

# CRARA

Cranley Road Area Residents' Association

*A staggering 25% increase  
is being planned for our town!*



WHERE WILL WE BUILD WHEN ALL THE BROWN AND GREEN FIELDS  
AND GARDENS HAVE GONE ?

# CRANLEY ROAD AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

From the Chairman, John Cummings  
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- \* 25% increase in dwellings
- \* town cramming and garden grabbing
- \* 2,000 homes in Green Belt
- \* traffic congestion increasingly the norm
- \* development in the flood plain

Dear Member

Are you aware that Guildford has been singled out for major expansion? The Secretary of State is currently considering Inspector-approved plans to make Guildford a 'regional hub' in the South East Plan. The Inspectors propose targeting growth on Guildford in a way that would turn our historic town, with its garden suburbs, into something more akin to Croydon.

Planning has become so remote and technical that there is a real danger of this Plan being approved without residents realising - until too late - what is intended for Guildford. Once approved, this Regional Plan will be binding on our local planners.

A staggering 25% increase in dwellings is proposed for our town. We are set to get both town cramming as a result of even higher density targets and a vast estate of 2,000 dwellings in our Green Belt beyond Burpham and Merrow. The Inspectors admit this will be largely to accommodate immigration from outside the region.

The Inspectors have removed a requirement for 'essential infrastructure before development'. There will be no guarantee of timely investment in services and facilities (such as transport, water treatment, education and health care) to serve new developments and to protect the quality of life of current residents. Yet the Inspectors recognise that we face real infrastructure challenges and suffer the most congested road system outside London.

Some towns in the SE may be able to accommodate such large increases in housing. CRARA considers that Guildford, with its historic heritage and narrow roads squeezed into a gap in the Surrey Hills, cannot. This is not just a case of locals resisting change. The scale of development proposed for Guildford will destroy the very qualities that have made it an economic success. We may have a University, a Law College, good shopping facilities and a railway interchange but we don't have land suitable for major new housing estates or high density flats.

If you share our concern that it would be a mistake to earmark Guildford for special expansion, please write as soon as possible to the Secretary of State, Hazel Blears (Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP, Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU). Please copy your letter to Anne Milton, MP for Guildford, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. (MiltonA@parliament.uk) and to Cllr Andrew Hodges, 126 London Road, Guildford, GU1 1TH (Andrew.Hodges@guildford.gov.uk).

An announcement is expected in December.

The key message to get across is that it would be a mistake to make Guildford a special growth 'hub' for housing development in the South East Plan. We must ask the Secretary of State to reject the Inspectors' recommendation to target extra housing and growth on Guildford as **unsound** and **unsustainable**. Building upwards and outwards would lead to congestion, flood risk, 'town cramming and loss of urban quality', environmental damage and harm to the character that underpins Guildford's economic success. Express concern that the Inspectors appear to have disregarded capacity studies and that proper Environmental, Habitat Directive and Strategic Flood Risk Assessments do not appear to have been done.

- ❖ Guildford is squeezed into a narrow gap in the Downs and is constrained
- ❖ Protected downland of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty rises to the south-east and south-west
- ❖ Flood plain runs through the town and spreads to the south and north-east
- ❖ The town is encircled by Green Belt
- ❖ Heathland to the north-west must be protected from the pressures of development under the European Habitats Directive. Housing would be in the 5km protection zone
- ❖ Encouraging even more 'intensification and recycling of urban land' would damage the character of the historic centre and of the garden suburbs and undermine Guildford's economic success and the reason so many enterprising and highly-qualified employees choose to live here
- ❖ The historic roads are narrow and constricted. They could not cope with the traffic and parking from so many more dwellings
- ❖ Expansion would add to congestion. Air quality standards for health-damaging nitrous oxides are already exceeded along the A3 corridor and in the town centre
- ❖ Guildford is a transport hub because it lies at the point where road and rail routes cut through the Downs. But being huddled in a gap in the Downs is also the reason why there are very real limits to how far Guildford can grow. To make Guildford a housing growth hub breaches those limits
- ❖ Where does growth end? Population and household projections would lead to a doubling of Guildford by about 2050. A different solution will need to be found, such as expanding a less-constrained and more adaptable town, or creating a new town beyond the Green Belt.

These are strong grounds for rejecting the Inspectors' proposal to make Guildford a special growth hub that would be a focus for extra housing (urban sprawl and higher densities) and for major, high density town centre redevelopment.

Please write and make sure your voice is heard.

Yours sincerely

John Cummings  
Chairman

November 2007

# *THE YEAR SO FAR – THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY*

A lot of developments this year have happened outside the CRARA boundaries, but nevertheless they affect us all. Many of them have been close enough to our area to have an impact on traffic and parking. Others affect our overall quality of life.

Apart from the need to save the Royal Surrey County Hospital probably the most important development was the plan to replace the Civic Hall and the associated 4-star hotel sharing the site. Without getting involved in the political ramifications, CRARA argued for the importance of a prestige development on such a prominent location on one of the major routes into the town. We asked for a development of which Guildford could be proud and which would provide the cultural and leisure facilities so needed. We also argued for no reduction in parking spaces.

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One notable factor during the year has been the opportunities provided by our Councillors and Planners to discuss with Residents' Associations their wishes for future development of the Town and for specific new

developments. This applied initially to meetings arranged with Councillors and prospective candidates for the Council elections in May and was reflected in the various manifestos. We put forward views on the Guildford Plan and the Local Development Framework in conjunction with EGRA – an association of the RAs to the East of Guildford. Together with Downsedge, in whose area it falls, and Merrow Residents, we had several meetings with Councillors and Planners to influence the proposals for the Defra site. Negotiations are still continuing as the application is prepared to be put to the Planning Committee.

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We have had much support from the Planning Committee on a number of applications – 5 Aldersey Road, the Clavadel Hotel, 12 Watford Close and various of the proposals along the Epsom Road. In many cases the

Council's decision was upheld at Appeal but not unfortunately 12 Watford Close where a totally inappropriate development has been approved. 5 Aldersey Road was only partially successful as the extension to Butterfly Cottage was approved, although this may not now go ahead. The Inspector involved with this even criticised the previously-approved development at 3 Aldersey Road - a pity he hadn't been the Inspector when that went to Appeal!

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We and the Planning Committee, although unfortunately not always the Planners, have made good use of the Residential Design Guide in countering unsuitable proposals. We were also delighted that our area is

described in GBC's Landscape Character Assessment Document as a Garden Suburb, again providing us with an argument for reflecting the existing character of our area in future developments.

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We were invited by our MP, Anne Milton, to comment on the Barker Review of Planning issued by the Government. As one would fear, much of Ms Barker's recommendations were centred on regional rather

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