

## Housing

### **Issue 1: How can Guildford Borough meet its housing requirement?**

The responses show a clear preference for Option 5a (the use of employment land for housing). The majority of respondents who identified this option as their preferred choice believes there to be an excess of employment land in the Borough, which, in light of the requirement to build new houses, could be more appropriately used as housing. The second choice of respondents was option 5b (a mixture of housing and employment land). This choice tied in with many comments received concerning sustainable communities and the desire to create 'communities' rather than 'houses'.

### **Issue 2: Where is the best location for new housing?**

Respondents identified options 1 and 3 (urban intensification and new village settlements in the countryside) as their least preferred options. Many respondents felt that urban intensification and higher densities could potentially destroy the character of Guildford and cause friction between residents. It was highlighted that Guildford is a County Town, and its character should be reflective of this. Respondents were fearful of Guildford becoming an 'urban conglomerate' and 'giant urban sprawl'. Many respondents suggested that to reduce journeys to work new housing development should be closely located to employment sites.

Possible sites for housing were noted, these included; Wisley Airfield, Pirbright Road, land at Liddington Hall Farm, Lancaster Volvo Car Dealership in Pirbright, land adjoining Guildford Cathedral, Slyfield and Buryfield. An alternative option suggested was to use countryside beyond the Green Belt for future housing developments, rather than Green Belt land itself.

### **Issue 3: Is there any public support for extension into the Green Belt?**

There remains extensive public objection to the release of Green Belt land to satisfy the housing requirement and a strong desire for all development to be on brown field sites. Respondents did recognise the need for a mix of the proposed options, ensuring development is sensitive to surrounding areas.

The majority of responses from housing developers questioned whether Guildford could meet its housing requirement in the urban area, and suggested that the Green Belt would possibly have to be used.

### **General comments**

Many respondents felt aggrieved by the housing requirement set out by the Government and urged the Council to resist it. Many considered the larger scale and drew attention to empty housing in the northern parts of the UK.

Many respondents greatly stressed the need for infrastructure and service improvements to cater for the growth. Most chose to focus on the current difficulties of movement at peak times, and questioned how Guildford would cope with extra houses, people and cars. Many respondents recognised the need for future housing developments to encourage alternative modes of transport to the car.

### **Conclusion**

There is a great amount of resentment towards the Government's housing requirement for Guildford, and concern about how the town's infrastructure will cope and fears for the character of the town. However, respondents have identified a clear preference for using employment land for housing as one of the preferred methods to meet the housing requirement.

## **Affordable Housing**

### **Issue 1: How can we provide more affordable housing?**

Respondents have identified option 5a (use of employment land for housing – redeveloping or converting some of our existing commercial/employment sites for housing) as their preferred option (18%), as Guildford is perceived as having a substantial amount of vacant employment land. This option is closely followed by option 4 (15%) (allocate more housing for key workers), option 2 (15%) (increase the % of affordable housing on housing development sites), option 5 (14%) (require developers of employment sites to contribute towards providing affordable housing) and option 1 (14%) (lower the thresholds for affordable housing requirement). Respondents generally supported option 3 (13%) (the introduction of a tariff).

### **Issue 2: Should we allow development in the countryside/Green Belt for affordable housing?**

There was very little support for options 5b (permit affordable housing sites in the countryside) and 5c (in the Green Belt). Many respondents felt that the Green Belt should be maintained and not sacrificed even for 'worthwhile' causes such as affordable housing.

### **Issue 3: Should we increase the amount of affordable housing developers are asked to provide where the economics of development will allow?**

Not many respondents specifically focused on economics, however, many respondents did agree with option 2 (increase the % of affordable housing on housing development sites) and option 1 (lower the thresholds for affordable housing requirement).

### **General Comments**

Many respondents raised questions relating to key workers, suggesting that the definition of a key worker should be extended to include other jobs apart from nurses, teachers and police officers.

The majority of respondents recognised the great need for affordable housing in Guildford Borough and urged the Council to provide more. Respondents did, however, request a definition of affordable, as many respondents perceived affordable houses in Guildford Borough as out of many potential owners' price range. There is evidence of cynicism regarding affordable housing. Respondents raised questions and expressed opinions relating to the usefulness of affordable housing and its lifespan in terms of whether it can ever be sold on by an 'owner' at market price.

A few respondents suggested that greater consideration must be given to the housing market and economics in the UK and the South East to find the most suitable solution. It was proposed that the overall problem should be addressed, i.e. the actual cost of private housing, rather than simply providing an alternative for those who are unable to afford it.

### **Conclusion**

Despite some uncertainty regarding the value of current affordable housing, the majority of respondents identified a great need in Guildford Borough for more 'truly' affordable housing, and support options 1-5a as methods to achieve it.

## Other Housing

### **Issue 1: How and where should accommodation for Gypsies and the travelling community be provided?**

*“They should as far as possible be treated in a fair manner like other residents. Their needs should not be seen as exceptional or as exceeding those of other residents with respect to land use and should not warrant release of Green Belt land or AONB. Full use should be made of the existing two sites.”*

This direct quote from one respondent is a fair summary of the general feeling expressed by the majority of respondents. Option 1 (to provide small Council owned permanent and/or transit sites in Greenfield locations) is the preferred option of respondents, as it is believed that the Council would retain control and be able to set standards for cleanliness and maintenance of the site. However, many who made this selection were concerned about the use of Greenfield land, suggesting Brown field land would be more suitable.

Many respondents selected option 2 (support gypsies and the travelling community in obtaining planning permission for their own sites in appropriate locations), however, a definition of the word ‘appropriate’ was frequently requested alongside unease over Gypsies and Travellers being given preferential treatment when applying for planning permission.

Respondents were concerned about the method of distinguishing between eligible residents and those who could be on a housing register. This issue was raised along side concerns over whether there is a need for more sites in Guildford, and whether these should be of a permanent nature. Many suggested that if more permanent Council owned sites were created residents must be aware of both their rights and responsibilities.

Few respondents named locations for possible new sites, however two respondents brought forward Wisley Airfield and land just past St Luke’s hospital.

## Economy

### **Issue 1: Is the amount and type of offices, factories and warehousing adequate?**

Many respondents focused on the amount of vacant office space in the Borough, suggesting that it would be better used for housing. (19% of respondents agreed with option 1; release employment land for housing). Respondents felt that the current housing need is far greater than the need for office space. A few respondents, however, did express concern at releasing too much employment land for housing, as the economy often fluctuates and is relatively unpredictable.

Changes in future work patterns were also raised as a relevant issue, as more people now work from home and many offices use 'hot-desking' practises. Respondents claimed that this would mean less employment land would be needed in the future.

A few respondents commented that when commercial applications are submitted, consideration should be given to the amount of commercial floor space in close proximity, to avoid a build-up of vacant office space. It was also suggested that the scale of office development is often too large, and that smaller commercial units may prove to be more successful. Many respondents resented Guildford being too commercialised, with one respondent stating, "Guildford is historically a market town, not a mini-London".

### **Issue 2: Should we aim to balance the number of jobs to workers available in the Borough?**

There was little agreement with option 2 (aim to match the number of jobs to workers available). Many respondents questioned how this could be achieved and others stated that such balances should be left to market forces.

### **Issue 3: Guildford has the potential to be a quality tourist destination. Do we want to encourage this?**

Option 3 (develop Guildford as a quality tourist destination) was selected by the most respondents (22%). The benefits that tourists bring to the economy was recognised by many respondents, however, many concerns were raised in terms of transport and parking. A few respondents did not foresee Guildford being a quality tourist destination due to a lack of unique attractions, movement problems and too many chain stores and not enough independent shops, which tourists often enjoy.

Despite the enthusiasm shown for developing Guildford as a tourist destination, many respondents did not wish Guildford to become a major tourist destination on a par with, for example, Windsor.

### **Issue 4: There is a lack of hotel accommodation in the Borough.**

There was general agreement (18%) with option 4 (encourage more hotel development). There were mixed views though as to the type of hotel accommodation needed, varying from small independents to a large 5\* hotel. One respondent suggested that vacant office space on the Portsmouth Road could be used for a hotel and conference centre.

### **Issue 5: Are we losing our agricultural industry?**

Option 5 (assist farmers, horticulturalists and rural workers to diversify their businesses) was selected by a large proportion of respondents (22%). There was also a request for more Farmers' Markets.

## **General Comments**

Many respondents commented that if commercial and tourist sites are to be successful, great improvements need to be made to the transport network.

## **Conclusion**

There is an overriding feeling amongst respondents that there is a substantial amount of empty office space in the Borough that would be more efficiently used as housing. However, these views coincide with concerns about unpredictable market forces and accessibility.

## **Shopping**

### **Issue 1: Should we provide more shopping facilities given the soon to be built Friary Centre? If so, what type is needed?**

Many responses stated that further shopping provision is not required in the town centre due to the new Friary shopping centre.

### **Issue 2: What type of buildings and mix of uses would you like to see in the town centre?**

Option 2 (encourage a variety of uses, such as leisure, housing or entertainment as well as retail in the town centre) was clearly the preferred option from respondents.

A number of respondents considered that a wider range of shops is required in the town centre, particularly grocers and butchers. An improved market and more Farmers' Markets were also requested. A suggestion was made that North Street should be pedestrianised.

Respondents were keen to encourage smaller retailers within Guildford town centre. Specialist shops were also highlighted as an area that could be developed.

### **Issue 3: Where should new development in the town centre be focused?**

Many responses sought another town centre supermarket, preferably at the bottom of town. It was suggested that retail and leisure uses should be provided on industrial land or on the edge of the town centre.

### **General Comments**

Respondent noted the cost in terms of high rents and rates for a business choosing to locate in Guildford. Also, attention was given to congestion and the expense and lack of car parking spaces.

More public events, entertainment and cultural provision were requested. Other matters relating to retail issues were that people felt unsafe in the town centre during the evening and night time and that housing should be encouraged in the town centre.

### **Conclusion**

Respondents wish to see a variety of uses in the town centre, rather than simply further retail provision.

## **Local Shops**

### **Issue 1: How important are local shops in villages and the countryside? Should they be retained?**

The majority of respondents support option 1 (retain local shops). Local shops are seen as an important part of the economy and provide a good service for those that are unable to access outer centre shopping areas such as those with mobility difficulties. Many respondents commented on local shops providing a good service for the elderly.

### **Issue 2: How can we keep these?**

In order to keep local shops and encourage more people to use them many respondents suggested reducing rates, providing subsidies or local incentives and improving local transport, access and parking facilities.

### **Issue 3: How can we encourage a diversity of different local shops?**

Option 3 (retain a certain number of local shops in each area and let others go) was seen as being the most realistic option, as some local shops will choose to relocate anyway.

Respondents suggested that it is important to retain the unique traditional shops that tourists enjoy, in order to maintain the character of Guildford.

### **General Comments**

Few respondents commented upon option 2 (accept market forces and the loss of local shops). Those that did stated that this is inevitable as it is extremely difficult to manipulate market forces.

### **Conclusion**

There is a distinct keenness to maintain local shops, and useful methods have been suggested to achieve this, however, there is an element of realism in relation to the greater forces of the market.

## **Public Services / Facilities**

### **Issue 1: What additional services / facilities are needed?**

Respondents showed support for facilities for youth/teenagers in both suburban areas and villages. However, it was noted that there is a need for community infrastructure to expand in line with the population increase and change. Respondents suggested that facilities should be provided at the same time as new residential development takes place.

### **Issue 2: Where should they be located?**

There was general agreement with option 1b (additional facilities in villages) as respondents highlighted the need for protection and enhancement of community facilities in the villages, in order to avoid the need for transport into the town centre for entertainment, health and education services. It was also felt that this enhancement and protection of village facilities is needed to keep village communities alive. There was little preference for option 1a (additional facilities in urban areas).

### **Issue 3: How can we ensure that these are delivered?**

There was little preference for option 2 (deliver additional services/facilities through the council and/or relevant organisations where resources permit). The need for efficient use of facilities is emphasised. The efficiency of underused facilities should be increased, e.g. dual use of school and University facilities should be encouraged. Several references are made to specific community facilities including need for replacement Civic Hall, improved library, need for accessible health facilities etc.

### **Issue 4: Should we protect open spaces, recreational facilities, sports centres, playing fields, theatres, day centres, museums, libraries and/or community centres?**

There is great support for the protection of existing facilities, especially open space and recreation facilities.

### **General Comments**

Accessibility is a key issue. Respondents suggested that facilities should be in easily accessible locations.

## Transport

### **Issue 1: What more can be done to encourage people to use other means of transport than the car?**

Respondents expressed agreement with option 1a (more park and ride sites), option 1b (more cycle lanes and safer walking initiatives) and option 2 (encourage patterns of development that minimise the need for car use). Option 2 was the preferred option, however, many who selected it commented that it was not very specific and questioned how it would be achieved.

### **Issue 2: What are the implications of reduced car use/parking?**

Many respondents feared for the economic stability of Guildford if it were made more difficult and expensive to enter Guildford Town Centre, suggesting that locals and visitors would simply go to other places. Kingston was named as the main rival in terms of shops and attractions.

### **Issue 3: Would more park and ride sites help?**

Despite many respondents selecting option 1a (more park and ride sites), there was evidence of mixed feelings towards park and ride sites in Guildford. Many respondents felt that they (especially the Spectrum) are too close to the Town Centre and therefore do little to reduce congestion, however, some respondents saw Park and Ride, coinciding with the pedestrianisation of many parts of the Town Centre, as the future of Guildford Town Centre. Other comments received in relation to Park and Ride sites include; the suggestion that a site on Woking Road would be useful, the bus fare should be free and it would be useful if the Park and Ride at the Spectrum ran on a Saturday.

### **Issue 4: Would more cycle lanes and safer walking initiatives help?**

Option 1b (more cycle lanes and safer walking initiatives) was selected by many respondents, however, in order to encourage more people to cycle rather than drive, it was suggested that great improvements need to be made to cycle lanes. The safety of cycle lanes is a strong concern of many respondents, many of whom felt that they are ill observed by motorists and therefore highly dangerous. One respondent stated, "You take your life in your hands when on a bike in Guildford". Separating the cycle lane from the road with a barrier was suggested. It was also claimed that cycle lanes "disappear when most needed". Walking initiatives received more enthusiasm, however, safety remains an important issue, especially in relation to children walking to school.

### **Issue 5: Are road improvements appropriate in Guildford and if so, where?**

Some respondents noted the poor state of many roads in Surrey, however, many respondents chose not to focus on this issue. Other respondents claimed that road improvement work does not solve the overall problem and causes major short-term delays.

### **General Comments**

A recurring theme throughout the responses was the perceived unreliable and infrequent bus service in Guildford. Many respondents claimed that they felt unable to travel by public transport because the bus service is inadequate, lacks an evening/late night service and is too expensive. The same issues were raised in relation to the train service, although not quite as vociferous as the comments relating to the bus service. Respondents also voiced discontentment with the bus lanes in Guildford as they felt they caused more congestion because they were infrequently used. Respondents suggested smaller (minibus size), but more frequent, buses, which were cheaper, would be better used. It was also suggested that the money lost to businesses through congestion (£600m per year as quoted in the Core Strategy questionnaire) could pay for an improved bus service with a flat fare (as in London) once congestion was reduced.

Many respondents felt aggrieved by the amount of congestion the 'school-run' causes in Guildford, and suggested the use of American style school buses.

Respondents wish to see an improvement in the train service in Guildford, with new stations at the Research Park and Merrow.



**Conclusion**

The issues relating to transport in Guildford Borough have caused the greatest response from respondents, showing the importance placed on these issues. Most respondents recognise the level of congestion experienced in Guildford at peak times, and have put forward useful comments and suggestions.

## Environment

### **Issue 1: Which part of the environment do we need to protect?**

Option 1 (protect ecological, historical and aesthetically important areas) is the preferred option of respondents. SSSI's, AONB's, conservation areas and listed buildings were all stated as areas that needed to be strictly protected. However, respondents stated that there is a need to protect everyday sites such as parks, open spaces, road verges, lanes, hedgerows and even roundabouts as this is 'the everyday environment' which people have the most contact with, therefore having a significant effect on the character of the area and quality of their life. Many respondents put forward the idea of a 'buffer zone' around important sites.

There is a perception that plans are being prepared for the release of Green Belt and many respondents stated that this would be a totally unacceptable approach and felt that Green Belt is a 'finite resource'. There was, however, a minority that agreed with a flexible approach to Green Belt designation, stating that not all Green Belt was of a sufficiently high quality to be protected in the same way as an AONB and that releasing some Green Belt might be necessary to secure future economic growth in Guildford.

### **Issue 2: Should we encourage greater energy efficiency in new developments to help tackle climate change?**

There was general agreement with option 2 (encourage greater energy efficiency in new developments). Respondents felt that sustainable construction should be in established buildings as well as new buildings. There is a feeling that new development does not always fit the character of its surroundings and is of a low quality particularly in regard to the style and materials used.

### **Issue 3: How can the council promote sustainable construction and renewable energy?**

There was general agreement with option 3 (promote sustainable development and construction). Most respondents felt that more could be required from developers to achieve this, and that the issue should become more prominent. The most commented upon issues were reducing the demand and use of water and energy, re-using building materials and greater provision of recycling facilities within developments, particularly for plastics. Many respondents felt that the council should take a lead in sustainable construction in its own buildings. Many expressed concern about landfill and incineration, stating that waste should be reduced and recycled so that such measures would not be needed.

### **General Comments**

Most respondents linked quality of life to the character of the area. Many saw the character of Guildford as the abundance of high quality landscapes, open spaces and historic environments. Many stated that Guildford had failed to protect these areas in the past and it is essential to protect them now to safeguard Guildford's character and distinctiveness for current and future residents. A lot of respondents expressed concern about a rise in infill development and many also felt that important views should be protected.

### **Conclusion**

There is great support amongst respondents to protect ecologically, historically and aesthetically important areas whilst emphatically resisting any Green Belt release.

## Other Issues

### **Issue 1: Have we identified all the issues and options?**

A diverse range of comments was received in reference to the issues and options. A common theme raised was movement. Concerns were voiced about traffic flow, parking provision and public transport in Guildford. Despite 'transport' being an identified issue, respondents wished to emphasise its importance by re-iterating and expressing in greater detail issues relating to movement. Respondents expressed a desire for easing movement across the Borough to be a priority of the Council.

Many respondents wish to see the character and heritage of Guildford maintained. Suggested methods of achieving this included higher standards of design, preservation of the High Street and the creation of a 'master plan' offering greater detail on the desired type of development. Unhappiness was expressed at night time social activities, with the growth in the number of pubs, clubs and possible future casino causing anti-social behaviour and the erosion of Guildford's status as a safe and pleasant location.

Respondents were keen to highlight their annoyance at future housing growth rates dictated by the Government Office for the South East and Central Government. Many respondents requested consideration be given to the infrastructure, waste provision and services needed to accommodate this growth. Respondents also reiterated comments on the issue of housing, detailing the need for affordable and key worker housing.

Other issues raised included; lack of facilities for young people out of Guildford Town Centre, noise pollution and the introduction of zones of tranquillity, elderly care, the location of phone masts, the preservation of the Green Belt and the quality of roads in the Borough.

The Spectrum was noted as a high quality facility, with the suggestion of adding entertainment uses in light of the closure of the Civic. It was also suggested that the attractiveness of the riverside be accentuated by relocating Debenhams to the new Friary Centre.

### **Issue 2: Are there are particular sites you wish to suggest for future development?**

A representative from Guildford Cathedral identified land in close proximity to Guildford Cathedral for possible housing development, stating that the development would link the cathedral with the community and provide greatly needed houses. It would however need to be of the highest quality design. The rear of large dwellings was also suggested as a possible location for new housing. A number of respondents to the housing issues also identified possible sites for housing.