

# RE APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION AT DUNSFOLD AERODROME BY DUNSFOLD PARK LIMITED

Planning Authority's Reference WA/2008/0788

Planning Inspectorate Reference APP/R3650/A/08/2089143/NWF

## **Statement of support on behalf of Cranleigh and the Villages branch of the Labour Party**

### **1. Introduction**

I am Lynda MacDermott; I have lived in Cranleigh for 23 years. I have been the Chair of Cranleigh and the Villages Labour party for more than 10 years and am a former chair of Surrey County Labour party. I am also Chair of West Surrey Co-operative Party. We have many members and supporters in the villages and throughout Surrey. Cranleigh and the Villages Labour party has a unique position as we are part of Guildford Parliamentary Constituency and Waverley Borough. We engage with the wider public in a variety of ways and based on those contacts and our own experience, we have developed and pursued our own vision for the area over the years.

We wish to voice our strong support for the proposed development at Dunsfold aerodrome - mainly because it includes a good percentage of affordable homes and because of its sensitivity to environmental issues, but also because we believe it can be a vital lever for change which will favourably impact the future prosperity and happiness of all of Waverley's residents. We believe it includes many features we have identified over the years as specific needs of the villages and which we have used to put forward our vision for Cranleigh and the Villages<sup>a</sup>, which has included the following actions:-

We have long been campaigning at local and county level, pressing for more affordable homes for the people of Cranleigh and their children, which has become a most pressing issue.

We have supported the Cranfold Job Seekers club which helps local people into employment and have called for Waverley to address the need for job creation locally in its policies (tourism for example)

Worried about Cranleigh's carbon footprint, some years ago we put forward proposals to encourage research into the development of a light railway link with Guildford.

We have promoted where possible the redevelopment of the Wey and Arun Canal and called for some imaginative thinking to bring it into focus as a player in the local transport set up.

We understand the transport issues in the area and on bus travel we have long been pushing for a service which enables you to live in a village without a car and not be isolated.

The Dunsfold development proposal gives us some hope that we might see some parts of our vision become reality.

## **2. Affordable housing - Why has the lack of affordable housing been such an ongoing problem locally?**

i The lack of affordable housing has been discussed at length within Surrey County without much real impact from the County or Boroughs on housing numbers. During the EiP of the South East plan in 2006 the failure to provide affordable housing was acknowledged by all. Nick Dexter from the Government Housing Supply Unit made a plea then for a step-change in the targeted housing figures.

In 2002, I organised a county-wide conference with Lord Falconer, Housing Minister, Ann Osborn<sup>b</sup>, Head of Policy development at SCC and other County Council officers on this pressing issue, which even then was urgent. Ann Osbourn had consulted widely with key players in the county to produce a Community Strategy for Surrey – **THE** key issue in promoting economic, social and environmental well-being of the area was identified in the consultation as lack of Affordable Housing. Some key facts were given by Ms Osbourn; average income was 42% higher in Surrey than the national average, housing costs were twice the national average. A subsequent document, "Housing to underpin Economic Success"<sup>c</sup> contained key recommendations about affordable housing some of which have not yet been implemented.

In my preparation for the conference and trying to understand the complications of housing process, I went to Waverley Borough Council Offices and bought for £7.50 this Housing Land Availability Statement.<sup>d</sup> In that, and in a discussion with a Waverley housing officer, it was made very clear that it was felt that the borough had reached its target, set some years earlier and either couldn't identify any new land for housing. There was little available land I was told, and that they relied, on windfalls, on developers wanting to build affordable housing. Only in 2003 did the Waverley Community Strategy suggest that they even started to look for sites which might be suitable for affordable housing. And so despite a housing assessment need even then of 5-600 per annum we have been building 50-80 affordable homes per year

ii One of the other reasons for the scarcity of affordable housing is that much of the housing in Waverley that is built as in-fill housing - small developments which don't have to include affordable housing unless they reach a size threshold which in Waverley is 15. In Waverley, housing developments over this number must include 30 % of affordable housing, but under

that number, there isn't any need to do so. Even 30% is a lower percentage of affordable housing than in Guildford 35%.

This windfall at Dunsfold aerodrome is a unique opportunity. We welcome it and don't want it to be wasted. This plan now offers 900 affordable homes available to be built, on a brown field site over a span of ten years. It can begin to mop up the backlog and give some hope for the future. We want our borough to engage with the developer as this process develops and come out with the best possible solutions for the people of Waverley. We need to see the political will to provide what is needed.

iii Some groups would like to think that there is no will to address these housing issues in Waverley, amongst its residents. That really is not the case. One example is from 2007, when I attended, in a personal capacity, a consultation to look at how housing issues affect the local area, run by Fordham Associates<sup>2</sup>. At that meeting one person, a representative of a group who believe no more housing at all should be built in the area, tried persuade the focus group to object to the idea of any more building in the borough at the outset and refuse to participate. He failed to do that; the people there knew we need homes. The representative left in anger and he did not participate when the group voted to continue with the consultation. From that consultation the key message concerned the need to ensure that Waverley Borough Council had a clear understanding of the need and demand for affordable housing in the borough.

### **3. The future of the Cranfold area if we don't build more affordable housing soon.**

We believe that without more affordable homes, the local villages could face stagnation and decline.

i Much has been said about Surrey having no room left. We don't agree- and not only don't we agree, but in 2002, neither did a columnist of the Sunday times." There are plenty of spaces to build round here....A disused aerodrome across the woodland could be easily redeveloped with thousands of pleasant homes...Similar aerodromes are dotted about the SE. Far from being "full" the countryside is basically empty and it is increasingly derelict" Jonathan Miller – Mean Fields Column –Sunday Times June 9<sup>th</sup> 2002<sup>o</sup>

ii There is a serious lack of any affordable housing in the borough. The cheapest housing in Waverley costs 10 times a modest average annual salary. At present there is little hope for the young people of the area of being able to buy a home in Waverley in which to raise a family. Instead they have to move away to find accommodation and jobs to build independent lives and we lose their talents . Or else they stay and are often constrained to live in

overcrowded conditions in their parents' homes. Other examples exist where relationships have broken down, but people cannot move out. Indeed the problems which arise from this tension lead to the creation in 2003 of a mediation service for families who were simply stuck with each other.<sup>f</sup> We hear of examples like this on the doorstep and when we have street stalls, or telephone canvassing.

iii An area which loses its young people just will not flourish; it will lose its vitality, its links with modern developments; its sense of excitement and progress.

Over time, a lack of young families will mean that schools will close and if that happens, a vicious circle of decline would begin; no more families would chose to come or stay. The area will become a stagnant backwater, with few fresh ideas – and lovely though we oldies are, a healthy society needs diversity, people of all ages. The 2007 consultation by Fordham Associates talks about preventing Waverley from becoming a geriatric enclave.

Without more affordable housing the Cranfold area would face a self sustaining spiral into decline. Shops would close, the arts centre, petrol station, the pubs; jobs would vanish; people would have to travel more to shop and play.

iv Our area needs young people and families to keep it alive and make it vibrant. They need affordable housing. And they need jobs, and local jobs.

One tangible negative effect of lack of affordable housing that has already been identified, but will increase without more local housing, is the way that the lack of affordable housing now contributes directly to the congestion and pollution of our roads. The flows of service and other workers who commute into Surrey each day are a recognised feature of our traffic jams.

They would like to live near their jobs but people on ordinary incomes just cannot afford to live here. With an ever aging population Waverley is going to need more people to support it. If they can't afford to live here they will have to travel in, with all that that entails. Besides its environmental and economic effects, this movement is also a drain on people's reserves, both financial, physical and emotional. People need to be able to live nearer to where they work.

v Indeed we welcome the provisions envisaged for jobs in the scheme and also the focus on home working, with an emphasis on Smart technology and smart Growth with no carbon footprint. The times they are a-changing and with the advent of the Internet, home-working is much more possible. Instead of working in isolated homes dotted around the area, this development gives home workers a chance to meet, share resources work out new ways of working and doing business; envisage change even – I know that's a scary word locally, but it can be good for the good.....

#### **4 The sustainable aspects of the development as levers for change.**

i This development is planned with a view to sustainability which is unmatched in the area and of which we could only dream until now.

We support the inclusion of a Combined Heat and Power plant and in our county council campaign in June we shall be calling for more such plants to deal with waste locally as in this development. And of course we welcome the homes which are designed with a view to minimizing their carbon foot print

ii Other speakers with more knowledge than I on environmental issues will have focused on the sustainable benefits of the development but for me, I want to concentrate on how this development could help bring about a sea change in local thinking and acting.

Take for example the questions it raises about transport – a key issue in our area. Unlike other groups who have submitted their views, we don't necessarily see the new town as a problem but as an opportunity.

We believe that the Dunsfold proposal can be a driver for change both in the use of vehicles within villages and also for increased and better bus service use between villages and towns. We have been campaigning for more and better buses and light railway and/or canal link to Guildford for years...the necessity to find alternatives to the car grows ever stronger

We can't carry on using our cars as we have over the last 20 years. In 2009 we have to leave our cars behind and find alternatives. It's too cynical and hopeless of CRPE to say that they don't think people will change. We **have** to change our behaviour in choice and use of cars and other ways too.

In Cranleigh we see daily the blatant disregard for parking restrictions that goes on; the arrogance that inconveniences everyone else and the laziness that means many able people can only walk two steps to a shop. The Parking strategy outlined in the plan will encourage residents of the development into good habits – In recent discussions about a new hospital in Cranleigh, a local GP emphasised the need for his patients to get out of their cars and do some walking...

I'm a walker and a cyclist too and the development encourages this with cycle and walking paths. The local area is ideal for cycling and walking – even for oldies - it's flat and lovely – I expect electric buggies will be accepted there and it'll be easy to use them.

In this way, we believe that the proposed development can address the transport issue it has been said to cause and offers solutions that will make the other villages think too. We think that it will be a real driver to make Waverley residents see that that the reality of addressing climate change involves everyone of us in 2009. We are in this together! All our children and grandchildren will be affected, both opponents and supporters. Climate change will not recognise NIMBYs

It is possible to engender change by indirect means. Take for instance the humble bus pass. Since we've been using ours, my colleagues and I have discovered a whole new world of public transport and use the bus as often as possible now. It gets us around the area with a minimum of carbon footprint. The Dunsfold aerodrome development, by focussing on public transport will encourage its use over the wider borough. From 2010 boroughs will HAVE to cut emissions in their area. It's not an option. Waverley has to get us out of our cars!

## **5 In summary**

We believe that instead of fearing the development Waverley Borough and residents should embrace it. Through dialogue become part of it and face the future here with confidence and excitement that for once we'll be leading the way.

We believe that this development

- will bring hope to people who presently can see no way opportunities for living in the area.
- will ensure that the local villages and local heritage stay alive and vibrant
- will enable us to play our part in making lifestyle changes that can save the planet for future generations.

Cranleigh and the villages Labour party strongly urges that the appeal be upheld. To quote President Obama – Yes we can!

## Notes

- a. Cranleigh Labour leaflet
- b. PowerPoint slides
- c. Housing to underpin economic success – SCC report
- d. 2002 Housing Land Availability Statement
- e. Jonathan Miller – Mean Fields Column – Sunday Times June 9<sup>th</sup> 2002
- f. Waverley Options magazine