



MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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Ms Anne Tait
Locum Clerk
West Clandon Parish Council
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cc Terence Patrick, Chairman West Clandon Parish Council
Chris Dean, West Clandon Parish Councillor

31st March 2020

Dear Ms Tait

Draft West Clandon Neighbourhood Plan

I am writing on behalf of the Merrow Residents' Association to comment on the West Clandon draft Neighbourhood Plan. We do so since 60% of the Gosden Hill Farm site is in the parish of Clandon and Merrow will be substantially affected by the development of Gosden Hill Farm.

You may also recollect that I attended the West Clandon Parish Council meeting on the 12th February and spoke not only about your Neighbourhood Plan but also and more specifically about the development of Gosden Hill Farm. I expressed the view that it was important to put infrastructure first and that we were very concerned about the implications for all the additional traffic the Gosden Hill Farm site would generate.

We are very concerned that the draft Neighbourhood Plan seems to concentrate so much on the village of West Clandon and the need to have a clear separation from the Gosden Hill Farm site and comparatively little on the Gosden Hill Farm site itself and what should be included in your Plan to address the impact of the development with particular reference to traffic. The Plan covers the traffic mitigation measures that could be covered by the £1m in Infrastructure project LRN24 of the GBC Local Plan but the most obvious mitigating measure to reduce traffic through the village hasn't been included which is to argue for a direct connection between Gosden Hill Farm and Garlicks's Arch. This effectively ensures that northbound Gosden Hill Farm traffic bypasses West Clandon.

Others will have pointed out that the draft Plan covers areas and issues outside the Parish of West Clandon. We find that surprising, especially without any contact or discussion with the neighbouring communities.

Policy 2 The Strategic Site at Gosden Hill Farm

Paragraph 2.1 states

"Development shall not commence until details of the access arrangements to the A3 have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority."

We find this policy unbelievably weak since it doesn't state what access arrangements must be put in place.

As you will be aware Policy A26 of the GBC Local Plan Requirements (1) requires a two way junction with the A3. We take the view that this must be developed at the same time that the site is developed and must be available for use by construction vehicles. We appreciate that the Highways Authority take the view that a 4 way junction is not necessary with the A3 on the Gosden Hill Farm site. It is also noteworthy that no improvements to the A3 at Gosden Hill Farm are being proposed by the Department of Transport in their recent publication 'Road Investment Strategy 2: 2020-2025'. That being the case we take the view that the connector road covered by Requirements (2) of Policy A26 between the Gosden Hill Farm site and the A247 at Garlicks Arch should be put in place to route northbound traffic from Gosden Hill Farm direct to the new slip roads at Garlick's Arch to avoid this traffic going through either Burpham or Merrow. As you will appreciate without either a 4 way junction to the A3 at Gosden Hill Farm or a link road with the A247 at Garlick's Arch there will be a massive increase in traffic in Burpham and also Merrow which is neither appreciated nor addressed in this draft Neighbourhood Plan. This traffic will be generated from the 1800 houses, the two schools, the new Park and Ride and the new railway station proposed for this site. Moreover, much of the traffic into Merrow is equally likely to be seeking a northerly access onto the A3, which will take them along the A25 and onto the A247 through West Clandon. This additional traffic would not only be to the detriment of Merrow, it would also be to the detriment of West Clandon.

Paragraph 2.2 states:

"Improvements to Merrow Lane and Park Lane, including the railway bridge at Merrow Park and the link to the A3 should be evaluated and implemented as necessary."

Since Park Lane is outside West Clandon Parish we fail to see why this road has been included at all.

However since it is covered in the draft Plan we feel that we must comment on this weak and unhelpful paragraph. There can be no realistic possibility that the railway bridge between Burpham and Merrow will be improved or widened. It would also have been useful if some detail had been provided on what improvements the authors of the Plan had in mind for Park Lane. We take the view, as indicated above, that a link road between Gosden Hill Farm and the A247 would ensure that traffic wouldn't need to travel up Park Lane to the A25 and through Clandon to the new slip roads at Garlick's Arch but would use the direct link road route south of the A3.

The Strategic Development Framework – Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) raises the possibility of closing part of Merrow Lane to vehicular traffic (ref. SDF SPD document Fig 25). The MRA have commented to GBC on this SPD as follows:- 'We are concerned at the suggestion of a new entrance to the site in Merrow Lane close to the railway line. We have been in discussion with GBC about this gateway which crosses common land that hadn't been used for at least 20 years until it was opened up illegally by Network Rail in 2014 in order to get access to their substation. Brand new aluminium gates have now been installed even though GBC confirmed that the gateway would be returned to its original state after Network Rail had completed their work on the sub-station. To make matters worse Martin Grant Homes who own Gosden Hill Farm have provided evidence to GBC that the gateway which crosses common land has been used for agricultural purposes although we have not been able to see this evidence and are currently challenging the GBC response to our FOI request to have sight of the evidence. We have clear photographic evidence that the gateway has not been used for agricultural purposes for many years and therefore any such claim is spurious. In any event and notwithstanding our FOI challenge we object to this gateway being used for access to Gosden Hill Farm. The access to the site should either use the existing farm track to the existing farm buildings or from the road adjacent to London Road to the north of the site- see figure 29'.

We went on to say 'In addition we object to the proposal that the current access to the farm and farm buildings should be restricted to access to Gosden Hill Farm and about 100 homes. This appears to be an attempt to construct a small secluded development within the site- possibly of superior homes surrounding the existing farm. This shouldn't be permitted and this access to the site should serve the whole site and should be one of two major access points. It follows that we do not support the proposal that pedestrians and cyclists in parts of Merrow Lane should have priority but that the lane should be for the use of all.

The proposed access to the site on the south west, if it is retained, should be for the use of pedestrians and cyclists only for which specific consent from the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State in Defra would be required as the gateway crosses common land’.

May we ask that these concerns about Merrow Lane are considered by your Parish Council in the hope that they will support our concerns and include the gist of our proposals in your Plan. We believe that there is the opportunity for mutually supportive options- and that this approach would also be the most likely to find support from GBC.

Policy 7 Non-Statutory Community Aspirations

Paragraph 7.4 refers to

“Improved and new off-road cycle and pedestrian routes to Merrow and Burpham.”

It is very difficult to comment on this in the absence of any detail.

Paragraph 7.5 states that:

“An evaluation of the use of Merrow/Park Lane linking with a new A3 junction as an alternative route to the Street for heavy traffic.”

These roads lie outside the parish of West Clandon and therefore we suggest that this reference should not appear in your Plan.

This seems to suggest that heavy traffic rather than going through West Clandon for the A3 should be diverted to Merrow and Park Lane to join the A3 at Gosden Hill Farm. We cannot support any such proposal not least because of the signal controlled bottleneck railway bridge between Merow and Burpham which is already a significant pinch point. We have tried to explain in this response why it is so mutually important to lessen and not increase the traffic load at this point.

We hope and trust that West Clandon Parish Council will take these comments into account in the re-draft of their Neighbourhood Plan and particularly give consideration to our suggestions which we see as beneficial for both communities. If you have any queries I shall be very happy to answer them.

Yours sincerely

Keith C Meldrum CB