

# The Guildford Society Design & Heritage Position Papers

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# The Guildford Society

## Design & Heritage

### Position Papers

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## 1. Background to position papers prepared by the Guildford Society

### Overview

The Guildford Society's purpose includes:

- Conserving the best of Guildford and its environs;
- Promoting high standards of planning and architecture to create a long term sustainable community; and
- Influencing the pace and type of development.

Its activities are focused on the town centre and significant issues in urban Guildford with parish councils safeguarding other areas of Guildford Borough.

The Society is broadly in favour of the development of The Town to ensure it continues to provide a great place to live, work and do business. However, development pressures from a range of sources are significant:

- Commercial developers of all types of building;
- Home owners seeking to extract value from their property by development;
- The Council's desire to re-develop parts of the town centre;
- New businesses seeking to move to the Town;
- The continuing success of the University;
- Immigration to the South of England; and
- New business opportunities.

If not properly controlled, such development will irreversibly damage the urban, natural and rural environment valued by citizens. Consequently, this desire to develop needs to be balanced with the need to create a long term sustainable community, and preservation of Guildford's heritage and culture, critical factors in The Town's success over many years. Consequently, the Society believes that it is vital that The Town's heritage is conserved for the benefit of current and future generations and that this must be a vital consideration when evaluating regeneration and new development opportunities in the town centre and urban Guildford.

### Our response

In response to these challenges, the Society has prepared a series of papers setting out its position on matters related to The Town's heritage. These papers are deliberately aspirational and are intended to provide a basis for communicating consistently with stakeholders on the Local Plan, town planning and individual developments; they will be reviewed and revised periodically as required.

The desired overarching design principles are set out in the paper entitled "Good Design"; other papers provide information on the Society's views on key heritage aspects of The Town.

The Society welcomes early discussion with home owners, developers, businesses and the Council when significant development is planned and this is intended to be facilitated by these papers.

While acknowledging the considerable work already performed by competent authorities in defining policies applicable to Guildford including GBC, SCC and NT, much of which the Society concurs with, there will always be certain matters which the Society either disagrees

with or considers to be under ambitious. The Society's position papers are not intended to be restatements of policies produced by others but are instead intended to represent the Society's own independent views. The Society recognises that, on occasion, these positions may differ from those of other parties due to differing objectives but encourages those parties to actively engage with Society members on areas of difference.

To complement these position papers, the Society also intends in due course to develop a map of The Town highlighting districts, streets, groups of properties and selected buildings which it considers to be of architectural, heritage or community value. It also intends to create a register of principal views of skyline and sightlines.

While in setting out its views proactively, the Society is keen to ensure its message is received by GBC in advance of bringing forward detailed local planning policy and by developers and residents prior to embarking on the development process.

The Society is also active in reviewing planning applications and on occasion engages in pre-application discussions with developers and councillors on major applications. Members of the Society's Planning Group review all planning applications in Guildford town centre, and other applications in the Guildford urban area which it considers to have significant impact on the locality. As the Society's adopted position on a number of facets of Guildford, the views set out in the Society's position papers will form a key component of the Society's responses to future planning applications.

### **Current position papers**

- ▶ Good design - eight points to help ensure good design and future heritage creation
- ▶ Preserving and enhancing the approaches to Central Guildford
- ▶ Preserving and enhancing Guildford's historic High Street
- ▶ Preserving and enhancing Guildford's residential heritage
- ▶ Enhancing Guildford's riverside
- ▶ Preserving Guildford's vistas, roofscapes and skyline

### **Glossary**

The Society's position papers make use of the following terms:

AONB	Area of outstanding natural beauty
Borough	The Borough of Guildford
GBC or Council	Guildford Borough Council
HGV	Heavy goods vehicle
NT	National Trust
SCC	Surrey County Council
Slyfield	Slyfield Industrial Estate
Society	The Guildford Society (see <a href="http://www.guilfordsociety.org.uk/">http://www.guilfordsociety.org.uk/</a> )
SSSI	Site of special scientific interest
Town	Urban Guildford
University	University of Surrey

*September 2014*

## 2. Good design - eight points to help ensure good design and future heritage creation – a position paper by the Guildford Society

It is undeniable that good design helps to build communities, creates a better quality of life, and makes places more comfortable for people to live, work and play in. It is the Society's position that good design should be at the heart of ensuring that new developments and building refurbishments in the Borough respect its heritage and create buildings of quality and architectural merit to form the heritage of the future. This will enable today's citizens of Guildford to hand on The Town to the next generation in a better state than we acquired it.

1. A good Town Centre Master Plan should include a comprehensive Design Guide. The results of such initiatives as the *Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment* should be incorporated into the Design Guide as 'best practice' for driving forward good design. GBC should also ensure that this guide is publicly consulted on and widely communicated to citizens and the development community. It should also ensure that it is applied to all future developments in The Town so that new and refurbished buildings embrace the principles of good design and hence enhance and enrich Guildford's commercial and aesthetic future.

A good design policy is only as good as the people that seek to apply it. Where a planning team does not have sufficient members that are fully qualified to design buildings, then its approach often defaults to one of setting simplistic guidelines to prevent the worst mistakes. This limits the opportunity for creating strong and innovative architectural solutions. As a consequence, to effectively implement a good design policy the Society will challenge GBC to commit to up-skilling its planning team.

2. The NPPF states that Local Authorities should have local design arrangements in place, and recommends setting up independent design review panels. Design Review is an independent and impartial evaluation by a panel of experts on the built environment with the skills necessary to appraise and offer observations leading to improvements. They do not attempt redesign. Their review gives planners confidence to encourage quality and innovation. It is independent, expert, multi-disciplinary, accountable, transparent, proportionate, timely, advisory, objective and accessible

Such panels are in place and used by certain neighbouring Authorities. The Society will liaise with appropriate professional bodies to bring forward proposals to assist GBC with establishing such a Design Review Panel and offer its services, on the basis of the Principles and Practice set out in the guidance document published by the Design Council (in association with CABE, the Landscape Institute, RTPI and RIBA) to meet the NPPF requirement.

3. Developers that embrace good design should be publicly rewarded. One way that this can be achieved is by substantially increasing the public awareness of design awards to both local and national levels including Guildford's own Design Awards programme<sup>1</sup> which promote and recognise successful projects and credit owners, architects and builders. Developers should also be actively encouraged to think of themselves as

“patrons of good architecture” and be made aware of the financial benefits accruing by creating effective and iconic buildings.

- 4 The GBC Design & Heritage Champion’s role should be clearly defined to enable them to play a critical and proactive role in planning pre-applications, acting as a truly independent and pro-active champion and as conduit of information with outside bodies.
- 5 GBC should develop and apply the concept of Permitted Development Rights to smaller projects so that owners are encouraged to consult an architect and invest in a well thought out design without the risk of the scheme not being granted planning permission. Owners are also reminded of the Society’s views on a wide range of development related matters which are set out in the Society’s position papers when considering a development.
- 6 For larger projects, responsibilities for ensuring good design should be clearly allocated across participants. The developer should be responsible for the financial viability and the architect for the design and for specification of materials. Clear articulation of the benefits to be derived from good design should be encouraged.
- 7 Primary responsibility for protecting the public interest both in respect of an individual building but its wider context within the public realm should lie with GBC’s planning team. One of their roles should be to protect the public where the developer may have little interest beyond short term financial profit and the architect exerts little influence, a situation which does not normally result in the creation of well-designed buildings. Specifically, planners should:
  - ▶ Apply their powers to ensure that sufficient open space is allocated in new developments.
  - ▶ Ensure that the urban grain is distinctive and adds character to The Town. This includes involvement in determining the scale of new streets, lanes, squares and other urban spaces to ensure that the urban grain is developed and enriched. Blandness in the grain, even more than the individual uses of the units, will result in a disappointing “anytown” character and fail to capitalise on the benefits of being a “gap town”.
  - ▶ Spot opportunities to make space that could be potentially helpful for public transport services notwithstanding that they do not have direct power to control traffic. Planners can however ensure space is allowed for off-road bicycle routes and in large new developments for drive-in-drive-out entrances for buses where these are appropriate.
  - ▶ Restrict the height of buildings so that they blend into the existing urban fabric. Given the height of existing buildings in the Town, building heights of more than four or five storeys will generally be unlikely to meet this principle.
- 8 Finally, to realise these aspirations, the general public and interested local bodies must all contribute if Guildford is to continue to conserve and create high quality and new heritage.

*September 2014*

### 3. Preserving and enhancing the approaches to Central Guildford – a position paper by the Guildford Society

#### **Setting the Scene: A Brief Analysis**

Guildford's position as a 'gap town' has endowed it with a complex set of access roads and railways. The roads and railways leading directly into The Town centre are used to access different parts of the Borough as well as connecting to towns outside of Guildford. Although Guildford town centre is the destination for several thousand people every day, people also travel across the Borough to access the University/Research Park/Hospital zone, to work in the suburban office parks and nearby towns, or to attend schools throughout the Borough and beyond. Further, Guildford's location means it also attracts significant through-traffic including cars and numerous HGVs. The need to cross the River Wey has resulted in many of these routes converging on the frequently grid-locked gyratory. The surfaces of many of these highways are no longer in good order.

The approach roads into the Borough of Guildford tend to be through greenbelt, agricultural land and villages which provide an attractive entrance into the Borough by road. Development in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century has meant that this network is now substantially fixed. Several of these roads are also cross-country 'A' roads with a single lane in each direction with only occasional dual carriageways. These factors limit the scope for expanding capacity and varying use.

Within the Borough, the road layouts of the various wards/neighbourhoods were developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and were well established by the 1930s creating a network that is also fixed at the local level and inadequate for modern needs. The widths of roads in residential areas as well as along main 'A' roads are not fit for purpose today. However, with adjacent land generally having been developed and in established ownership, there is little scope to change this today.

This trend has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with new roads within The Town generally being a single lane in each direction with inadequate space for car parking. This has contributed to the significant levels of congestion experienced by motorists during the rush hour when parked vehicles, often unloading goods, partially block a portion of a lane of traffic. In many roads near schools when one traffic lane is fully occupied by parked vehicles, dropping off or calling for children in the mornings and afternoons sometimes brings car movements to a standstill.

This paper's purpose is not to set out the Society's position on how this existing highway and rail networks should be changed; this is the work of the Society's Transport Group. It does however set out the Society's position on how those existing routes should be improved to provide a positive visual experience for residents and visitors when arriving and leaving The Town.

#### **Improving and Enhancing the Approaches to Guildford**

The Society's position is that it is vital that the approach roads to Guildford make a positive statement about Guildford's success, culture, heritage and aspirations for the future. In particular:

1. The major routes into and out of The Town should have an absence of pot holes. They should have a wearing course and structure that is durable and of a high standard. Variants should be progressively applied to all roads in the Borough. Surrey County Council's five year £100 million "Better Roads Scheme" to relay the worst roads in the County, with resurfaced roads having a 10-year guarantee<sup>2</sup> is a positive development.
2. Major buildings on principal approach roads should be of high architectural merit. The impression made by such buildings should be a consideration when granting planning permission for new development sites with the intention of creating landmark buildings. These should also have regard to the environment in which they are located, be kept in good order and minimise any impact on The Town's skyline. Site hoardings should be kept to a minimum and be decorated to blend with their surroundings, including being painted with a representation of the obscured building as is done in historic towns across Europe; plain or advertising covered hoardings should be discouraged.
3. To provide positive first impressions of Guildford, the Society's position is that approach road roundabouts and verges be greened and planted to a high standard. General advertising should not be permitted. However, where a planting scheme has been sponsored, a modest board is acceptable, provided that it is of standard size and format, its contents are in good taste and it is maintained in good order. The planting rather than advertising must dominate.
4. Well-designed signage suitable for all users should follow a clear hierarchy of needs and apply a consistent style which has been developed following public consultation. The extent of information and directional road signage should be useful to users without dominating the environment. Redundant road signage should be removed.
5. Improvements to the pedestrian experience in The Town should include renewal and upgrading of pavements, provision of small landscaped spaces and planters. There should be a presumption in favour of removal of pedestrian protection barriers except where a balanced risk assessment has established the need for retention on grounds of pedestrian safety. Where appropriate, footpaths should be opened to use by cyclists.
6. Street furniture should be well designed, suitably sited and apply consistent styles, developed in consultation with the public. There should be different ranges of street furniture (benches, planters, lighting and bins) for rural and urban locations. Street furniture should also include public art, particularly sculpture, reflecting The Town's strong tradition in the arts.
7. In order to improve pedestrian links between the rail station and The Town there should be a pedestrian corridor including a river crossing from the vicinity of Guildford Station at Walnut Tree Close to Bedford Road or Onslow Street to serve people accessing The Town as well as Guildford College, businesses and residential areas to the north of York Road.
8. Measures to improve the Traffic flow within The Town should be smooth and include:
  - a) Traffic light synchronisation and monitoring of traffic hot-spots with CCTV.

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<sup>2</sup> Surrey Matters, Autumn 2013



- b) Rules regarding loading and unloading of goods vehicles on roads, particularly prohibiting stopping and unloading of trucks during peak hours on the gyratory.
9. Both rural and urban approach roads should be suitable for all road users. Wherever possible, cycle paths should be created using green verges and be separated from roads. Also cycle paths through open spaces, for example, adjacent to redundant rail lines provide an attractive and safe alternative and could link villages to The Town. Installation of adequate cycle lanes in urban areas is more difficult but where possible should be created both within existing roads as well as providing off-road paths. Safe space should also be made for pedestrians so they do not feel threatened by other road users.
10. Rail passengers arriving in Guildford should experience clean, modern station facilities. There should be well sign-posted, at-grade pedestrian access to all The Town's key facilities and attractions as well as good interchange facilities for other transport modes.

*September 2014*

## 4. Preserving and enhancing Guildford's historic High Street – a position paper by the Guildford Society

### Overview

Guildford's historic High Street provides the images by which the Borough is universally known. It is designated as The Town's primary Conservation Area and contains several listed buildings. Its adequate care, conservation and vitality have been a priority to the Guildford Society since its re-formation in 1935, and to its predecessor, the Old Guildford Society<sup>3</sup>.

However, it faces many pressures including: new shopping priorities; wear and tear; the impact of weather on services, surfaces and buildings; commercial demands; competition from proposed new developments; and competing demands for funding. These all present challenges to its survival.

Maintaining High Street premises as economically productive is the best way to ensure the long term preservation of its historic buildings. Consequently, the Society's position is to balance the desire to encourage the vitality and general liveliness of High Street while conserving the characteristics that have made it iconic. This includes encouraging smaller specialist traders to High Street and its gates to create a balanced offer with major chains and "services" premises – banks, 'phone shops etc; and working with master-planners to make the High Street fully pedestrianised. We are also keen to avoid developments elsewhere making High Street premises economically unviable while High Street premises should be able to participate in a wider range of activity, for example the night time economy, markets and art.

### Street paving

The granite setts make a major contribution to High Street's character. They were laid over a century ago on a flexible sub-base adequate for horse-drawn traffic but were re-laid in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a rigid construction which has proved incapable of bearing the load of heavier and faster vehicles of today. This has been exacerbated by inexpert re-laying following maintenance of buried services with lifted setts frequently mislaid and replaced with asphalt.

A similar situation applied to the footways/pavements of York stone paving slabs which have suffered from both heave from vehicles mounting the kerb and maintenance of buried services. The traditional cast-iron rainwater ducts across the pavements have been allowed to disintegrate with shallow concrete surface channels being considered.

The Society's position is that:

11. Suitable specifications and method statements are developed and made mandatory for all relaying work including the currently planned relaying of the setts in High Street.
12. Matching replacements are sourced to cover any setts or York stone slabs lost.

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<sup>3</sup> *"What Makes Guildford High Street Special?" by Doug Scott, Nov. 2010*

13. Only crafts-persons correctly trained in laying setts and York stone paving are employed to work on this key heritage asset.
14. A clearly designated officer with responsibility for oversight and checking should continue to be appointed, the findings of that oversight rigidly enforced and all contractors be required to give notice of operations to that officer.
15. A programme of systematic like-for-like replacement of the cast-iron rainwater channels across the pavements is established (for example when shop fronts are renewed).
16. There is adequate funding and a committed budget to cover the above.
17. A weight limit be imposed on HGVs using High Street to protect setts and stone flags.
18. The iconic High Street be listed to match the buildings which benefit from this status or given "Scheduled" status by English Heritage.

### **Street furniture**

The Society expects all street furniture<sup>4</sup> and signage on High Street to be: appropriate to the character of its location; simple; consistent; and for all signage to be clear. This is particularly appropriate to The Town's historic streets. The Society's position is that:

1. A high standard of design, sensitive to location, for all items of street furniture.
2. Design and colour of bollards, bins and posts to be consistent.
3. Signs to be clear, informative, sensitively placed and unobtrusive.
4. An appropriate "heritage sensitive" barrier gate.
5. Utilitarian barriers which break the visual link with Town Bridge to be removed/replaced.

### **Shop fronts**

Over the years the Society has done much to encourage good shop front design through its Design Awards. Many of the points made have been built into the Council's own shop fronts policies. The Society's position is that within the High Street conservation area:

1. Fascias should show good and appropriate design (both "retro" and clean modern), be in "traditional" colours and respect the architecture of the stories above.
2. Hanging signs should be no larger than (600x600mm); fascias and signs should not be illuminated.
3. Windows should not contain garish long-term posters.

### **Upper stories**

High Street premises used for shops at street level frequently use the upper floors for storage or appear to leave them unoccupied. Windows are frequently blanked off or left

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<sup>4</sup> The Society defines street furniture to include seats, benches, bollards, telephone connection boxes, lamp posts and floral posts, pedestrian signposts, historic plaques, parking restriction signs, significant sculptures (two currently) and the barrier gate to exclude vehicles at "pedestrian only" times.

uncleaned. None at present appear to be used for their original residential purpose, due to the difficulty of separate access. The Society wishes to encourage:

1. Proper maintenance, including window-cleaning, and removal of unsightly clutter.
2. Occupants to re-plan and open up “dead” windows.
3. Creative design by owners to allow uses including residential or small professional office and connecting adjoining premises together.

### **Street lighting**

Existing street lighting is appropriate to High Street with a range of replacement “heritage” posts and fittings being currently available which is generally acceptable. The Society will continue to monitor the appropriateness of lighting, applying the same standards as for street furniture. The Society is also keen to encourage good design for special displays such as Christmas lighting.

*September 2014*

## 5. Preserving and enhancing Guildford's residential heritage – a position paper by the Guildford Society

### Overview

Guildford is a historical commercial centre and major commuter hub. Its housing stock comprises a blend of dwellings from medieval to contemporary which when combined with its proximity to London makes it a highly desirable location in which to live. With continued inward immigration to the South East and ambitious plans by the University and GBC to make the Borough a technological hub, Guildford faces a significant challenge to balance increased demand for residential accommodation with the need to conserve the character that makes it an attractive place to live.

### Preserving the character of The Town by retaining its existing housing stock

A significant proportion of Guildford's historical housing stock has already been lost through poorly planned or insensitive development. The housing stock that remains makes a significant contribution to the character of The Town and includes what is regarded by some as a garden city (Onslow village), Edwardian mansions and Victorian terraces. The Society is committed to conserving The Town's existing housing stock and retaining this intrinsic part of Guildford's character.

A number of Guildford's districts already enjoy some protection through the more onerous planning regime that accompanies designation as a conservation area. However, there are a significant number of other residential areas of Guildford which the Society considers to be of community or architectural value but which do not enjoy this same level of protection.

To prevent isolated out of character development, the Society is generally against demolition of existing single dwellings, instead preferring developers to focus on modernisation or conversion within the existing fabric of a building in order to preserve its exterior and interior architecture and provide it with new life. Such development should ensure that architectural styles and materials match those of existing contemporary buildings with materials selected and construction performed in accordance with the principles of sustainable construction<sup>5</sup> and so as to ensure the new development achieves an Energy Performance Setting A rating. Further information is contained in the Society's position paper on Good Design.

An alternative development strategy of which there have been numerous examples is the practice of sub-dividing existing residential plots and development of additional dwellings, increasing densities. This has an adverse impact on local community by increasing plot densities, introducing new and often clashing architectural styles and compromising access. The Society considers the green spaces provided by gardens to be an important part of the character of a site which are also to be conserved. The Society considers that owners have a duty to the society in which they live to retain the character of their area. The Society will oppose sub-division where it considers the resultant development will cause aesthetic harm to the locality.

### Strengthening communities through high quality development

The Society is however supportive of new development that enables the Town to continue to thrive and flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The requirements for such new properties would

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<sup>5</sup> Strategy for Sustainable Construction published by HM Government, June 2008.

ordinarily be set out in a comprehensive master plan for Guildford. But in the absence of such a plan, we would expect the characteristics of such developments to include:

- ▶ Being of a size and nature that meets the changing needs of The Town's demographics;
  - ▶ Being sensitive to and complimenting existing architectural styles prevalent in their locations;
  - ▶ Built at a plot density in keeping with other contemporary local developments;
  - ▶ Built according to best practice in sustainable construction; and
  - ▶ Creating a quality architectural legacy of benefit to current and future generations and that is of equal or greater architectural merit than any existing building being replaced.
- Further information can be found in the Society's position paper on Good Design.

To avoid unnecessary development of greenfield sites or the greenbelt, the Society believes new development should be sited within The Town whenever possible. This will rebuild a vital community in the heart of The Town, prevent destruction of other sites of value to residents and enable regeneration of existing industrial sites.

Further there has been a recent trend to convert retail premises for residential space. Providing such development takes place in accordance with the principles set out in this paper, the Society would be in favour providing that such conversion does not remove essential services from communities. With regard to Guildford's historic High Street, the Society is in favour of bringing space above shops into residential use as this helps conserve the fabric of these historic buildings. However, the Society is opposed to conversion of street-level retail premises for residential accommodation as this would damage the character of this Guildford landmark.

Where residential development does take place, it is important that this is well planned and makes provision for the necessary infrastructure to create thriving, accessible and sustainable new communities. This includes good transportation links, schools, retail leisure and open spaces which should be provided at the cost of the developer. The Society does not consider "gated communities" where security fences and gates seek to isolate and separate specific developments from the communities in which they are located to be consistent with the creation of strong, sustainable communities. The Society is similarly opposed to the creation of gated environments around existing dwellings or groups of houses.

Importantly, the Society has a presumption that where existing residential sites are developed, due regard should be given to the character and utility of the urban environment in which the new development is sited. This will enable green spaces (including gardens) to be retained. Equally, this should not be seen as encouraging high-rise development as this would also change the character of The Town and damage views of its surrounding countryside and existing skyline.

While this paper is focused on the Town, the Society would apply similar criteria when considering proposed residential development in the surrounding villages.

*September 2014*

## 6. Enhancing Guildford's riverside – a position paper by the Guildford Society

### Overview

The River Wey runs through the heart of Guildford. While in its outskirts the river provides green space, in the centre it has become hemmed in by buildings of disparate styles as poor planning decisions over many years have resulted in significant damage to this environment. Of particular concern is the preponderance from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century of monolithic structures, brutalist architecture and ugly surface car parks. These provide an unpleasantly stark contrast with Guildford's county town vernacular and the rural environment that the river provides in the heart of The Town, undermining its value to the community.

The National Trust owns the River Wey Navigations and is responsible for maintaining it as a working waterway. This affords a level of protection to the river itself and its adjacent towpaths and today is principally used by pleasure craft (rowing boats, canoes, narrow boats), walkers, cyclists and fishermen. However, the river is also a major part of Guildford's industrial heritage and is surrounded by a number of historic buildings which are variously in the ownership of GBC and private landowners and which should be conserved and protected from future redevelopment.

Further, the river is a rich source of pleasure to residents of Guildford, providing a green corridor in the heart of The Town. The adjacent Shalford Park and water meadows are critical for absorbing floodwaters and protecting the town centre from flooding while providing a haven for wildlife.

### Society position

The Society's focus is on the riverside between Ferry Lane and Stoke Mill. Its position is to recognize the distinct stretches of river - regenerating and preserving the built-up area in the town centre and conserving the rural areas of the river. Specifically:

4. There should be no further development between the River Wey and A281 from Ferry Lane to Guildford Rowing Club to preserve the rural environment that currently extends into the heart of The Town. This land should be preserved as part of the green belt to the south of Guildford and provision made to encourage wildlife and wildlife watching and so it can fulfil its historical role of absorbing flood waters and protecting the town centre.

Where redevelopment of existing properties on the west bank takes place, such development should be low-rise, have due regard to enhancing existing scenic views and existing architectural styles. In particular, there should be a presumption against large apartment-style developments in this part of The Town.

5. The developed area of the riverside from Guildford Rowing Club to Dapdune Wharf should be re-zoned for leisure use while conserving the existing heritage buildings and public open spaces in this area. A plan should be established for this area setting out a long term programme for its transformation. In particular:

- ▶ This area could be a leisure destination for residents and visitors, creating new dining and drinking experiences and facilitating a “café society” that might become the pulsating heart of The Town. It should meet the tastes, needs and budgets of all ages and social groups and include landscaping, open spaces, sculpture (eg the Society’s “Bargeman”) and galleries to promote the arts, creating a focal point for culture and cultural events in The Town.
  - ▶ Many of the existing buildings in this area<sup>6</sup> are part of the Borough’s industrial heritage and should be conserved for predominantly leisure use. All new development in this area should be sympathetic to this heritage and its architectural style. Cities such as Birmingham and Manchester provide good examples of how this can be achieved.
  - ▶ Buildings that do not fit this template<sup>7</sup> should be redeveloped as they approach the end of their lives and be replaced with more sensitive properties. In the interim period, owners should be encouraged to take steps to ensure that these buildings are less obtrusive and better blend in with the proposed use for this area. The Yvonne Arnaud Theatre has made some positive changes with its outside café in this respect.
  - ▶ Parking should be sited away from the riverside area and in particular existing surface car parks at Millbrook, Park Street and Bedford Road should be re-sited or built under ground, freeing up this land for more efficient use, for example leisure related-activity.
  - ▶ The environment should be re-landscaped, removing railings where possible and hiding unsightly bins that are currently visible and negatively impact the perceptions of visitors.
  - ▶ Interpretation boards should be located sensitively to explain the historic context of buildings.
6. The river between Dapdune Wharf and Stoke Mill already flows in an urban area. Sites in this area should be re-zoned for housing, with existing green sites preserved. For example, Walnut Tree Close should become a new waterside community. This would enable the greenbelt to be protected while removing the existing unsightly industrial and commercial buildings from this stretch of river. Such development should not be high-rise in nature, but be flood resistant and sensitive to its riverside location; premises with river frontages should be well presented.
7. Wey Navigations infrastructure which is the responsibility of the National Trust should be well maintained to avoid negative perception of poorly maintained infrastructure by residents and visitors. Existing pedestrian bridges at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre and Guildford Rowing Club should be replaced with permanent structures that are in keeping with other Wey Navigation infrastructure and provide step-free access.
8. Traffic infrastructure and in particular the gyratory has one of the most significant impacts on the riverside area. Detailed consideration of this is beyond the scope of this paper. However, where possible there should be a presumption in favour of minimising the impact on the riverside area of major highways that parallel or cross

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<sup>6</sup> Eg Rodboro Building, The Billings, Town Mill, Dapdune Wharf, Electric Theatre, Onslow Street quay, Treadwheel Crane.

<sup>7</sup> Including Debenhams, Connaught House, Wey House and Friary Court.



the river and priority given to pedestrians. The existing historical Town Bridge and Onslow Bridge should be re-integrated with the regenerated riverside area and colour schemes co-ordinated.

9. The riverside area should enjoy safe, attractive connections to key locations in The Town including the railway and bus stations, High Street, North Street, University and Castle. These should be greened and access provided for able bodied and disabled people at street level. Signposting should be clear, unobtrusive and in keeping with the character of the riverside area.
10. A continuous foot path including new bridges in contemporary or canal vernacular architectural style should be created along each side of the river from land already in public or National Trust ownership and from land provided as part of future development and regeneration opening up frontages to the river. Where residential properties back directly on to the tow path, walls (in bargate stone) or wooden fencing should be well maintained and consistent in style.

*September 2014*

## 7. Preserving Guildford's vistas, roofscapes and skyline – a position paper by the Guildford Society

### Overview

Guildford has been bestowed with a stunning natural location, located as it is in the heart of the North Downs in the River Wey Valley and this topography has created particularly fine sight lines. As the historical county town of Surrey, Guildford's development has created a number of historic buildings of local and national significance that have created an iconic skyline. Together these have combined to form a key component of The Town's heritage.

It is the Society's position that these skylines and sight lines be protected for the benefit of current and future generations against damage by development in The Town. As it is impossible to list every sight line and skyline of heritage value in Guildford, developers should demonstrate that there is no significant impact on these by any proposed development.

### Vistas within Guildford town centre

Guildford is frequently called a gap town "and probably owes its location to the existence of a gap in the [North Downs](#) where the [River Wey](#) is [forded](#) by a path commonly known as the 'Pilgrims' Way'" between Winchester and Canterbury<sup>8</sup>. It is also located on the coaching route between London and coastal towns such as Portsmouth, which was a catalyst for creating much of the iconic architecture in Guildford today.

On both sides of this river valley there are steep and significant hills, the Mount leading to the Hogs Back to the west, and Pewley Down (with the Castle at its base) and St Martha's Hill to the east. Both sides of the valley are wooded and the existing trees are a significant component of these views and consequently require careful maintenance.

The principal sight lines which this has created are as follows:

- ▶ Looking down from the top of the iconic High Street, across Town Bridge over the Wey to The Mount and the original Pilgrims Way green lane drovers' road winding its way over the Hogs Back towards Winchester.
- ▶ From The Mount one can look up the High Street with its granite setts, half-timbered and Georgian buildings and the exceptional 17<sup>th</sup> century Abbots Hospital, Holy Trinity Church, 16<sup>th</sup> century Royal Grammar School which form a unique cluster of listed buildings with the Guildhall and John Aylwards' clock projecting over the street.
- ▶ From above Tunsgate Arch a short lane approaches the Castle Gardens and at its centre the splendid Norman Keep, an ancient monument from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.
- ▶ From the Keep and its surrounding mount, the view South across the Surrey Hills is outstanding.
- ▶ To the west of The Town, one looks across central Guildford towards Maufe's 20<sup>th</sup> century Cathedral which towers over most other buildings in The Town.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guildford>

- ▶ Looking east from The Town across the Wey valley to the rear of the fine terrace of listed buildings on Quarry Street with the Castle behind and Semaphore Tower above.
- ▶ The narrow lanes leading off on either side of the High Street such as Angel Gate which form part of Guildford's county town vernacular.
- ▶ The rooflines formed by the listed buildings and more recent developments on High Street, Quarry Street and Chapel Street.

However, the rooftops of many buildings are strewn with plant and radio transmitters and these should be suitably obscured by sensitive architecture whilst retaining functionality.

The skylines to the east and west heading south from the town centre are dominated by green hills which are peppered by individual homes of character built to a low plot density which were constructed principally in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These have contributed to the characteristic appearance of these hills.

These views are considered to be key features of Guildford's cultural, historical and natural heritage and should be secured in perpetuity.

### **Vistas in the Surrey Hills and Greenbelt**

The Town's location within the Surrey Hills provides many views both adjacent to The Town and further afield that are extraordinary. Much of the Surrey Hills and the North Downs are already protected as they are in the rural Greenbelt and are designated as AONBs and SSSIs.

Along the A248 between Shalford and Albury, spectacular views in all directions can be seen from and to the pinnacle of St. Martha's Hill, with its 12<sup>th</sup> century church reputed to have served as a resting stop along the Pilgrim's Way; this site also features several Neolithic and Megalithic artefacts some of which have been dated to 3500 BC.

The Hogs Back is a narrow elongated ridge that stretches from Guildford to Farnham. At a height of 154 metres above sea level it provides exceptional views:

- ▶ To the north of the Borough's towns and villages such as Normandy, Tongham and Ash and on clear days to London including Canary Wharf, The Gherkin and Heathrow Airport.
- ▶ The views to the south of the Weald are unspoilt and much of this area has been designated as AONBs as well as SSSIs.

These views are considered to be key features of Guildford's cultural, historical and natural heritage and should be secured in perpetuity.

*September 2014*

## ANNEX – PHOTOGRAPHS OF KEY VISTAS

### Vistas within Guildford town centre



Looking towards the West Hill from the High Street



The same view a bit further up the hill at the Guildhall.



View of the Cathedral and the University site from West Guildford



View from Bright Hill towards Guildford Cathedral

### Vistas in the Surrey Hills and greenbelt



View from the South looking up towards St. Martha's Church