

**NOTE BY GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL REGARDING STUDENTS & THE A3**

**(made in response to matters raised on 13<sup>th</sup> June)**

**Students – further policy?**

1. The Council has acknowledged the impact of students on housing in Guildford. It has done so in two specific ways.
2. First, in terms of anticipated increased student numbers, it has made provision for them. No-one has suggested higher provision, and Guildford Residents Association suggested 23dpa amounts to over-provision. This is robust provision. That judgement is reinforced when taking into account the considerable pipeline student accommodation being provided by the University. This includes a further 1,151 bedspaces in terms of the current build out at Manor Park to be completed by Autumn 2019. A further approximately 1,000 bedspaces are planned in tranches to the end of 2021.
3. It appears common ground that the current student pressures are reflected in the OAN figures (students being included in the demographics and indeed perhaps unwittingly contributing to some of the previous unexplained population change), the house prices, and availability etc. Again, no-one has suggested this has been overlooked in the calculations of OAN, although GRA and GGG have stressed the impact of students.
4. Second, the Council has considered whether a more stringent policy is needed in the plan but determined only on the inclusion of an “expectation” – which it is to be noted the University still objects to. The Council contends that is still justified as setting the framework for any future discussions in respect of which this issue becomes relevant.
5. The Council currently maintains that this position is robust – and sound.
6. Guildford is a University town, and a relatively new one. It has and always will have a large number of students in accommodation out of university accommodation. Whilst clearly recognising the impact of students, when taking into account all considerations the Council sees no justification in seeking to change that state of affairs, given amongst other matters the importance of the University to the town and the need for a choice of student accommodation, but seeks to ensure that proportions are acceptable.
7. In practical terms the Council has planned for the future accommodation needs of students taking into account the University supply and the approach of the University coupled with the specific increase made for the higher end of their aspirational aims for increased student numbers.
8. Any system to limit the use of housing for students would be very difficult to construct, let alone enforce.

(See 4.2.16-18 of the Plan for a further discussion on this issue. In the plan students are appropriately identified as an issue and a matter to be monitored, and separate consideration is given to purpose built student accommodation (which won't just be restricted to the University).)

### **Highways Infrastructure/RIS**

9. Concern has been expressed as to the plan relying upon the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) schemes, particularly in relation to the RIS Road Period 2 scheme on the A3 at Guildford.
10. In summary response, the Council makes three short points:
  - i. First, it is consistent Highways England's (HE) own guidance<sup>1</sup>, as well as with principles of good planning, that Road Investment Schemes (RIS) are taken account of in Local Plans.
  - ii. Second, in any event, built into the Local Plan are mechanisms such that if the RIS scheme in relation to the A3 is ultimately delayed there is a degree of flexibility to address such an eventuality.

In particular, there are opportunities for the promoters of the strategic sites to invest more in and to accelerate the delivery of non-highway sustainable transport schemes, where such schemes can both 'retain capacity' and create 'headroom' on the A3 by respectively providing for non-car trips from the site and also shifting a proportion of existing traffic from the A3 to other modes.

That alternative options have been appropriately considered can be illustrated by the Guildford Local Plan Viability Update (2017).<sup>2</sup> It considered the development viability of the Plan as a whole. For both Blackwell Farm and Gosden Hill Farm, for robustness, this included the application of the full identified costs of both new rail station and Sustainable Movement Corridor sections, as well as their other identified transport infrastructure costs. Both strategic sites were identified to be viable.

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<sup>1</sup> *'The strategic road network: Planning for the future – A guide to working with Highways England on planning matters'* [Highways England, September 2015 (GBC-LPSS-SD-049)] provides:

*"20. The Roads Investment Strategy (RIS) programme is the Government's primary means of investing significantly in the SRN. Our Delivery Plan 2015-2020 sets out an ambitious 5-year investment plan to operate, maintain and modernise the strategic road network in the context of the RIS.*

*21. These investments will bring about essential and material improvements in the performance of the network and facilitate growth. They can change the land-use around the SRN, and can unlock or encourage new developments in the surrounding area. In this context the planning landscape in terms of local plans and other planning applications is therefore an essential factor to consider so that **the local plans are consistent with, and appropriately plan for RIS interventions.**"*

(emphasis added)

<sup>2</sup> Council's Submission document 31 [GBC-LPSS-SD-031].

iii. Third, and again in any event, HE have confirmed that planned development up to 2024 is not dependent upon the RIS Road Period 2 scheme. By this time the Council will have had to review the plan, in order to comply with their statutory duties. Any delay or uncertainty in relation to the A3 scheme (which is not addressed by the flexibility mentioned above) would be accounted for in this review.

11. The Council could not ignore the RIS schemes, or plan on the basis of them not going ahead. That would be unsound. It has planned in accordance with them, but identified them as vulnerabilities and given appropriate consideration to planning for what can occur if the RIS schemes change.