

Council Meeting: 14th February 2013

Councillor Ms. S. Finch will ask the **Executive Member for Communities** the following question:-

COMMUNITY CENTRE PROVISION IN REDHILL

Will the Executive Member for Communities please confirm what plans the Council has to provide a community centre in Redhill now the New Centenary House on Cromwell Road has closed?

OBSERVATIONS

The community centre that until recently operated in Cromwell Road, Redhill, was run by Age Concern (Merstham, Redhill and Reigate). It closed last November largely due to the fact that Age Concern were unable to raise enough funds to maintain the operation.

This was despite money from the Core Funding panel. I share Councillor Finch's disappointment that the scheme closed but I understand that Age Concern are providing transport for users to their scheme in Merstham.

The Council have also reminded users about the Council's own Community Centres, particularly the Woodhatch Centre which is approximately 2.5 miles from the centre of Redhill.

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Councillor M.J. Selby will ask the **Executive Member for Planning and Development** the following question:-

CORE STRATEGY: URBAN EXTENSIONS

Does the Executive Member for Planning and Development not think the annual target of 460 new dwellings per year to 2027 is too high for our Borough bearing in mind we have large areas of Common Land and that we already have the highest population of any district in Surrey and does he have the power to scale down the target figures to a more realistic level before the character of our Borough is irreversibly destroyed by excessive development?

OBSERVATIONS

- The housing target in the Core Strategy is an annual average of 460 homes per year, or 6,900 over the 15 year plan period. This figure has been agreed by the Full Council.
- The housing target reflects a level of growth that is consistent with longer term growth trends in the borough. It is considerably lower than the level of growth that government projections suggest will take place over the plan period, but it is of a level sufficient to provide the additional homes for local people and workers over the next 15 years.
- The target is also broadly in line with the amount of the South East Plan housing target that remains to be delivered in the borough. For the time being the South East Plan is still in place and we are required to demonstrate general conformity with it.
- However, today, Eric Pickles has announced his decision to revoke the South East Plan. In order to effect this decision, he will bring an order before Parliament after 25 February and the process will take 21 days. We are working with the Planning Inspectorate to understand the implications of today's announcement but it is unlikely to affect the timing of our hearings.
- It is important that the Core Strategy includes a realistic level of housing provision. That means one that balances protection of the environment and character of the borough with the need to provide housing to meet local people's needs.
- Without doing this, there is a significant risk that the Core Strategy will be found unsound, and without an adopted Core Strategy, future development in the borough will be determined by Inspectors who decide appeals.
- The Council would lose control of when and where development takes place.

- Also, the Council would not be able to get on with the important task of preparing up-to-date detailed development management policies, nor would we be able secure Community Infrastructure Levy contributions from developers to pay for the infrastructure needed to support new development.

Council Meeting: 14th February 2013

Councillor J. Durrant will ask the **Executive Member for Planning and Development** the following question:-

CORE STRATEGY: WARD IMPACT

Can the Executive Member for Planning and Development outline the impact of the proposed Core Strategy on my Ward?

OBSERVATIONS

The Core Strategy sets the strategic framework for development within the borough, and sets out – in general terms – the scale and location of future growth.

In terms of built development such as new housing in Earlswood and Whitebushes, the Core Strategy sets out the following:

- As a priority, development will be focused within the urban area in sustainable locations. This principle applies across the borough, including to this ward.
- The very southern part of the ‘broad area of search’ for sustainable urban extensions to the East of Redhill/East of Merstham extends into the north eastern corner of the ward, as far south as the Redhill-Tonbridge railway line. This is shown on the Core Strategy Key Diagram.
- The broad area to the East of Redhill/East of Merstham is identified as an area where opportunities for sustainable urban extensions to accommodate 500-700 homes will be explored. Further work to test and identify specific sites for development will be undertaken as part of the Council’s Development Management Policies document. Members have been and will continue to be involved in that process, and Further public consultation will be carried out.
- It is important to understand that Green Belt sites will only be released for development in the event that opportunities for housing within the towns and villages dry up. Green Belt sites are a last resort.

More generally, other Core Strategy policies will benefit the whole borough including Earlswood and Whitebushes, these include:

- Policies that seek to protect and enhance valued landscapes and the natural environment, valued townscapes and the historic environment.
- Policies that seek to secure sustainable development, sustainable construction methods, timely infrastructure provision and a range of travel options for residents.

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Councillor S.T. Bramhall will ask the **Executive Member for Planning and Development** the following question:-

CORE STRATEGY: DEVELOPMENT IN WARD

What reassurance can the Executive Member for Planning and Development give my residents in Southpark and Woodhatch that the Council's Core Strategy will not lead to excessive development in my Ward?

OBSERVATIONS

- I can reassure you that the development of greenfield sites in the ward in question will only be progressed as a last resort. If this does prove necessary, development will be carefully planned to minimise the impact on local residents and the environment.
- The South/South West Reigate 'broad area of search' for sustainable urban extensions identified in the Core Strategy falls within the Southpark and Woodhatch ward.
- The Core Strategy identifies the South/South West Reigate location as a broad area where opportunities for sustainable urban extensions to accommodate 500-700 homes will be explored.
- Further work to test and identify specific sites for development will be undertaken as part of the Council's Development Management Policies document. Members have been and will continue to be involved in that process and further public consultation will be carried out.
- The Core Strategy proposes development within this location of search as a last resort, in the event that opportunities for housing within the Borough's towns and villages dry up. If more development opportunities are found within urban areas, the need for urban extensions in the plan period (including in South Park and Woodhatch) will be reduced.
- The Core Strategy also suggests that sites in this area should only be considered for development if opportunities around Horley and to the East of Redhill do not provide sufficient sustainable development opportunities.
- The plan-led system means that we are able to ensure that new development is sustainable as possible. Work planned to inform the Development Management Policies document and allocation of sites will include looking carefully at local environmental and landscape sensitivities, and constraints to development such as flood risk. It will also include analysis of the impact on local infrastructure such as roads and schools. Masterplanning of sites will incorporate the new infrastructure required to support growth.

- This means that the Council will be in the best position to ensure that the impact of new development on the local environment and local communities is minimised.