

Response to the Notes The Local Development Documents Annual Monitoring Report 2018-2019

The document suggests that that the Core Strategy (and other policies intended to deliver it) contribute significantly towards Council priorities. I do not live in a deprived area. I see planning decisions that amaze me and certainly act to the detriment of those who have moved to the area and particularly this side of town. I draw your attention to plan/2019/0722, passed at a planning meeting on 14th February, 2020. This plan achieves a situation that leaves a householder's brand new home with a view of a block of flats. Flats bring more cars to an already congested area. Litter is appalling. Traffic speeds are unchecked. Pavements are in a dreadful state. The area has had little investment and has deteriorated. A friend has moved her Mother to a new apartment in Maybury Road. She has not settled. Pleasant properties have been built, but the area is not well maintained or monitored and many people are not happy. Litter is thrown into the grounds of the buildings – mostly alcohol cans/bottles from those returning home after a night out. There is no neighbourhood forum here.

Cllr. Saj Hussein commented at the above planning meeting on parking problems in the area and will, I am sure, provide further information.

This is an interesting article. It contains a business owner's view of the area.
<https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/surrey-news/fears-plan-build-flats-behind-16764900>

At the Joint Committee Meeting on 17th March I asked a question and it may be seen in the minutes. The question was unfortunately lost for a period of time, then written up incorrectly in the pre notes, and an incorrect answer provided. The photographs tabled before the meeting failed to show the low loader to which I referred and which was dangerous to pedestrians and motorists alike. Advising that it would be looked at in the 2020 Parking Review was inappropriate in an area of roads where two pedestrians have died in recent years. I subsequently obtained printed photographs for the Programme Manager and these appeared in the presentation. I hope too that they will appear in the documentation issued after the meeting. The relationship between Enterprise Cars in College Road and the council was said (by Cllr Bittleston) to be that of a good friend. A quiet word would be had. The point of my question was that it is not a good friend to local people. Photographs showed the long standing practice of cars being reversed off low loaders, into the face of oncoming traffic, on the public highway, by a trio of roundabouts. Why does WBC have good friends who care not a jot about the health and welfare of local people? Many pedestrians walk in the area and these actions are dangerous for pedestrians and motorists alike. A320 and other highways reports have routinely showed these junctions to be busy. Crazy planning applications have been passed as money seems to be more important than the welfare of local people. The site on which Enterprise Cars sits was formerly a small car sales garage.

I asked Andrew Milne, Highways Manager for SCC, why they did not monitor the area as complaints had been made to both WBC and SCC. Objections to planning applications have also referred to the dangers to pedestrians and traffic congestion. Mr Milne acknowledged that there were problems. He was aware of the many occasions on which bollards were knocked down. There are bollards at all of the pedestrian crossing

points in Oriental Road, Maybury Hill and College Road. Recently two bollards were left lying on the ground. One was repaired and the damaged one left dumped at the perimeter of the Lion Retail Park. (Photograph available.) I was surprised to be asked by the Cllr Aziz whether I had ever brought my concerns to the attention of Surrey Councillors. This, I felt, was research that should have been done before the meeting since neither councillor was present. I have in fact written to both and confirmed that to be the case. Sadly, the video equipment was not working on 4th March but the minutes should confirm the discussions. Minutes for the Joint Committee were formerly available on the WBC website. Now they are less accessible and are stored on the SCC website. I wrote to Colin Kemp about the difficulty I had in finding them.

There is currently a planning application, of which I was advised in mid December. It seeks to allow the placement of four Portakabins, shipping containers, cabins, huts or anything else that might be decided upon, for various uses. I am advised that, in planning terms, this is a try on. It will result in British Land/Mary Street Estates being able to do whatever they wish on the site. Please see plan/2019/1120 due for consideration at the planning meeting on 17th March 2020. The applicant advises that the car park is never more than 50 per cent full. The attached photograph and others on the Woking planning website illustrate that this is not true. In Plan/2018/0263 the applicant advised that the car park was never more than 38 per cent full and I sent a series of emails to Cllr Ian Johnson on 27th March 2018 attaching photographs showing this was nonsense. One of the emails refers to a car mounting the pavement and crashing over the grass alongside homes in Little Ridging. I referred in an email to the unloading of car transporters to which I alluded in the recent question to the Joint Committee. Another photograph showed that the car hire firm had begun to store larger vehicles on its frontage. The fourth email showed Pets at Home still lit at night. On 26th July 2019 I wrote again to Cllr Johnson (copying Russell Ellis) as there had been night work on drainage at the Lion Retail Park, and I complained of night deliveries and the failure of WBC to manage these matters. On 2nd August 2019 I wrote to Euan Tapper, and Cllrs Johnson and Lyons about midnight delivers to Costa. These complaints are about the poor management of activities in the area and the negative impact on the life of near neighbours. On 9th August 2019 I sent photographs showing deliveries to the site at 3 am. This too was copied to the Planning Enforcement Officer. There are other emails showing that WBC does not have their finger on the pulse regarding this area.

At the Joint Committee on 17th March I listened with interest to a councillor remarking on the need to relocate a (smelly) food market about which there had been many complaints. I wonder where that might go? Surely not to a congested residential area like the one the Lion Retail Park sits in. Would that not be contrary to council policies which seek to encourage walking, improve air quality and protect the health of local people? Amenity is certainly not considered. It is common knowledge that the food van sited there at present produces foul cooking odours. Adding more food units will exacerbate this problem. Objections on Woking's planning website will show what people feel about the site.

In 2018 the LDF Monitoring Report published in March 2019 referred to Maybury as having local centres where only very limited development appropriate to the size and function of the centres may be permitted. On page 20, SH2 Major New Retail

Development paragraph 2 states: If it can be proved no suitable site is available in this location, a site on the edge of a defined shopping centre of Woking, or within or on the edge of the retail service area of a district centre and easily accessible on foot, may be accessible.

The Lion Retail Park was designed to encourage walking and to encourage pedestrians. I received an email from Adrian Bishop stating so. Cllrs have said so. As you will see from the objections to plan/2019/1120, the site is, at certain times, regarded as hazardous for those pedestrians who are brave enough to tackle it. The internal road system is chaotic. It used to have a height restrictor but it is no longer there. Now anything can (and does) drive in, as there is no monitoring. (See photographs on the latest Lion Retail Park Plan for examples.) The footways go across rather than along the car park. There are ramps, which were presumably meant to warn drivers that a pedestrian may appear. In fact, as a driver, one tends to have to accelerate. The site is not disability friendly to non-drivers. Disabled spaces are not enough.

Turning to page 5 of The Hot Food Takeaway Supplementary Planning Document; the concerns of councillors and the general public about hot food takeaways were, at that time, indicated to be:

- The appropriate number /proportion of Hot Food Takeaway establishments in the Town Centre, District Centres, Local Centres, Neighbourhood Centres, Shopping Parades and Priority Places
- The appropriate level of clustering of Hot Food Takeaways in centres
- Measures to protect the amenity of surrounding residential occupiers
- Local environment issues including the control of odours and cooking smells
- Storage and disposal of waste products and litter
- Crime and anti-social behaviour
- Highway Safety

Page 7 of the policy says, “the Council will seek to protect and retain local shops and other small scale economic uses because of the importance of these uses for everyday needs of those living locally. An A5 unit or a cluster of A5 units has the potential to adversely harm the vitality and viability of a local or neighbourhood centre. The Annual Monitoring Report shows that there was a loss of retail space and so one assumes that there is room in the town centre for the units planned for the Lion Retail Park.

Plan/2019/1120 provides four units of any type, and a car wash. There is a car wash around the corner and already four hot food units. One is near the Mosque, the Rooster Shack opposite the retail park and Costa Coffee and The Place to Eat are in the car park. Walton Road has several hot food takeaways.

Core Strategy CS21 Design shows that proposals for a new development must meet the criteria in CS21, including, achieving a satisfactory relationship to adjoining properties and avoiding significant harmful impact, be designed in an inclusive way to be accessible to all members of the community, create a safe and secure environment where the opportunities for crime are minimised, incorporate provision for the storage of waste and recyclable materials and be designed to avoid significant harm to the environment and general amenity, resulting from noise, dust, vibrations, light or other releases.”

I do not believe that the type of units suggested for this site comply with this policy in that they will make the situation for pedestrians worse, introduce more traffic to a congested and polluted area, alcohol will be consumed in the seating areas which will provide more opportunities for anti-social behaviour. It is only in recent years that this area has shown fighting in police crime statistics. This seems to be an area that is having no community improvements. A unit that operated on the site for some time without planning permission is a wood fired pizza unit. I am unsure whether WBC has evaluated how environmentally friendly this is. Already we endure the smell from the food van and it is not exciting to think what the area will be like when four more units are added. The Place to Eat van already has planning permission. The waterless car wash is said to use organic cleaning fluid, so no problem. But there is no evidence as to whether this is detrimental to health. For example, perfectly natural products can be detrimental to asthma and hay fever sufferers. The units are large for a busy pedestrian area.

On page 8 (5.1) Protection of residential amenity states that ...“applications for Hot Food Takeaway shops within close proximity to residential units will be refused where it is considered that there may be significant adverse impacts on residential amenity in terms of noise, vibration odours, traffic disturbance, litter hours of operation as a result of the proposed premises that cannot be mitigated by design of planning conditions.

This retail park currently generates odours, noise from traffic, and light pollution. There are, on occasions, 3 am and other late deliveries without oversight from WBC or the site owner. Litter is collected within the retail park by the site owners, but not beyond it. Litter is already more than would be expected in a residential area. We notice sandwich wrappers and empty alcohol bottles on the scraps of grass beside Little Riding. There will be more light nuisance. There are to be outside seating areas. Already police are overstretched. At Christmas I purchased from Asda bottle of Moët and Chandon champagne. Inside the carton was something else entirely. When I returned it for exchange, the shopkeeper advised that he found it impossible to keep a track on theft. The police had no time to come out and arrest shoplifters and so, even when caught, he had to let them go.

Page 9 states Hot Food Takeaways can create significant disturbance to neighbouring occupiers in the evening and late at night when they tend to peak in trading and background noise levels are considered to be low. The disturbance can be caused by a number of factors including an increase in footfall, external storing of waste, deliveries of stock and associated parking. It is important that these issues are controlled or restricted to protect the residential amenity of those living in close proximity to units. All planning permissions will have strict conditions to regulate the hours of operation.

The above is quite true and sites do become noisier at night. The site, to date, has generally been quieter in the evenings and so good for local people to shop. The point of plan/2019/1120 is perhaps to extend the opening hours across the site. The van known as the Place to Eat has gone after normal working hours. Costa, I believe, has permission to open until 5.30 pm each day, but currently chooses to open until 7.30 pm from Monday to Saturday. The latest plan will add to noise and activity and so not give us much of a break at all. It is clear that WBC wish to extend opening hours irrespective of the entrance to the car park being close to homes.

Continuing, the policy states that, compared against other uses, hot food takeaways can generate unacceptable levels of noise, vibrations, odours traffic disturbance and litter. It is therefore important that such uses are appropriately located to prevent an adverse effect on the neighbouring houses. It goes on to discuss over concentration. It is important that the takeaway establishments do not detract from the centres primary retail function. The Place to Eat has a generator and this sits behind the food van and alongside a pedestrian walkway. It is not screened and is of great interest to little children. In Woking complaints regarding odours have increased (page 64 – Annual Monitoring Report) and this is largely due to a lacklustre performance in some areas of the environmental health unit. There are too many food units and no meaningful oversight. Why on earth would bonfires be included in this figure? Walk near the station and it is obvious that WBC are not managing odour in the town. It is increasingly smelly. I have advised previously of the arrival of a Pizza van for which there had been no planning permission. Euan Tapper liaised with Russell Ellis and he advised that there would probably be a planning application. The unit continued to operate with no published controls. The plan is to promote expansion of the Lion Retail Park. It is not being managed by WBC and shows little consideration for neighbours.

Highway safety is said in the policy to be regarded as an important consideration. At the recent Joint Committee meeting I asked Mr Milne how on earth the Highways Report for plan/2019/1120 could state that there are no highway reasons for preventing approval of this plan. His answer was not to trust the highway report, because it depends what questions the planning officer asked! But the policy shows that proposals located near to busy road junctions, traffic signals controlled junctions, etc., are likely to be refused. The planning officer advises me that this plan is likely to be recommended for approval.

5.4 (page 10) of the policy States that hours of operation must be specified. At a recent planning meeting a councillor expressed the view that all units on this site should have the same opening hours. This is wrong. Surely the policy requires proper consideration of neighbours? Shops were originally allowed to open until 8 pm but opening hours are fewer and have been between 6.00 pm and 8.00 pm. Asda (another friend of WBC?) was allowed extended opening hours from 7.00 am until 10.00 pm, which is interpreted by WBC as allowing deliveries up until this time and so vehicles may leave still later. Staff may leave later still, and the store reopens at 7.00 am. There are periods of deliveries in the early hours which WBC leave to neighbours to monitor. There is no requirement on the site owner to provide evidence to WBC from cameras when there are middle of the night lorry movements. The cameras are purely to fine those who overstay.

Since the sale of Costa to Premier Inn there has been a reduction in the frequency of litter removal. Photographs taken today will be forwarded for the planning website. Surprisingly, car parking spaces have been marked in front of the rear entrance to Costa. In the original plan, this was an area for use by those collecting waste. It may be that the area is now being used as a collection point for waste from other Costa sites too. Costa has opened another coffee shop near the station. There is certainly a lot of waste, poorly stored, in the Costa yard. The advice from Officers at WBC is that Costa may do this if they wish. It seems rather odd to me that planning permission or regular inspections are not needed. We could end up with a waste centre with no-one taking responsibility for standards and clearance!

I note that the number of passengers at Woking railway station declined. This is perhaps because Woking is a less pleasant place to be and more people are looking beyond it. Social media provides an interesting mix of views of the town. One negative factor is that there is up to one parking space per new home, which makes no sense at all. Drivers have to pinch other people's spaces or park on the pavement. I have friends who will not take their car out at night as they may not find a parking space when they return. This is not a good achievement. Pavement parking is unfair to pedestrians and makes life hard for those with disabilities. WBC has promoted the idea of residents renting out their drives. Some do, and some also park their own family cars on verges in order to increase income. There can be several BT vans parked in Little Riding at any one time giving a feeling of being in a BT yard. Still the use of cabinets at the end of the cul de sac continues to increase. Communication with Cllr Kemp received a dismissive response. WBC is more interested in money than amenity of local residents. For many weeks telecommunications have been upgraded in the area and there have been daily visits from various telecom companies.

Whilst there is a mixed community I am not convinced by the figures regarding ethnic composition of Woking. We are a Christian country and many people, like me, who are not churchgoers, still have Christian values. I want to be in that category if it means that we retain our values and culture. Woking has made a great play of Muslim heritage and that has attracted a lot of traffic and people to it. The Mosque plays a small part in the life of the town. How many Hindus are there? What sits in the "other" ethnic group? Why is religion so important in Woking when it has been an irrelevance in other towns that I have lived in?

Spatial vision of Woking (page 9) from Monitoring Report. In my view Woking will only have high environmental quality and standards when it starts measuring particulate matter and ensures that environmental health officers know whether or not monitoring tubes are in place. Last year the one outside St Paul's Church in Oriental Road disappeared for many weeks. It was confirmed by an environmental officer that this does happen. There was no answer to the question "how will that affect results." I imagine nil results will produce an inaccurate (but better) result. Whilst it is good to protect green spaces, it is surely equally important to monitor the air that those in the town breathe?

Page 12 sets out Planning development activities. This works less well than before. I am advised that now major changes such as that in plan/2019/1120 will not be

advertised at the site. This used to be an excellent method of communicating to everyone what was planned. My request for this plan to be advertised at the retail park was declined as not necessary under planning legislation. I noticed too there were complaints on social media that the council had taken down notices put up by objectors to the football stadium development. The same happened with the Martyrs Lane campaign. Planning in WBC sometimes appears to be on a war footing with local people! Communication from WBC is rather poor and not even handed.

It is erroneous to suggest that enforcement is dealt with quickly. It took several months to resolve late and 3 a.m. deliveries to Costa, and a year to get Pets at Home to extinguish their illuminated fascia panels and internal lighting. They remained lit all the time, but should have been extinguished once the store closed. Both stores sit on the Lion Retail Park. Enforcement is poor to the extent that one rarely complains directly to WBC. There is little point. The unit on the Lion Retail Park is often referred to as the smelly food van. But there are likely to be few complaints as it is known that investigation will not be proactive.

Page 44 shows the cycling infrastructure in the town centre and other centres. I would point out that Maybury seems to get more traffic but rarely appears when something conducive to good health is mentioned. Cycle markings and double yellow lines are not routinely repainted. Detritus is not removed from gutters. Drains are blocked and SCC wait for reports rather than operating routine maintenance per a schedule. Our pedestrians are exposed to too much traffic and so cycling is attractive only to the fittest. This means taking the bike by car to prettier places out of town. For safety reasons, some people will take cars rather than walk to the shops. It is an unhealthy situation. I heard at the Joint Committee that Horsell High Street would have a 20 mph speed limit. When I asked Cllr Kemp some years ago what steps could be taken to reduce speed limits and improve road safety and air quality in Maybury, I got no satisfactory answer. Even the idea of painting speed limits on local roads fell on deaf ears.

Finally, my hope for Woking is for a healthier environment, with fewer fast food places, better roads and pavements to encourage walking, and a fair and open planning system which cares for everyone's amenity and health. People on this side of town are getting a rather raw deal. This is a residential area but complaints/concerns are dismissed or dealt with in a way that puts religious venues and businesses above the needs of all council tax payers.

M Meinke