

Local Plan – Issues and Approaches

My Council has asked me to advise the District on the difficulty individuals have encountered in accessing all the supporting documents that explain the various sections of the Local Plan. When the Section 19 consultation arrives we would like to see the supporting documents being made available on the same website as where residents respond to the consultation. The consultation portal has intimidated some of our residents who are not as comfortable with IT and a more streamlined easier method to respond would allow a far greater proportion of our population to become engaged in the process.

Topic Paper 1: Issues and Objectives

Question1 – What do you think about the issues?

My Council would be in agreement that these sum up the issues facing the District. With regard to Burstow we would list them in descending order of importance

Housing and Infrastructure being of primary concern

Closely followed by Flooding and Health and Wellbeing

Natural Environment and Climate Change are both relevant to Burstow

Heritage, Design and Safety, Town Centre/Retail and Leisure and Economy and Tourism all play a significant part in the day-to-day life of Burstow

Housing

Tandridge features in a list of one of the ten most expensive areas to live in according to the National Housing Federation. Last year the average house price was estimated at £384,000 in contrast to the average UK price of £280,000. And yet the average salary of a Tandridge resident was estimated to be just over £24,000.

Some of the reasons contributing to the high cost of housing would be the proximity to London, good train links to the city and the attractive rural setting attracting new residents to the area who are prepared to pay a premium on property. TDC suggests that in excess of 9,500 homes are required in the District over the next 20 years however my Council disputes this and believes that such an approach is inherently flawed, will not meet the current housing crisis for local people and will only serve to further inflate house prices because it will encourage immigration into the area without addressing the need for low cost homes for young local people earning low salaries.

Tandridge, and in particular Burstow, has an aging population and a significant number of single occupancy larger homes where a spouse is deceased and a family has moved away from the area. The remaining occupier is often forced to remain living in an oversized property due to the short supply of smaller more suitable homes with good transport links.

Prospective residents to the area are often families moving from the city and so they also require larger homes so developers focus their building onto larger homes and thus ignore the needs of the existing community. Should any additional housing be introduced then it is essential that the scale, type, tenure and stock should be determined by what the current community is likely to require over the next twenty years and not be led by developers trying

to maximise their profits by providing 'executive' homes carrying premium prices or by what is likely to be needed by an incoming population. This should be tailored to individual areas needs. For example, Smallfield has a high number of single occupancy larger homes. For many reasons residents choose to stay in a property that is larger than they need but one of the reasons that frequently is mentioned is the lack of suitable property in the area for them to downsize to. If a resident is to give up the dwelling that has been their home for 30/40/50 years they do not want to also have to sacrifice their community and move away from the area. Young people need low cost smaller starter homes too. The District Council could more rigorously enforce a 'small homes' rule – that permission be refused to extend small homes thus ensuring a ready stock is available. This would also encourage people to sell when they need/want more room and thus help the economy. Salaries in rural areas are often lower than the average wage, this is true in Burstow and there is a need for 'affordable' housing that is clearly demonstrated by the number of residents registered with Tandridge for housing

Tandridge, and especially the southern section of the District, has always attracted members of the travelling and showman communities. There are a significant number of sites, both legal and illegal, in the area and local services are already stretched trying to meet their specific needs. Any additional accommodation should be carefully considered and a difference made between need and want. Should a 'need' be determined then all effort should be made to locate such accommodation in an area that does not have much existing accommodation to avoid further adverse impacts upon areas already struggling to cope.

Infrastructure

Roadways – In theory there is an excellent road structure in place for the District with the A22 offering a direct link to the M25 London orbital, easy access to the adjacent M23 with links to the south coast by it and the A22 and links east – west via the A25 and A264. However the congestion on the roads often means the roads are operating at or very close to capacity. Any additional housing or expansion at Gatwick Airport would have serious implications for capacity.

In addition to this many road users, in particular HGVs use the smaller roads and lanes to avoid congestion and/or roadworks exacerbating existing problems and causing damage to the road surfaces.

Railway and Bus Links – Burstow and Smallfield is not served by a train line and bus services are limited (and facing further cuts) leaving residents isolated in the village and increasing dependence on cars as a means of transport. Non-drivers do not have sufficient access to public transport during evenings and weekends.

Health Care -The Doctor's Surgery is operating at or near capacity for treatment of patients and to provide parking for patients attending clinics with no realistic prospect of increasing either.

Drainage -Drainage and sewage systems struggle to cope with existing volume so to add further stress to an overloaded system would represent major health issues. As things stand, when there is a sudden downpour of rain residents in

Whealers Lane, Kingsmead, Plough Road and Orchard Road report overflowing toilets, being unable to use showers, baths, toilets etc for fear of causing an internal flood and overflowing effluent covers the streets and gardens. Privatisation and underinvestment on an old sewerage system means the system struggles to cope with existing demands and could not cope with any increases. Pumps are outdated and aging with no monitored alarms to alert Thames water when they fail – and they regularly fail – one memorable cause of pump breakdown was due to flooding. Inadequate maintenance of Highways drains for surface water was responsible for a disproportionately high number of internal floods in the Burstow area following the 13/14 rains.

Education - The Primary School in Burstow has been enlarged several times and still is unable to meet capacity with at least one portacabin in the grounds serving as a classroom. The staff parking has been built over causing stress on surrounding streets as staff travel in from further away and leave their vehicles there for the working day. In addition at least twice daily during the school term the village is at gridlock whilst parents drop off and collect children from school.

Right of Ways – Long-term under investment in the maintenance of our public footpaths has caused many of them to deteriorate significantly. In addition, poor enforcement of breaches by landowners blocking or moving footpaths has led to systemic disregard of planning rules and abuse of the footways by those seeking to serve their own interests. For example Footway 428 last year was first blocked and then moved by a commercial operator as they sought to illegally extend their operating area. After investigation the path was left in the new location and now the same operator is causing further damage.

Communications - Internet connections are sporadic and/or very slow reducing the ability for home working and commercial enterprise in the District. Telephone signals, both 3 and 4 G, are sparse and intermittent at best and non-existent in a number of places at worst. Investment in mobile masts to overcome this is essential as is the upgrading of fibre optic broadband.

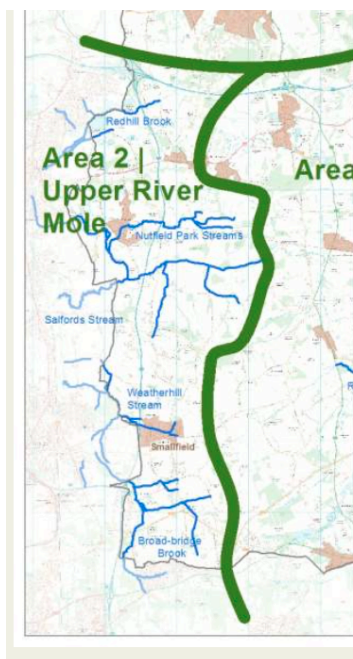
To summarise what is needed is better policed speeding and weight issues on the road network, improved public transport to reduce dependence on private cars, investment in the upgrading of existing foul and surface water drains and a regular maintenance program to ensure they do not fall in to disrepair again, a new primary school located on the outskirts of the village where ample parking provision can be made and the playing fields be on the same site and the investment in telecommunications to ensure it is effective and with sufficient coverage.

Flooding

There is a river that flows through Smallfield, however it is underground and fed through a 3 x 6 ft culvert, therefore it has, over the dry years, been 'out of sight and out of mind'. Burstow Parish is in the Upper River Mole area. It is crossed by brooks and streams, which all feed into the River Mole and eventually reach the River Thames. These watercourses are also fed by the surface water that

rises out of the land during heavy rainfall and in Burstow these all flow to the west. Life threatening flooding in Burstow is unlikely, as flood plain water tends not to be more than 4 to 6 inches deep unless there are blockages. Blockages are caused by lack of maintenance to ditches, drainage and the balance ponds, created to protect the area and the motorway, are allowed to get seriously overgrown which then has knock on effects downstream. This happened over the winter of 2013/14 when at least 67 internal floods were recorded for the Parish.

The Burstow Flood and Resource Team has been created to work with agencies so that the areas can be repaired and maintained. It will also work with the Environment Agency in partnership with SCC, TDC, RBBC and Thames Water on the Burstow Flood Alleviation Scheme. We have been working with residents to get the history of the Parish from a flood point of view and are here to provide the 'local' aspect of the area which we, more than others, know.



The Planning Inspectorate has decided to allow an appeal and 51 units are to be built behind Coopers Close – a Zone 3 Flood Plain. The developers have added flood defences to their application. Our question is 'will those balancing pond/ works be maintained?' The developers has a duty to maintain them for 2 years, but if the District/County Councils do not adopt them, and this maintenance is not continued, as happened over '13/14', this will put our residents upstream at risk.

Since the call for land for the HELA, Burstow Parish has attracted a great number of 'interests' regardless of the flood risk to the areas. One field has had ducks living on it all this winter, but that has not stopped the owner applying! The maps produced by the Environment Agency haven't yet been updated from 2013 and we have had floods in

1968, 2013/14 and 2016!

Building in our Parish requires flood management/awareness to be a major factor in looking at any planning applications– for example the likelihood of flooding, who would maintain any defences, the effect of the number of houses on flood risk, the implications of concreting over of the land. As Burstow holds the highest risk of flooding (apart from the Caterham Bourne which has a different geological problem) in the area we feel that this must be predominately addressed and added to the Local Plan. The Plan should include plans to protect us, by realising that the area around the Parish requires on-going consistent maintenance programs that have the flexibility to adopt to changes in weather patterns

Health and Wellbeing

The District in general has appeal in relation to the pleasantness of its environment; i.e. 94% of the district is greenbelt, which for the majority of residents is seen as highly desirable and a strong reason to be a resident in the district. Open space, nature and natural beauty can all be directly linked to a general positive wellbeing.

Green Belt in the District must be protected and indiscriminate development of greenbelt is undesirable and not supported by the communities situated within it. The District Council must be very careful in its assessments of the various parcels of land it divided the area up into. It is not enough to decide that a particular parcel does not contribute sufficiently across all the measuring criteria and thus remove it from Green Belt and permit development for housing. This whilst by letter adheres to the assertion there will be no building in the green belt is to all intent and purposes an underhand resolution to the perceived shortage of available land

No development of green belt should be considered until all other options, such as brownfield have been fully developed.

Village settlements within the greenbelt, in this case Smallfield do not have the infrastructure to deal with significant increases in population size. At present, villagers can at times wait up to 3 weeks (to see their preferred choice of doctor) for a medical appointment at the local doctor's surgery. Any increase in village size will further impact on this situation and negatively impact on health and wellbeing.

As housing increases and the density required is made ever greater by Central Government the importance of ready access to open spaces and outdoor recreational facilities cannot be underestimated. Rising obesity levels, episodes of mental illness and the stress and strains of affording high priced housing and longer commuting to the workplace mean that it is vitally important to have sufficient high quality areas available for residents to use. Unfortunately incidents such as the recent Planning Inspectorate decision to overturn the refusal of an application to build 51 dwellings adjacent to (and with access across) the QEII Field in Smallfield reduce the availability of spaces and put lives at risk. Parents may not feel comfortable allowing their children to play on the open space with the danger from in excess of 200 traffic movements daily taking place beside them.

Smallfield, and much of Tandridge, given its high level of greenbelt is home to many pastimes that improve people's health and wellbeing; horse riding, rambling, dog walking, cycling etc.; destruction of the greenbelt will negatively impact on people enjoying these pass times and make them more dangerous to engage in within the borough.

Roads are getting busier and vehicles travel faster and plans need to be put in place to make the enjoyment of rural pastimes safer. For example, insisting that when areas are developed footpaths, bridleways etc. are added, to ensure greater safety of people in the area given the increase in traffic that the developments bring. Consideration could be given to opening up rights of way across land that

the District owns to ensure more people can access open space and rural pastimes safely. Burstow Parish Council would be happy to assist in this. This will also help to address obesity issues and engender a healthier way of life.

At present, even simply walking in the village can be a hairy experience given the number of HGV movements around Smallfield; because the speed at which they travel, the wind gusts they create and the closeness of the vehicle to the pavement walkers are already at risk. Horse riders and cyclists are also put in greater danger when the number of vehicle movements increase due to size of village and developments. Where possible, such as the middle section of Redehall Road and Plough Road heading east, the introduction of pavements would allow residents to walk to and from the village centre more readily.

The stresses, anxiety and emotional disturbance caused by flooding of homes and amenities are great. Knowing there would not be indiscriminate development of open spaces would help alleviate some of this worry.

The East Surrey CCG already identified depression as a significant issue and it is in fact the 3rd worst across Surrey CCG's – Identifying the positive links of open space, recreational activity space etc in addressing the mental health issues and wellbeing experienced in Tandridge would have a positive impact.

The lack of public transport infrastructure negatively impacts on people's ability to feel engaged, happy and socialised. There are few, if any, leisure opportunities in many villages and so people need to travel to access leisure provision. Unfortunately Surrey County Council and the bus providers have reduced the buses that serve villages – Smallfield has seen a massive reduction in its bus service and as such people will become increasingly isolated, which will negatively impact on their health and wellbeing and ability to have an acceptable work life balance.

We would ask the District Council what the assessment of the local Clinical commissioning Group is with regard to the status of the Doctors Surgeries in Burstow and whether the supply of medical services in the area is sufficient and what would be required in order to service the additional homes being proposed in the area.

Natural Environment

The plan document highlights inappropriate uses, biodiversity, green belt and AONB's etc but makes no mention of low-lying areas, watersheds and flood plains. It is critical that all planning considerations and decisions ensure that no further flood impact occurs in areas already blighted.

Proximity to motorways (M25 and M23) and to Gatwick airport means that there are high levels of emissions in the area. The presence of trees provides the best natural defence against this problem. Forestry should be encouraged and developed in the green belt rather than allowing planning applications to reduce vegetation and increase emissions.

Climate Change

The impact of climate change in Burstow and Smallfield could be felt in many ways; not least the risk of increased flooding in the area. Large sections of the Parish are designated flood plain areas and in the recent flooding of 2013/14 over 65 homes suffered internal flooding, some on more than one occasion. Regard should be given to the potential impact of climate change when considering building more homes in the area.

Air quality is under stress from the proximity to Gatwick Airport. Residents have commented on the smell of aviation fuel in the air when there is low cloud. The M23 runs adjacent to the edge of the village and high numbers of HGVs use the small roads through Burstow as a means to access the M23 and avoid congestion. In addition there are several waste processing sites in the area that have the potential to cause dust and do add HGV traffic.

Due to the rural nature of the village and the continued erosion of public transport that serves there is a large reliance on the car to travel around. Additional homes being built in the area will only exacerbate all of these issues.

Heritage

Heritage sites and natural habitats need to be protected in all circumstances and must not be altered in any way unless to offer further protection. The local plan states planning for 'major development' should be objected to when in fact all development other than what is sympathetic to the habitat itself such should be objected to without exception. Our heritage sites are what make the area special and attract visitors and tourism to the area, which needs to be encouraged for employment of our young residents.

We have 250 ancient woodlands which is a huge amount considering the whole country only has 2% overall. The habitat provides protection and homes to butterflies, small mammals and birds all of which are on the decline in the UK and need protection. Preservation sites such as 'Harewood' in Outwood, which is owned by the National Trust, increase visitor levels into the rural area which in turn supports local business and local employment. Our hedgerows that are so often seen in Tandridge also provide protection and habitat for wildlife so reducing our green belt in any way would be against policy and would also be of great detriment to the local area and the UK as a whole.

Design and Safety

Areas of antisocial behaviours and criminal damage are not limited/restricted to the larger built up areas. Smallfield is a village classified as a larger rural settlement and yet over the past number of months has been plagued with not only antisocial behaviour but also more serious criminal damage, breaking and entering to steal from shops, armed robbery of the local co-op and arson attacks. Numerous catapult and air rifle attacks have cost tens of thousands of pounds worth of damage to property and a high level of fear has been introduced to the local community by the repeated attacks. It is a small village and yet has had higher crime statistics than towns such as Reigate or Horley.

The design of housing estates with cut-throughs and had-a-ways has aided the perpetrators in avoiding detection and the lack of street lighting has allowed them to move around without identification.

Though the reduction in the police force is not attributable to the District Council funds raised through CIL could be passed to Parish Councils to assist them in crime prevention such as CCTV installations and funding streetlights.

Town Centres/Retail and Leisure

Burstow is well served by a number of small and mostly independent shops, which cater adequately for basic needs. However it has become increasingly difficult to find parking in the village and recently people have said they only shop infrequently due to the difficulties. Additional parking near to the centre of the village would alleviate pressure on the nearby roads allowing for more free-flowing traffic and boost the economic return to the local area by encouraging local shopping. As a by-product this would help reduce the number of traffic moments in the locality too. It is important, not just in meeting local needs, but also to promote economic development in the area that new shops are driven by the demands of local residents rather than what a developer imagines is required or desired.

Leisure and recreational activities are limited in the village and almost all require you to travel out-of-town to access them. Lack of public transport, especially at weekends and evenings leads to social isolation and/or dependence on private cars.

Better parking provision in towns, with no or low charges would encourage shoppers to visit. This may in turn attract a more varied form of retailer and boost the Districts ability to compete against nearby towns such as Crawley and Redhill.