

# West End Action Group (WEAG)

May 2018

## ***Infrastructure, pre-history and GDPR***

### **Infrastructure**

WEAG, represented by Beulah Kingston (Chair), Jeff Llewellyn (Vice-Chair) and Guy Consterdine (Secretary) have recently held a meeting about infrastructure with Michael Gove MP (and Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), together with relevant officials and representatives from Surrey County Council (SCC), Surrey Heath Borough Council (SHBC) and West End Parish Council. WEAG had drawn up the agenda.

Our basic concern was that the infrastructure in and around West End was inadequate to cope with around 400 new houses being built on the southern and eastern sides of the village. 400 houses means about 1000 residents and about 800 extra cars.

Roads and traffic management are a particular problem. The A322 and A319 through West End are already heavily congested at times, Benner Lane and some surrounding streets are in gridlock during school run periods, and Beldam Bridge Road is increasingly being used as a rat run by drivers from outside the village wanting to avoid the crowded main roads. Having an additional 800 cars based in West End on the new estates can only worsen the problem. WEAG wanted to ensure SCC (the roads authority) was fully aware of the situation, and to discuss potential solutions.

SCC have two limited schemes in mind. One is reshaping the Gordon's roundabout, originally to cope with the traffic generated by 1200+ houses at Deepcut, but the need is now reinforced by West End's 400 new houses and other large estates in Bisley and Knaphill. This will be funded by money from Deepcut developers but is not likely to begin until 2021.

The other scheme is for Fellow Green roundabout, where slip roads for traffic turning left from the north and from the south are proposed. It is costed at about £120,000 but there is no SCC money for this (but see 'Finance' below).

These two schemes, if implemented, could mitigate the traffic queues at these roundabouts, to a limited extent.

A major scheme is being planned for the M3/A322 junction at Bagshot. SCC were not ready to give details but we received the impression that the flow over the M3 of the A322 north-bound and south-bound traffic would be greatly improved. This is some years away but

should greatly reduce the long and frustrating tailbacks on the Lightwater bypass for north-bound traffic, benefitting West End residents and a much wider area.

Meanwhile SCC has no further plans – or money – for relieving the burden of traffic in West End. However the County is currently conducting a review of roads across the whole of Surrey, identifying the most pressing problems, prior to applying to the Government’s Transport Department for funding. WEAG has emphasised the need to identify the A322 as one of those most pressing problems. The traffic on the A322 is a regional strategic issue, much bigger than concerns about West End’s 400 new homes.

One detail is that in Beldam Bridge Road the 30 mph speed limit, which at the moment ends opposite the entrance to Kings Road, will be extended beyond the Taylor Wimpey 129-house development towards the exit from Pennypot Lane and Beldam Bridge.

Finance. Developers have to pay to the Borough a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) based on the number of houses. It is to enable councils to put in the necessary infrastructure to support the development. That’s the theory. In practice it doesn’t quite work out like that. In the case of West End’s 400 houses, the CIL amounts to around £4 million. However this isn’t all spent in West End. The Parish Council is awarded 15% of it, which is about £600,000, while the Borough Council retains the 85%, which it may spend anywhere in the Borough. The Council allocates some of it to buying and maintaining land for public recreation (including SANG – see below) and the rest is being allocated to road works on the A30 in Camberley, and associated projects. The Council’s intention is to regenerate the local economy by making Camberley a more appealing place to attract new commercial investment.

The WEAG three and the Parish Council representatives argued that some of the Borough’s CIL money, or the County’s transport budget, should be spent on the proposed improvements to the Fellow Green roundabout, since the Parish Council is not a roads authority. The Borough flatly ruled this out, saying that the money was already committed to the Camberley project for at least the next three years, and even after that there will be competing priorities. The County representatives, too, made it clear that the only way the improvements at Fellow Green could be made was if the Parish Council spent some of its £600,000 to do it. So that’s a big decision for the parish to think about in coming months.

Education is another major worry, with Holy Trinity Primary School and Gordon’s secondary school both at full capacity. The County Council has no plans to increase the capacity at either school, arguing that even 400 new houses do not generate enough school pupils to justify additional classrooms. For primary education, the new housing estates are nearer to Holy Trinity School than many existing houses in the west of the village; consequently it seems inevitable that the catchment area will be drawn in tighter to accommodate the new estates. This will mean that many children at pre-school and school-going age who live on the west side of the village will not be able to attend Holy Trinity once the new estates are occupied, other than siblings already attending the school. The County education officials assured us that “places will be found in schools in the area”, citing spare capacity in primary schools in several surrounding villages. Mike Goodman, a County Councillor, said “We don’t see there’s a problem”! He advocated more car-sharing, use of public transport, and cycling

– which sounds fine in theory but for the most part is totally unrealistic as ways for young children to get to school.

The situation is highly unsatisfactory for those West End children who will be affected, having to be driven considerable distances to and from out-of-village schools, making the congested school run even more difficult than it is now, and damaging the social fabric through children being split between many different schools.

The GP practice cannot cope with an extra 1000 residents plus the intensive medical needs of the occupants of the Gracewell care home in Streets Heath. We ensured that our MP and the County and Borough Councils were aware of this but, as we knew, medical services are not something either council has control over, nor is it a consideration when determining planning applications.

Land for recreation: the European Birds Directive has established Brentmoor Heath as a Special Protection Area, one of the consequences being that every planning application for 100+ houses in the West End area must include land for public recreation: a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) – an alternative place for people to walk or take their dogs, to reduce the impact on the protection area. Notably, the major planning applications have kept just below the 100 dwellings (95, 85 and 84 dwellings), and although the Taylor Wimpey and Shanly sites have now been expanded beyond 100 the extensions were put forward as separate planning applications after the main applications had been granted – thus escaping the need to provide SANG land. Moreover a new SANG at Chobham was deemed to serve as SANG for West End – as though residents would drive with their dogs to Chobham instead of walking the short distance to Brentmoor Heath.

More positively, the former Windlemere 9-hole golf course land looks as though it might possibly provide some SANG land in West End, for public recreation. Discussing this at the Gove meeting, we heard that the Borough Council is in confidential negotiations with the land owner about making this land available for a SANG – though the outcome is not yet certain.

Overall, there were some modest benefits from the meeting, more in terms of ensuring that our MP and all levels of local government are aware of our concerns; learning their latest thinking about these topics; and clarifying a number of issues, than in effecting any immediate change. However sympathetic to our arguments the Councillors and officials may be (and in general they are indeed sympathetic), they are highly constrained in what they can do by the bureaucratic process and their shortage of money. Michael Gove summed up with the remark “No-one can have everything they can legitimately want”.

### **Prehistoric West End: 8pm, June 4**

Cotswold Archaeology have completed their analysis of last summer’s excavations at land off Benner Lane, where remains of Iron Age roundhouses, granary store, and iron smelting were discovered, among other things. I have arranged for the archaeologists to come to West End on Monday 4 June

to tell us about their findings. The public meeting will be held at the Sports Pavilion, Benner Lane at 8.00 pm, hosted by the Parish Council.

The talk will be given by Sam Wilson, Project Supervisor at Cotswold Archaeology. Sam will discuss the different phases of archaeological work undertaken at Benner Lane and the excavated evidence for multiple periods of occupation, dating from as early as the Late Bronze Age and with notable Iron Age settlement. The presence of iron smelting evidence in particular puts the site among a handful of important sites within the region. The finds and environmental evidence from the site will also be discussed along with the wider landscape context and any potential for future research.

West End has a proven heritage of 4,000 or more years of human occupation. Come and hear about the earliest of those times on 4 June. Tea and coffee will be served after discussion time, for a social end to the evening.

### **GDPR**

As part of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) coming into force on 25 May, WEAG must check that you still want to receive emails from us. Please reply to [contact@weag.info](mailto:contact@weag.info) if you do NOT wish to receive any further emails. If you are happy to continue then you do not need to take any action.

Our policy on data protection can be found on our website.

Regards

Guy Consterdine  
Secretary, WEAG  
[contact@weag.info](mailto:contact@weag.info)