY to oppose any changes to the Green Belt boundaries?

• The housing target can be challenged.
• The basis for the Ove Arup report is flawed.
• “Urbanisation” is not the monster that is portrayed by Elmbridge.
• Government intervention not a reality.
• Both Options 2 and 3 can be opposed with a clear conscience?
Options 2 and 3

Option 2
Seek to meet needs as far as possible by amending Green Belt where it is at weakest

Benefits
• Protects the character of the urban area
• Protects 97% of the Green Belt ensuring boundaries endure beyond the plan
• Maintains existing settlement pattern whilst increasing in housing provision
• Larger sites enable infrastructure to be delivered alongside development
• Increase in the delivery of affordable housing and smaller units

Disadvantages
• Will not meet housing needs in full
• Some loss of Green Belt
• Development may be in less sustainable locations on the edge of urban areas
• Increased pressure on highways
• Reliance on other Local Planning Authorities to meet residual needs

Option 3
Meet needs in full by amending Green Belt boundaries regardless of the strength with which it meets the purposes of Green Belt.

Benefits
• Protects the character of the urban area
• Meets housing needs in full
• Larger sites enable infrastructure to be delivered alongside development
• Increase in the delivery of affordable housing

Disadvantages
• The loss of a significant amount of Green Belt
• Significantly increases the risk of settlement coalescence, encroachment into countryside and excessive sprawl
• Fundamental changes to the nature of the Borough and its settlement patterns
• Massive pressure on infrastructure in particular highways
Parcel 20 – The Fairmile & Chippings Farm

Sue Kilpatrick - Chairman
Cobham & Downside Residents Association
Parcel 20 – The Fairmile & Chippings Farm

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Parcel 20 - The Fairmile & Chippings Farm (1)

• Development would be detrimental to the character and openness of the Green Belt.
Parcel 20 - The Fairmile & Chippings Farm (2)

• Important in preserving the gap between Cobham and Esher.
• Green Belt Boundary Review fails to recognise this.
Parcel 20 - The Fairmile & Chippings Farm (3)

- Only 4.6% built-on.
- Green Belt Boundary Review also fails to recognise this.
Parcel 20 - The Fairmile & Chippings Farm (4)

• Includes Common Land, Allotments and Site of Special Scientific Interest.
Parcel 20 - The Fairmile & Chippings Farm (5)

- Habitat for a variety of wildlife – rare birds, reptiles and insects.
Parcel 20 - The Fairmile & Chippings Farm (6)

- Rugby Club has long lease.
Parcel 20 - The Fairmile & Chippings Farm (7)

- Poor air quality would be worsened by substantial development.
Parcel 20 - The Fairmile & Chippings Farm (8)

- Infrastructure is totally inadequate.
Parcel 20 - The Fairmile & Chippings Farm (9)

• Who is going to pay the huge cost of the necessary improvements to the infrastructure?
Parcel 14 – Knowle Hill Park & Polyapes

Ian Nelson- Chairman
Stoke D’Abernon Residents Association
Parcel 14 – Knowle Hill Park & Polyapes
Parcel 14
Knowle Hill Park & Polyapes (1)

• A purpose of Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl / towns merging.
• But Elmbridge regards Cobham/ Oxshott as one town - Stoke D’Abernon doesn't even exist!
• So Elmbridge score only 1 out of 5.
Parcel 14
Knowle Hill Park & Polyapes (2)

• Land with less than 3% building and/or strong unspoilt rural character should score 5.

• Only 2.5% building, but Elmbridge score only 2 out of 5.
Parcel 14
Knowle Hill Park & Polyapes (3)

• Much of Parcel 14 unavailable:
  – Knowle Hill Park 45 acres.
  – Scout camp 22 acres.
  – Ancient Woodland, Commons, steep hills, natural springs.

• Other problems: traffic (near M25), flood risk, protected wildlife.
Next Steps

Sir Gerry Acher – Chairman
Cobham Green Belt Group
Next Steps (1)

• Please Engage!
Whatever your thoughts and views; visit our website: **www.cobhamgreenbelt.org.uk** to see tonight’s presentations and further information.

• Please submit your responses to the consultation by Friday 24th February to Elmbridge Planning.
  – use the online website portal.
  – send an email maybe using our "cut and paste guide“.
  – write a letter.
  – use our quick “consultation response check list”.

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Next Steps (2)

• Next stage of consultation will be in the summer.
• Then public enquiry in summer 2018.
• We shall need to raise funds to fight the next stages of our defence.
Next Steps (3)

• To do nothing is not an option *but*
  – What is the *correct* housing number for Elmbridge?
  – What is the *fair* number for Cobham, Downside, Stoke D’Abernon and Oxshott?
Next Steps (4)

— How can this be accommodated in our area without:
  
  • Wrecking our Green Belt.
  • Overloading our already challenged infrastructure.
  • Changing the nature of our community.

— **But** ensuring we get the right sort of housing - social and affordable - however we have a bad track record for this to date.
Next Steps (5)

• Finally, visit our website at

   www.cobhamgreenbelt.org.uk

   where you can provide your email address to receive our free email newsletter which will keep you informed of progress.

• Over to you - Questions and answers.