

**Effingham Parish Council/Bookham Vanguard Liaison Meeting Minutes**  
**10.00am, Wed, 7 Aug 2013**  
**Parish Room, 3 Home Barn Court, The Street, Effingham KT24 5LG**

**Attendees**

Cllr Arnold Pindar - Chair, Effingham Parish Council  
Cllr Ian Symes - Vice Chair, Effingham Parish Council  
Cllr Liz Hogger - Effingham Parish Council, Guildford Borough Council  
Cllr Andrea Lightfoot - Effingham Parish Council  
Clare Ritchie - Clerk, Effingham Parish Council  
Trevor Sokell - Bookham Vanguard Leader, Task Force  
Peter Seaward - Bookham Vanguard Deputy Leader, Task Force & Chairman Bookham Residents Association  
Neil McDonald - Bookham Vanguard Leader, Housing Working Group (ex Director of Housing Planning, DCLG)  
Roger Hutton - Bookham Vanguard Member, Housing Working Group (ex Planning Consultant)  
Michael Agius - Bookham Vanguard Leader, Infrastructure Working Group & Chairman, Woodlands Road Residents Association

**1. Introductions**

Cllr Pindar chaired the meeting and made introductions

**2. Overview of Bookham Vanguard**

T.Sokell gave an overview of Bookham Vanguard as an organisation, its background and remit.

**3. Overview of Effingham Village Plan**

Cllr Pindar gave an overview of progress to date on the Village Plan and on the timetable for Guildford Borough Council's Local Plan.

**4. Questions & Concerns**

Cllr Hogger introduced the Council's specific concerns on the consultation on the tests to be used during the green belt review, specifically that the announcement of 'final' green belt tests' were made before details of consultation responses were published, and seemed to take no account taken of views of Effingham Parish Council. The issue was so serious for Effingham village that the council had felt it necessary to go public on its concerns to make sure its views were listened to. T. Sokell said he thought that had been an unnecessary step since Bookham Vanguard had already offered to meet to discuss the concerns. Cllr Hogger emphasised that the Council was pleased to meet with Bookham Vanguard to plan a way forward and have the opportunity to put in place a liaison mechanism for the future.

**4.1. Consultation**

As the green belt area in Bookham immediately adjoins Effingham, the Council considered it key to comment on the proposed tests and criteria to be used by Bookham Vanguard but were disappointed that these did not appear to be taken into account. R. Hutton stated that they had.

The council also requested that a further breakdown of the organisations who responded to the consultation and whether these comments could be separated out, particularly in the case of comments from potential developers. It also suggested that comments from individuals should identify whether an individual is part of either the Bookham Vanguard forum or taskforce. Both these pieces of information would be helpful both to residents and interested parties and in helping promote the transparency and confidence in Bookham Vanguard's review processes.

Bookham Vanguard advised that comments had been received from 5 developers, 9 statutory consultees and 196 individuals but could not provide further information due to an omission to request permission for publication on the consultation form.

#### 4.2 Evidence of Housing Needs

Bookham Vanguard confirmed that the household consultation carried out by Bookham Vision in 2009, while pre-dating the Localism Act, provided evidence of housing needs and had a high response rate due to the delivery/collection method used. They are also working with Mole Valley Housing Association to ensure social housing needs are flagged.

#### 4.3 Shared Vision

The council is concerned that Bookham Vanguard documents and communication appear to imply that development growth is inevitable and would like clarity on whether the group are representing the 'top down' approach driven by the local authority's allocations rather than a 'bottom up' approach based on the community's needs and preferences.

These concerns have also been voiced by a number of both Effingham and Bookham residents to the Council both by email, during Council meetings and at the recent Village Day event.

Bookham Vanguard confirmed that it has to be a combination of both elements, as well as taking into account factors such as an aging population profile, lack of space in Bookham's current settlement area and impacts on infrastructure. It was stressed that currently there are no firm proposals for consideration and as soon as these are available they will be published for consultation. The way in which Bookham would get to a shared vision is through such consultation and the Referendum

All agreed on the importance of communication during such processes and that regular and clear communications may help both alleviate some of the community concerns and answer common questions.

#### 4.4 Declarations of Interest

As an elected body, all councillors have to declare and make publically available any pecuniary interest not only for themselves but also their spouses. It was suggested that this may be a useful process for Bookham Vanguard to undertake to help promote transparency and confidence within the community, and in order to be secure against a legal challenge. In particular anyone who had links to or an interest as a developer should decalre this in public

Bookham Vanguard confirmed that they have a Conflict of Interest policy under their constitution which meets the requirements of the Localism Act, and that two members of the Bookham Vanguard Forum have pecuniary interests. However, they do not feel further information, other than meeting minutes, are required to be published but noted the suggestion and will discuss a possible change of policy at the forum.

#### 4.5 Woodlands Road

Woodlands Road straddles both Effingham and Bookham and the Council and residents would like clarification on how the green belt review methodology will tie in with other

relevant processes and strategies such as NPPF and MVDC's Core Strategy particularly as several sites suggested for the Bookham Neighbourhood Plan are on green belt adjoining or close to the boundary of Woodlands Road.

Bookham Vanguard stated that the green belt review tests are only for the review and that Test 2 will not deal with the suitability of land for development. When the process is more advanced Bookham Vanguard will have discussions with the statutory authorities.

It was agreed and noted that residents' concerns on the Woodlands Road issue were best allayed through clear, regular communications.

#### 4.6 Authority to Conduct Review

Bookham Vanguard stated that a meeting with the Minister for Planning in May has confirmed that responsibility for the green belt review is with the local authority and Bookham Vanguard is a sub-contractor who will submit recommendations to MVDC who retain responsibility for consistency checks and balancing.

#### 4.7 Co-operation

Both the Council and Bookham Vanguard agreed that timely liaison and communication were the key to the way forward both between the two organisations and to local residents of both Effingham and Bookham.

### **5. Way Forward**

#### 5.1 Review of Tests

The Council asked that Bookham Vanguard consider revisions to the tests to take account of the Council's original consultation response. In particular,

Test 1 'Would the development ... lead to the reduction or closing of an existing gap between VILLAGES. If so....' (This is consistent with NPPF criteria for purposes of GB – NPPF para 80). N McDonald commented that, by referring to gaps between "built-up areas", Bookham Vanguard's proposed wording allowed account to be taken of both gaps between different villages and gaps between different parts of the same village. This was important as arguably the most important gap to both Bookham and Effingham – the gap between Rectory Lane and The Lorne was a gap between two parts of Bookham.

Test 2 Revised test introduced 'existing use' of land, without explaining what this meant. Test 2 seems to incorporate a methodology for testing the 'suitability' of sites, not just whether they fulfil purpose of green belt. Must clarify all the mitigating factors and how they will be used in this test. Although a full and exhaustive definition of what is meant by reasonable use was probably not reasonable, residents should receive reassurance that neglect of land was not in itself sufficient to justify its suitability for development.

Test 3 'Would the development ... affect the setting of Bookham AND NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES, including any Conservation Areas? ....'

Bookham Vanguard said that, having considered all of the comments received in detail and discussed them at a Forum meeting, it was difficult to re-open them without potentially delaying the process as others might also ask for their representations to be reconsidered. Nevertheless, they said they would take away the suggestion that "and neighbouring villages" should be added to Test 3. An option might be a revision to the explanatory notes to make it clear that the wider context needed to be taken into account.

Bookham Vanguard stressed that the review has not yet been completed and firm proposals have not been developed. Once this stage has been reached consultation and discussion will be much more meaningful.

The Council expressed the view that clarification on the Bookham Vanguard's process for green belt review and assessing the suitability of land for development was essential to allay concerns of residents. The possibility of a legal challenge to Bookham Vanguard's review, by either residents or the Council, was discussed. Bookham Vanguard expressed the view that since they were a sub-contractor for Mole Valley District Council, they were not vulnerable to judicial review. The Parish Council consider that Mole Valley District Council may well be vulnerable to such legal action, and it was in everyone's interests that Bookham Vanguard's processes were such as to avoid giving cause for a legal challenge.

Bookham Vanguard agreed to give further consideration to a response to the Council's concerns.

#### 5.2 Communication

In the spirit of 4.7 above it was agreed to consider issuing a joint communique for publication on both Bookham Vanguard and the Council's website, detailing that the meeting had taken place and a summary of the discussions and outcome. The Council's Clerk will prepare notes on this meeting on which an agreed communique can be based..

#### 5.3 Timetable

Bookham Vanguard advised that the green belt review timetable is to be reviewed at a meeting of the Task Force next week. This may result in a delay to their original timetable to ensure it coincides and is driven by MVDC's timetable.

### **6. Date of Next Meeting**

10am, Tues 15th Oct 2013

Bookham Vanguard offered to host. Venue TBA