

Earl's plan for 1,000 homes on golf course

Surrey Advertiser 6th May 2016

By James Watkins

A NEW proposal for around 1,000 homes, a new school and sports facilities has been made for green belt land in Guildford.

Clandon Golf Course in Merrow has been earmarked for the development, a site which although has been mooted in the past for potential new housing, was absent from the latest version of the draft local plan.

The new document outlining the project has been put together by the consultancy WYG on behalf of the Earl of Onslow and the trustees of Clandon Estate as a response to the local plan consultation.

As well as the 1,000 new homes, the site would include an expansion to the park and ride, a nature conservation area, a cricket pitch, and a school.

In a message which accompanies the plans from the Earl of Onslow, it says that the development, named Onslow Park, 'could be a major piece in the complicated housing jigsaw that Guildford borough is currently working so hard to put together.'

"I personally and wholeheartedly believe this because it is a simple site that will be easy to deliver very quickly, it is a sustainable site benefiting from great transport links into both Guildford and London, to West Clandon station and the park and ride, it has been designed to be a comprehensive multi-purpose solution that will provide many different opportunities in leisure, business and education for residents," the message said.

The Earl said there is one negative to the plan as the site is green belt.

"It is a great sadness to have to utilise the green belt but as has been proved by many independent surveyor it is today a necessary fact," he said.

"Therefore a most important decision that has to be made in answer to the question - what would be the best use of our precious green belt?

"In order to understand this question, elected representatives have the immensely hard job of interpreting how the electorate will want to live in the next 100 years and the foundation of the

answer to this question has to be sustainability."

Merrow Residents' Association (MRA) has previously raised concerns about the proposals to build the new development, and had a meeting this week to discuss the latest submission.

Keith Meldrum on behalf of MRA said: "The AGM of the MRA overwhelmingly rejected a very similar proposal from the trustees of the Clandon Estate in March 2015 and the executive committee fully endorsed this clear view from their membership at a meeting on the May 3 2016.

"The executive committee see no reason for this discussion document to have been published shortly after Guildford Borough Council has produced their land availability assessment where it is stated that the land adjacent to Merrow Park and Ride had been assessed in the green belt and Countryside Study but was within the 'high sensitivity green belt' and for that reason had been discounted for development."

Whilst the 1,000 home plan was missing from the identified sites in the local plan, the

draft document did include proposals for 2,100 homes in Wisley, 2,000 homes at Gosden Hill Farm, 1,800 at Blackwell Farm, and 1,100 in Normandy and Flexford.

The Onslow Park document states long term management of the environment and parkland would be undertaken by a trust under the stewardship of the Earl of Onslow.

"Onslow Park would provide for a balanced community with services that help support the needs of Merrow and the wider town with an emphasis on social, economic and environmental enhancement," the document said.

"Hence the proposals include a mix of housing, employment, an education campus, new sports and recreation facilities and well located, low carbon, sustainable homes."

The Clandon Park Estate Office has said the proposal is not a planning application, but a 'vision document to help explain and portray the possibilities of this particular site and its benefits to potential residents and the Guildford community at large.'