

GUILDFORD CONSTITUENCY LABOUR PARTY

DUNSFOLD PARK – PROOF OF EVIDENCE

PLANNING APPEAL: APP/R3650/A/08/2089143/NWF

1. Introduction

I am Keith Chesterton and am Chair of the Guildford Constituency Labour Party (CLP), which I am representing at this Inquiry.

Guildford Constituency, as well as the town of Guildford, also includes Cranleigh & a number of villages.

I was a Guildford Borough Councillor from 1999 till 2007, when I retired from the Council. From September 2000 to May 2003, I was the Council Executive Member responsible for the Environment.

I was a Member of the Council's Environment Committee throughout my time as a councillor.

I was the delegate from the Council, together with 2 officers, to the "Local Renewables Freiburg" international conference in June 2007, on local action for secure & sustainable energy – delegates from 37 countries.

I was a Member of the Guildford Partnership Transport Committee (& its vice-chair for 2 years), which later became the Surrey County Council Local Committee for Guildford, but still responsible for local transport schemes.

I am Chair of the Guildford Walking Forum, a member of the Guildford Cycle Forum, have walked & cycled in the Dunsfold area for over 30 years & organised both walking & cycling events starting from Dunsfold.

At this Inquiry, I am speaking solely for the Guildford Constituency Labour Party & not for any other organisations of which I am a member.

2. Reasons for support of the appeal

The Guildford Constituency Labour Party supports the appeal on the grounds of affordable housing, housing supply in general, & for the proposal's environmental benefits. We also have a few comments on other aspects of the proposal.

As extensive evidence has already been presented to the Inquiry on these topics, especially by Mr Leahy on affordable housing & by Dr Ellis for Friends of the Earth on environmental benefits, we will not repeat this at length.

3. Affordable Housing

There is a large unmet need within the Waverley & Guildford boroughs within & outside of the Guildford CLP area for affordable housing.

Waverley's Housing Survey shows an unmet need of 622 houses p.a. Waverley has achieved an average of 80 affordable house a year over recent years. Its witness, Mr Swanton, stated that none of the Council's plans would make this figure any larger in the future. This leaves a deficit of 542 affordable houses pa.

The 2005 Guildford Housing Needs Survey (extract attached) shows an unmet need of 696 dwellings p.a. so Waverley can expect no help within the Guildford borough for its housing deficit.

The Surrey Rural Partnership (Waverley Borough Council is a member) in its Rural Strategy Review 2008/9 Consultation of Dec 2008 has a SWOT analysis for rural communities. Under threats it puts "lack of affordable housing", under opportunities "affordable housing" and under weaknesses it puts "lack of affordable and sheltered housing".

The local MP, Jeremy Hunt, stated that affordable housing was one of the major issues raised with him, though he did not suggest any solutions.

Waverley has affordable housing as one of its 2 top priorities (Mr Swanton).
(It is listed as Priority Four in Waverley's Corporate Plan)

The Dunsfold Park development will provide 900 affordable homes.

Waverley did not give this feature of the development anywhere near the weight it should have done, against this background of strong need, the priority the Council has stated it gives to affordable housing & the Council's own inability to have any other way of satisfying this need.

In our view this feature of the development is a very strong point in favour of the proposed development.

4. Housing in general

There is a need for a significant increase in supply of housing of all types in the SE generally, in Surrey & in Guildford and Waverley in particular.

The Government's Barker Review makes clear this need and the contribution an increase in supply would make towards making all housing cheaper.

The draft SE plan gives a minimum target for new housing in Waverley.

Mr Owen, in his proof, has made clear the constraints on development within the Waverley borough & Mr Arrick has given extensive evidence on the difficulties Waverley will face, without the Dunsfold Park development, in meeting even this minimum target.

The site is a brownfield site & since the Second World War, has not been green field. We support the proposal to build on this site to obtain more housing.

5. Environment

Ameliorating the causes of Climate Change is a global & national priority.

The Government in its PPS1, made clear the great importance that development plans should give to climate change. But things have moved on even from when this was published.

Professor Nicholas Stern in his 2006 Stern Review laid out the necessity of the world taking immediate action to tackle climate change. He has written a book "A blueprint for a safer planet", which will be published later this week, on Thursday April 2nd. In an interview on this published in The Guardian on Monday March 30th, he states: "When it (the Stern Review) came out, people thought I'd overegged the omelette. But all the things people were looking at turned out to be worse than they thought. Doing nothing looks even more reckless than it did a few years ago."

Waverley puts "Environment" as Priority One in its Corporate Plan. However, regrettably, within this priority, climate change has only a small portion devoted to it.

The Dunsfold Park proposals incorporate housing built to code level 6 for energy & water on the code for sustainable homes. With the biomass CHP plant, it will be a zero carbon development. This will give an environmental performance, well above any other built or planned developments in the SE. It is on a par with some of the best European developments such as the renowned [Vauban \(Freiburg\) one or with Växjö in Sweden](#).

As Freiburg, known as Germany's green city, is Guildford's twin town, I have visited there on several occasions, as well as being a delegate to the 2007 international conference. I have been to Vauban, a suburb of Freiburg, on at least 3 occasions. Doubts have been expressed by a number of people on whether parking barns some distance from the dwellings, as proposed by Dunsfold Park, would work. I have observed these in successful operation at Vauban 400m away from the dwellings, with cars not parked outside the houses.

Växjö is a city in the South of Sweden, with a population of 80,000 in an area of 1,600 square kilometres. It is, again, renowned for its environmental achievements. It has been working on reducing its need for reducing fossil fuel use since 1993. In 1997 it installed a 100MW biomass (woodchip) CHP, with small-scale biomass for villages. 97% of the population is on biomass. It was (2007) setting up a bio-gasification centre to produce fuel for cars. So, although on a much smaller scale, Dunsfold Park is proposing to emulate Växjö.

It has been suggested by some that this is the "right development in the wrong place", because of concerns about transport. However, the detailed Transport proposals & the priorities given to housing for workers on the site, should reduce car journeys to & from the area by an amount that will reduce them below those from a typical large scale suburban development in the Surrey area. In addition, inside Dunsfold Park the discouragements to using cars and the incentives not to, should make living there a low carbon activity.

Overall, the proposed plans would make Dunsfold Park an exemplar development, not just for the SE but for the UK.

6. Other Issues

The CLP, as a long-term supporter of co-operative working, also welcomes the proposals for a community land trust, for when the development is finished.

7. Conclusion

The proposed Dunsfold Park development gives a large benefit to affordable housing and makes a major local contribution to ameliorating climate change & providing a model for other developments.

These two issues are so important that they should outweigh any disadvantages seen by Waverley Council and other opponents in other areas.

In our view, the appeal should be allowed.

Keith Chesterton, Chair for the Guildford Constituency Labour Party.