

Report Back from Housing Group

Strong consensus in group that:

1. In it to win it!

GBC should make a focused, well justified case for reducing Guildford's housing target in the SE Plan with a view to succeeding

- not just go through the motions of objecting
- eg economic growth proposed around Reading has been reduced because a good case was made that flood risk was unacceptable.

8. Geography

in the case of Guildford, its character, geographical position and constraints militate against major development on the scale envisaged without unacceptable harm.

It does not make sense to try and tackle London's housing shortage by trying to cram so much London overspill housing into Guildford.

This is a historic, congested town squeezed into a gap in the Downs, dissected by floodplain and surrounded by protected countryside and wildlife areas (European Special Protection Areas, Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – same level of landscape protection as a National Park, Green Belt).

3. Growth beyond local needs

A clear breakdown of housing need is required. We support sensitive provision of housing to meet local needs even though this will be a challenge. The Inspectors' report is clear that housing to accommodate inward migration, particularly from London, is a major factor driving up the targets. We need to use our limited space for housing wisely and to allow for growth in future years.

4. Give the full picture

Instead of referring to an extra hundred houses each year above some previous target, set out the full, cumulative impact. We face well above a 25% increase in the number of households in Guildford town. We would have a minimum of 5,940 homes in the town centre and suburbs, and 2,000 homes (plus provision for 2,110 more) in

Green Belt. We would also have significant “windfall” development (applications not identified in advance in a plan) on top of this which wouldn’t count towards these targets.

5. Highlight sustainability appraisal

GBC should draw upon the Government’s own appraisal of the SE Plan which tells us that quality of life will deteriorate. The appraisal suggests no increase in housing targets within 5km of the Special Protection Area for 5 years. This would include much of Guildford. It concludes air and water quality and congestion will get worse. We’ll suffer more water shortages. More development will be at risk of flooding. Historic town centres, countryside and wildlife areas will be damaged. It will take more than a few new community centres and road improvements to tackle these impacts.

6. No to being a regional housing hub

Yes, Guildford is a *transport* hub but oppose the new proposal that hubs should be a focus for very significant housing growth (far beyond local needs) and that Guildford should be a particularly major hub (alongside Woking). Flexibility is needed in the role of hubs.

7. Not just Green Belt

- important though that is

Need to protect the qualities of all three elements of Guildford: the historic centre, the established residential areas and the valued countryside. All three contribute to the economic success of Guildford as well as to quality of life.

8. Reinstate protection of character

The Secretary of State has removed wording in policies (that Inspectors had proposed) to protect the character of established residential areas. This Plan will replace the Structure Plan which provided much needed guidance on balancing provision of higher density development and protection of established character. The new Plan just encourages quality design for new, high density development. Robust policies to protect valued existing character will be essential in maintaining Guildford’s economic success during a period of major change.