

Summary Notes of Points raised by of Effingham Parish Council and Effingham Residents Association with responses by Berkeley Homes at Meeting on 27th July 2026 concerning Effingham Lodge Farm also attended by Director Planning Development Guildford Borough Council

Meeting attendees representing their organisations:

Effingham Parish Council (EPC)

Liz Hogger, Chair
Paula Moss, Vice Chair

Effingham Residents Association (EFFRA)

Vivien White, Chairman
Bhupinder Mahi, Committee Member

Berkeley Homes (BH)

Kate Woods (Berkeley Homes – Snr. Development Manager)
Lisa Flounders (Property House)
Carys Williams (Property House)

Guildford Borough Council

Claire Upton-Brown, Director Planning Development

The meeting was without prejudice to all parties.

The main points raised by EPC and EFFRA with responses by BH are set out below.

- 1. Status of the proposed scheme.** It was contended that the emerging proposal must be proposed and assessed as an entirely new scheme and not in any way built on the previous scheme as this was only agreed because of very special circumstances from the public benefit of the delivery of a new school and other smaller public benefits. The proposed scheme of 600 dwellings would be a 60% increase of housing in Effingham outside of the established settlement area set out in the Local Plan. A strategic expansion of the village was assessed in the Local Plan as unsuitable mainly because of the “historically constrained” road network.
BH Response - Accepted this would be a new scheme independent of the defunct scheme and would be separately determined on its planning merits. This was confirmed by GBC.
- 2. Grey Belt Status of site** and strategic justification for the development. It was asserted that the site could not be regarded as Grey Belt without proper evidence and assessment. The assessment needed to look at the site both as a whole and in parcels and look at the wider Green Belt context. Elmbridge and Mole Valley Green Belt studies retained this tract of land because of its contribution to the gap between Guildford and the Leatherhead–Fetcham–Bookham urban area and to prevent a finger of urban sprawl extending out from that urban area. Elmbridge also identified it as helping to prevent the merging of Cobham with the Leatherhead urban conurbation. Footnote 7 of the NPPF also applies as two close by Conservation Areas would be affected by any development on the site. GBC’s Local Plan specifically excludes major expansions in villages close to Conservation Areas with this site close to two Conservation Areas.
BH Response – BH confirmed it would be basing its application on its assessment of the land as Grey Belt and would need to address these issues.
- 3. Application of NPPF Golden Rules** Any development of this site would need to satisfy the Golden Rules (NPPF para 156) to be approved under national planning guidelines. It is believed that major development on this site could not satisfy the infrastructure improvements requirements needed for highway and traffic congestion as little road improvements are possible due largely to the existing settlement and Conservation Area status. Public transport is poor and the station carpark is already over capacity. The Howard School will be unable to cope with the increased pupil numbers and traffic. The masterplan does not provide sufficient useable new green spaces dedicated for recreation which are also not buffer zones for the Ancient Woodland or designated Wildlife Corridors and which are unsuitable for recreation. The KGV could not cope with the extra demand without significantly enhanced facilities.
BH Response: BH accepted the scheme would need to satisfy the Golden Rules and confirmed that the public webinar had attracted a large amount of concern about traffic and transport impacts.

BH said it was incorrect that there was no useable green space in their proposals as their proposals include useable recreational open space which will be publicly accessible (this was also set out in their online webinar in July).

4. Concerns re EIA Scoping Report Request. Both EPC and EFFRA confirmed they would be commenting to GBC on this as they both have major concerns on what has been scoped out and what had been included. They were concerned that a number of environmental matters - Thornet Wood Ancient Woodland, ecological connectivity, heritage settings and wider landscape effects and interaction with AONB, SSSIs, and the Thames Heath Basin SPA, are sufficiently fundamental to influence the principle, scale and layout of any development and therefore cannot safely be deferred to reserved matters or planning conditions. The masterplan shown at the webinar appeared to have been produced without determining the environmental capacity of the site. For example whereas the previous agreed scheme had due to the Inspector's decision left the north of the site next to the Ancient Woodland and much of the eastern boundary where the wildlife corridor is as open as green space, the masterplan sought to build on much of this land. Specific concerns are:

- Size and height of development proposed with 4 storey buildings included
- Arbitrary 2km boundary for scoping which including scoping out views from the AONB such as from Polesden Lacey and the impact of the Wisley development. Instead impacts on receptors should be category specific.
- Landscape and heritage constraints have been ignored.
- Ancient Woodland – Full impact assessment needed as required by Natural England including impact of any soil disturbance, increased sound, light and change to the water table. Buffers of 15 metres minimum mandatory depending on scale of development, to be left semi natural including shrubs to dilute wind and human and domestic animals to be largely excluded from the buffers to avoid compaction of the soil affecting tree roots and impact on wildlife and fauna. Concern expressed that contrary to this the BH Masterplan showed this area with human and domestic animal activity directed to the buffers as walking/cycling/dog walking routes. Also concern that BH propose to leave an area of Ancient Woodland out of the masterplan which means it cannot be conditioned.
- Wildlife corridor – the wildlife corridor along the eastern edge of the site, designated in the Neighbourhood Plan ENP-ENV2, should have a minimum width of 100 metres, and is not suitable for human activity which would disturb or harm wildlife.
- Contamination – BH has confirmed asbestos-containing material has been identified in soil in locations away from buildings and the source and full extent remain uncertain. (4 out of 20 locations – 20%). As large scale illegal dumping of building material on the site said to contain asbestos and hidden in trenches was reported by residents prior to BH's purchase of the site, this contamination may be site wide. Because of the high risk to health with schools and residential and commercial properties nearby this must be fully investigated over the whole site before any application is submitted and cannot be left to planning conditions.

BH Response BH said it needed to build on the land allocated to the school in the previous plan. It said the 4 storey buildings being included in the EIA Scoping Request was a mistake. GBC asked that this be confirmed to them.

BH said it has extensive experience of dealing with contaminated sites and they take any such matters seriously. They will be taking appropriate action to deal with any contamination accordingly.

5. Financial Viability It is understood that a Financial Viability assessment was not required. This was of concern because of experience of the previous scheme, the size of the proposed development and the intention to build 300 (50%) affordable homes. Given that many affordable homes remain unoccupied in nearby developments, some local developments had been unable to find housing associations willing to take on the affordable homes, and sales of market homes are slow, there was concern about the financial viability of the scheme being proposed.

BH Response The concern was acknowledged. BH do work with a number of registered providers but do not have agreement with a specific provider for this scheme.