



COMPTON PARISH COUNCIL

NOTES FROM A MEETING WITH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING OFFICERS AT GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

13th February 2026

Present: Cllrs S Mallet (SM)(in the chair), R Nagaty (RN), N Wyschna (NW)
Mrs L Timberlake (LT)
Borough Cllrs C Houston (CH) and D Williams (DW)
NP Planning officers Dan Knowle (DK), Ben Mayo (BM)

In attendance: The Clerk, Mrs J Cadman

DK set out initial steps:

1. Assess what skills are available
2. Who will contribute. Technical support is no longer available.
3. How is the plan to be funded – Central Funding has now been withdrawn.
4. Getting the Parish area designated would be the first step in engaging the community

GBC is producing a new Local Plan. It is currently at the evidence stage, and its shape should become clear by end 2026. The Government is currently consulting on the National Planning Policy Framework, which is a radical departure from the current NPPF and will have an impact on the Local Plan. The Government wants the process of creating a Local Plan to be streamlined and to take 3 years from beginning to end, rather than the current average of 7. It is also the case that, as soon as the Local Plan is finished, the review process will start.

NPs have to be aligned with the needs of the Borough and can plan for more houses than the Local Plan, but not for less.

The NPPF specifies that NPs should allocate land for development, not must.

Benefit of a NP

1. CIL funding: (Community infrastructure levy, paid by a developer for infrastructure in the parish. Without a NP the Parish will receive 15% of the contribution, with a NP this rises to 25%.
2. Local input into planning decisions: the NP would sit alongside the Local Plan and would be used to determine planning decisions.

There are 7 parishes in the Borough that have completed a NP. DK suggested talking to them to see what they feel the benefits are to them.

Housing numbers

At present GBC cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing supply, which leaves the borough open to speculative development. The old annual target for housing was 562, it is now 1100.

Process

The process is statutory once the Parish is designated as a neighbourhood area.

The NP goes through consultation with residents and then is submitted to GBC, who then take over the process. Further consultation takes place, then an Examiner is appointed.

The NP needs to have regard to and be compliant with the NPPF. It must be in general conformity with general strategic matters in the Local Plan and must be compliant with legislation.

The Examiner will normally recommend changes to the NP before it goes to referendum in the parish.

If the Local Plan is still being developed, the NP will be checked against the current Local Plan, but regard needs to be kept on the emerging Local Plan to ensure that the NP does not go out of date when the new Local Plan is completed.

Local Plan

Currently at the first stage: issues and options.

The second stage, consultation, is where it must be monitored.

The Borough Council has to start this process by April of 2027, for the plan to be adopted in 2029/30. The local development scheme sets out the process, but the time frame is decided by the Council, not by officers.

Content of Neighbourhood Plan

It has to have a land use policy – how and where development happens. – but this needn't be major.

Other than that, there is no prescribed content. The bigger the Plan, the more scrutiny is required and more evidence needed. It might be possible to consider having just 2 or 3 policies, which would be much easier to manage.

NW: what difference will the unitary situation make?

DK: this change will not affect Parish Councils. The Unitary Authorities will take over from the Borough Councils and go through the same process. The local planning authority will become West Surrey.

Compton

- The Majority of Compton is Green Belt.
- There is already substantial area designated for housing which is not yet built. (Blackwell Farm).
- There have also been a number of speculative developments on fields which have come to nothing.
- There is also a prospective housing development in the village (Harrow)
- The Parish is quite well protected, will a NP give us extra protection?

DK responded:

- County matters are excluded from NPs, so the traffic issues through Compton cannot be considered.
- The NP can set out guidance on housing figures but it cannot set out a lesser figure than the Local Plan. A NP cannot influence housing numbers.
- Blackwell Farm will be included in GBC's housing numbers going forward, with a projection of 1000 of the proposed 1800 being built in the next 10 years.

RN commented: design aspects are built into a NP, providing they don't conflict they should allow some influence going forward.

New NPPF

- Introduces new national decision making policies. Development and management policies which take primacy over local policies and which cannot be impacted on.
- Design codes: which is more technical than design policies (See Ash emerging NP)

RN: asked if it is possible to affect where a site joins with the road.

DK: If the NP can show evidence that there is a better route, this can be included. Highways would need to be involved, as well as the developers, but Highways have not been involved in NPs in the past.

SM: How can the Green Belt give protection as distinct from a NP?

DK: A NP can designate local green spaces, areas of land that are special to local people: eg: village greens. A lot of the Borough is fields, and cannot all be described as special. A local green space is usually within a settlement, not around it.

SM: so we would have to rely on the Green Belt to protect our village:

DK: Green Belt is strong and is it probably not possible to do any more to protect it.

Strategic gaps can be used as a buffer, where for instance a housing estate would finish too near a busy road, but this is rare.

A NP should not get involved in strategic matters. AONB and Green Belt are strategic matters.

SM: how realistic is it that a NP would be taken properly into account?

DK: NPs are development plan documents and will always be taken into account alongside the Local Plan.

SM: would a NP have a better chance of success if we were to designate one field or one area for potential housing? Would that help protect the rest of the village?

DK: Most NPs have not made site allocations, so this has not been tested. At the moment this is not necessary, the new NPPF says 'should' not 'must'. If the NP can prove that this has been given consideration, that should be sufficient. But this is a new era, so what will happen is not clear.

GBC can give some practical support, help and advice and can often do some mapping. The plan should be more spatial than in the past. DK recommended Google 'My Map' as a starting point, which GBC can then make into a parish map. GBC will also review the document as it evolves and give feedback.

DK recommended talking to Ash PC, finding out how they have done their plan in under two years.

NW: what sort of volunteers are we looking for?

DK: architects, planners, surveyors, would all be very helpful. Also necessary to engage local land owners.