



Date: 20 May 2012

Mr Chris Banks
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West Sussex
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Your ref 2116

Dear Mr Banks

Woking Borough Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to the Woking Borough Council's (WBC) paper on the implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The main concerns of our Residents Association (KRA) are on decision making especially in the handling of planning applications and effective enforcement. NPPF should be read alongside the emerging view from the Department for Communities and Local Government on the involvement of local communities. The paper produced by WBC for the Inspector includes very little on decision making and enforcement and yet both are key as to whether the Council are implementing all the policies contained in the NPPF and whether in enacting new legislation they are taking their communities with them.

WBC's involvement of local people in the decision making is negligible and from the proposed policy there appears to be little, if any, proposed change. NPPF states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. When handling a major planning application WBC concentrate on the economic aspect and the social, environmental impact of their decisions are secondary. This cannot be right. How can any Council fully embrace the social and environmental aspect of major decisions if they keep bodies, like ours, at arm's length? Once a planning application has been submitted the Council go into lock down especially on sharing reports from important bodies such as the County's highways department. The Minister in his forward to the publication of the NPPF wrote; 'This 'planning' should be a collective enterprise. Yet, in recent years, planning has tended to exclude, rather than to include, people and communities. In part, this has been a result of targets being imposed, and decisions taken, by bodies remote from them.'

For too long communities, like ours, have not been involved in the decision making on particular planning applications and their impact in their local area – whether it be about what happens to local amenities, how local services are delivered, or how new development is planned. The Localism Act 2011, which should be enacted alongside the NPPF, set about to change past practice. In recent years we have seen planning decisions taken that will significantly change the character of the area in which we live and change that, for the majority of residents, is detrimental to the village centre. Decisions have not only ignored the views of the local residents but also the views of Ward Councillors who represent this area. This cannot be right there is a requirement for more transparency and greater involvement of local bodies like residents associations. We live



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within the community and therefore are in a good position to inform the decision makers on how a plan will impact on the social and environment of a particular community.

The Knaphill Residents Association do not believe that WBC are planning to take sufficient action to embrace section 8 'Promoting healthy communities' in their enactment of the NPPF.

Turning to the question of enforcement, the general feeling amongst many residents in Knaphill is that WBC fails to meet the criteria as laid down in section 207 of NPPF. This is especially true when handling complaints against big business even complaints about noise nuisance and breaches of planning conditions. Some companies appear to be able to breach planning conditions on a regular basis and no action is taken. WBC appears to want to work with businesses rather than showing serious concern for the living environment of local residents. This is yet another reason why residents in the Knaphill area have little confidence in the way WBC operate the planning system in their area. The general opinion of the local community is that WBC considers Knaphill to be sufficiently distant from the town centre to be unworthy of time, proper investment of meaningful planning.

Yours faithfully,

Philip Stubbs
Secretary to Knaphill Residents Association