

Guildford Greenbelt Guardians Press announcement

29 January 2014

Draft Housing Market Assessment inaccurate and not fit for purpose

New Petition calls for draft to be scrapped

Guildford's draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment [SHMA] is not fit for purpose, according to the borough's environmental campaign group Guildford Greenbelt Guardians [GGG].

"The consultant's report for the SHMA did not follow relevant guidelines and is inaccurate," says Susan Parker of GGG.

A petition calling for Guildford Borough Council to scrap the draft report and for proper procedures to be followed has been launched by GGG.

In 2010 GBC successfully challenged the South East plan allocation of 422 homes - a year on the basis that this would prejudice the character of the borough. It cannot now be acceptable to have a draft SHMA which proposes building 800 homes a year.

GGG wrote formally to GBC in December, to all councillors and to the planning department, explaining our concern that the parameters for the SHMA needed to be subject to consultation with local people and community groups as part of government guidelines.

There is also a legal requirement to consult and cooperate with other local communities, and failure to do this has been the reason for a number of other Local Plans being rejected.

The consultants did not assess actual housing need within Guildford, or consult with parish councils or community associations, in order to assess demand.

There are a number of errors of calculation within the consultation document. Of more concern, the consultants have inflated the projected number of homes required on a subjective basis without adequate foundation for their argument.

In our petition we state:

"We the undersigned petition Guildford Borough Council to prepare a new SHMA and reject the consultant's draft report as inadequate.

The consultant's report is unsound as the foundation for a draft SHMA. It contains errors, subjective assessment and manipulated data, and so needs to be redone. It is subject to challenge.

Guildford needs an objectively prepared SHMA which is proportionate and realistic, meets proper requirements and will not be overturned, and will be useable in the context of the Local Plan.

We therefore petition the councillors to prepare a new SHMA as soon as possible in consultation with community groups and parish councils."

Susan Parker commented:

"The draft report gives a very high proposal for building needs of 800 homes. This is based on information which the consultants admit has been manipulated. The impact of this increases apparent demand. We ask, on behalf of the people of Guildford, that a new SHMA is commissioned which is based on the actual need for our borough".

Mike Bruton commented:

"The draft SHMA is based on subjective so called ' facts' but is as meaningful as astrology. These 'facts' swirled around like flocks of starlings, in the recent GBC presentation at GLive".

Notes to Editors:

1. Guildford Greenbelt Guardians

20 groups from Guildford's towns and villages have united to form an organisation in defence of the borough's Green Belt. These include parish councils, residents' associations and campaigning groups.

We believe:

- Brownfield land should be used for building before any green fields
- Housing numbers must reflect real local need, not developers' wishes
- Existing protection for the Green Belt and the AONB should stand
- Green fields matter - they are not just building land
- The Metropolitan Green Belt is for the benefit of all

Our members include:

Ash Green Residents' Association
Beechcroft Drive Residents' Association
Bookham and Effingham Together - Hands off the Green Belt
Burrows Cross Area Residents' Association
Compton Parish Council
Horsley Countryside Preservation Society
Jacobswell Residents' Association
Keep the Horsleys in the Green Belt
Normandy Action Group
Ockham and Hatchford Residents' Association
Ockham Parish Council
Poyle Road Campaign Group (Tongham)
Ripley Parish Council
Save Hog's Back
Save Shere, Gomshall and Abinger
Shalford Conservation Society
Residents of Wood Street Village
The Ripley Society
Westborough, Broadacres & District Residents Association
Wisley Airfield Action Group

A number of other groups are going through formal procedures to join us and we expect our numbers to increase.

2. Draft petition

We the undersigned petition Guildford Borough Council to prepare a new SHMA and reject the consultant's draft report as inadequate.

The consultant's report is unsound as the foundation for a draft SHMA. It contains errors, subjective assessment and manipulated data, and so needs to be redone. It is subject to challenge.

Guildford needs an objectively prepared SHMA which is proportionate and realistic, meets proper requirements and will not be overturned, and will be useable in the context of the Local Plan.

We therefore petition the councillors to prepare a new SHMA as soon as possible in consultation with community groups and parish councils.