

West End Action Group (WEAG)

3 July 2019

UPDATE ON FOUR PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Dear WEAG supporter,

There is some good news on two small but significant planning applications which proposed intruding into the precious Green Belt around West End. In addition a plan for 40 houses on Green Belt land just outside the village, at Scotts Grove, which would have injected 80 more cars into the local traffic bottlenecks, has been rejected. Meanwhile we await a date for the Borough's Planning Applications Committee to discuss the proposed 74 homes at Fenns Lane.

Fairfield Lane, West End

The planning application to build four houses on Green Belt land in Fairfield Lane (application 18/0863) has been refused, thus preserving the open rural feeling of the unadopted lane. There are many reasons for refusal; Fairfield Lane Residents Association's submission gave six pages of them. There were more than 100 objections from 94 different addresses, a magnificent response from the village to a blatant attack on our Green Belt. Surrey Heath Borough Council (SHBC) concluded that the proposal was inappropriate development in the Green Belt; the applicants' claim that the infilling was an allowable exception within the Green Belt regulations could only have been sustained if the site was within the defined settlement area of the village, which it was not; in any case it didn't qualify as in-filling; the impact on the character of the area would have been very harmful; the regular flooding of the site after heavy rain would not be solved by the drainage proposals; and so on.

Bagshot Road, West End

Another small planning application in the Green Belt has been turned down by SHBC. A five-bedroom house was proposed in an empty field on Bagshot Road, east of Penny Cottage and opposite Brook Place (application 18/1094). The applicant claimed it was in-filling, but in-filling is not permitted in the Green Belt unless within a defined settlement area, which was not the case. If the application had been granted it would have set a precedent opening the door to solid housing all along the A319 Bagshot Road between West End and Chobham – and elsewhere in the Borough.

Castle Grove Nursery, Scotts Grove

Although just outside West End, another decision is of interest for the village, not least because it is an example of the power of well-argued local residents' opposition to a development, in persuading SHBC's Planning Applications Committee (consisting of elected Councillors) to overturn a recommendation by SHBC's permanent officials. At Scotts Grove the developer Bewley Homes had proposed building 40 houses at Scotts Grove on the disused Castle Grove Nursery land (18/1118) – next to Tenakers farm shop. The planning officials had recommended approving the scheme, as the site is previously developed land. But the Planning Applications Committee refused permission, and by the large margin of 12-2. The site, like the whole of Chobham, is in the Green Belt; the imposition of 40 houses would obviously harm the Green Belt; adding another 80 cars to the traffic bottlenecks around Scotts Grove and into Chobham was not acceptable; and the housing density was more than twice that of the neighbouring cul de sacs. Expect Bewley Homes to not give up: they are likely to appeal, or perhaps to submit a modified plan with lower housing density.

Fenns Lane, West End

We are still waiting for Fairfax Acquisitions' plan to build 74 homes at Fenns Lane (19/0154) to come before the Planning Applications Committee. There have been 108 objections, a remarkable number, including a 13-page analysis by WEAG, and there are no letters of support. Some of the consultees (bodies such as the Environment Agency and SCC Transport Department) have criticised the application for its incompleteness, and have demanded more information, which is one reason for the delay.

Details of all planning applications in Surrey Heath can be found on SHBC's website. Visit www.surreyheath.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-applications-search Click on the green Search heading, then in the dialogue box enter the application number or address.

Regards

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