

Dear Member

Green Belt

As you may have gathered elsewhere, our local treasured Green Belt (70% or so of our area) is again under pressure. RBWM's Core Strategy Plan (formerly Local Development Plan) failed its Public Examination in September in common with various other Councils. Six out of its 26 policies were rejected, one reason given being its failure to consider options for Green Belt use. Representations have been made to the Planning Inspectorate to reconsider their rejections, citing inter alia that 94% of the Public Consultation wanted to preserve the Green Belt. The Core Strategy Plan was many years in gestation and rethinking it will entail much cost and delay. The RBWM Head of Planning will report the up-to-date position when he meets SPAE on 20th November.

Planning Targets & H5

The Government have re-emphasised that targets are only minimum figures and that it will reward Councils who exceed theirs. The H5 (Housing oversupply barrier) RBWM October 2005 resolution is now dead in the water, and we are faced with a minimum target of 6,920 homes in the draft South East Plan for the RBWM area over the next 20 years.

SPA & SANGS

Four recent Appeals in Ascot and Sunninghill have been lost on SPA (Special Protection Area) grounds, and it is debatable whether this area, which is further away from Chobham Common, can continue to sustain SPA objections. Up-to-date information will emerge from our November meeting with the Planners. Sunningdale, which is well within the 5km circumference from the Common, can still support SPA objections based on this proximity but the position will probably stay fluid until at least the South East Plan is finalised (anticipated Autumn, 2008).

It is also disturbing that, in the above Appeals, Inspectors did not reject arguments

that, in the context of the Appeal Sites, areas at Ascot Heath, Windsor Great Park and Swinley Park (Kingsride/Buttersteep/Englemere Pond) should also be treated as SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces). Whilst some planning authorities are preparing "Mini Delivery Plans" covering this, there has been no progress (of which SPAE is aware) in RBWM doing so due to lack of suitable land within its ownership or control.

Assessor Burley recommended to the SE Plan Panel three zones at 400 m, 1 km and 5 km, with no development within the 400 m zone, small developments up to 10 houses allowed within the 1 km zone and all but larger developments allowed within the 5 km zone. The Panel may accept this recommendation, but in the meantime the Appeal logjam is easing by the developers bringing forward successful Appeals in the outer limits of the 5 km zone. No certainty is anticipated until the SE Plan is finalised, but we must anticipate losing more Appeals in the meantime. Inspectors are likely to take into consideration our various alternative open spaces available, which need not be treated as SANGS.

Mailing

We have successfully trialled multiple emailing to members whose addresses we hold and aim, where possible, to email this Newsletter. If you now have a paper copy in your hand, please consider letting SPAE (secretary@spae.org) have your email address.

A Happy Christmas to you all.



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Chairman



Parish Reports

SUNNINGDALE

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Another period where applications for large one-for-one replacement properties, many with accommodation over the garages, held sway. This is in contrast to the predominance of multi-apartment replacement developments of two years ago. Perhaps the market is changing. Only Ashish Nivas, in Sunning Avenue, featured again as an application for flats and has been refused by RBWM. Many of these applications cite the poor insulation of the present property as a valid reason for demolition, and it is good to read in design statements of superior energy efficiency and sustainability of the redevelopment with the minimum carbon footprint possible.

The developers of the prestigious Charters (ex de Beers) site, yet to implement the approved new car park for Charters School, have won on appeal a concession for reopening the Hancocks Mount entrance for its residents' sole use and have applied for further building in the Green Belt.

SUNNINGHILL & ASCOT

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Applications for the replacement of single dwellings with apartment blocks, although fewer, are still occurring. Developers have applied to replace Woodberry Down, St Mary's Road with 5 luxury apartments (refused but now at appeal), replace Rosewood, Burleigh Road with 8, 9 or 10 flats (all 3 applications refused but yet another attempt to demolish this attractive dwelling), replace Manor Steps, London Road with 12 flats and Ridgefield and Milestone House, Winkfield Road with 12 flats. After successful appeals for 12 flats at Red Gables, St Georges Lane, 14 at the Ascot Motor Works, Winkfield Road and 16 at Brockenhurst House and Birch Common, Brockenhurst Road (all within 5km of the Chobham Common SPA) we cannot now expect that new appeals will be dismissed on the grounds of harm, alone or in combination, to the SPA.

The application to cause most local concern, however, has been one to extend and reconfigure the empty shop premises at 1-3 High Street, Sunninghill (formerly "The Stock Exchange") and to open it as a convenience store. Although submitted by Wilby Developments Ltd it appeared it might be designed to be a local outlet for a major supermarket (confirmed when a notice of party wall excavation was served by Tesco Ltd). The Society strongly opposed the application on several grounds but the Borough confined its refusal to the adequacy of parking and delivery vehicle access. Ominously we have recently been advised that the applicant has appealed against refusal and has asked for a Public Inquiry.

WINKFIELD

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Good news, bad news is a suitable summary of the fact that Bracknell Forest's Core Strategy has been approved in principle. You may recall that the draft list of site allocations did include potential large residential proposals in Winkfield (eg Lavender Park), which were all excluded from the preferred options list submitted as part of the Core Strategy. This was good news.

Unfortunately the bad news is that the list of preferred sites was excluded from the approval and could therefore be up for grabs again. Additionally it is possible, but not yet confirmed, that BFBC may be asked to find space for a further 2,000 dwellings, in addition to the 12,000 already agreed, in the Core Strategy period up to 2026. This will obviously put more pressure on all potential sites, including those in Green Belt. I say this because we detect a two-faced approach coming from central government on their intentions: on the one hand, warm words are the feature of ministerial utterances on the Green Belt, whilst local authorities appear to be under some pressure to consider further erosion for residential purposes. We remain vigilant.