

Planning Policy  
Reigate & Banstead Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Castlefield Road  
Reigate  
RH2 0SH

Dear Sirs

**Comments on your Green Belt Land 'Safeguarded' and Redhill Aerodrome in Particular**

Before making my strong comments against your use of Redhill Aerodrome, I wish to say

In 2018, *The history of the RAF at Redhill Aerodrome 1937 - 1954* cover every unit that was stationed there during the period and for the first time detail many of its activities not previously published. I searched all known official records and have much knowledge of the aerodrome. I visited the aerodrome in 1944 when over 200 aircraft were prepared in readiness to support the invasion of Europe.

One of the main reasons for the interesting story of the formation of the aerodrome and the important part that it played in the second world-war, for both students of British aviation and local historians, as well as to record a vital aspect of our national aeronautical heritage in this locality that will be lost and buried for ever if your proposal is realised.

My comments against this proposal are given below by topic:-

## Location

This proposal would constitute the blatant theft of yet another part of the Green Belt. Its main purpose was set-out in the 1938 Act, and a brief extract from the Department for Communities and Local Government is reproduced below to remind you of this accusation:

The 1938 Act started the definition of what may and what may not be done in the Green Belt. Section 27 provided that nothing in the Act shall:

- (a) prevent Green Belt land being used for purposes of recreation or for purposes of agriculture (that is to say as arable meadow or pasture land or a plantation orchard or wood or for the growth of saleable underwood) or for such other purposes (not being purposes inconsistent with the provisions of this Act or of any covenant entered into for the purposes of the Act) as may either before or after commencement of this Act have been or be approved by every contributing authority;
- (b) prevent Green Belt land from being used for the purposes of camping by means of tents subject to and in accordance with any enactment relating to the use of land for that purpose and any bylaws made under any such enactment; or
- (c) prevent a local authority or parish council from letting for any such purpose as aforesaid Green Belt land vested in them

I would like to also quote from:

### **The Public Sector Executive 01.02.15:**

The importance of protecting Green Belt land  
 Source: Public Sector Executive Feb/Mar 2015

Paul Miner, planning campaign manager at the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), discusses the benefits of protecting green belt land, and how using brownfield sites can help tackle the country's housing crisis and I quote:

*The Green Belt is good, positive planning. It stops urban sprawl and encourages the vital regeneration of our largest cities. It provides the countryside next door to 30 million people and protects the setting of many of our historic settlements. And, though not the principal purpose, it protects the attractive landscapes so important to our environment, heritage and wellbeing.*

*Without the Green Belt, we would have the urban sprawl that we see across Europe and North America. Both UN-Habitat and the European Commission have highlighted the particular problems arising from uncontrolled urban sprawl around large cities. Sprawl has all kinds of negative impacts, including loss of farmland and wildlife, increased car use, and neglect of older towns and cities. CPRE and Natural England analysis conducted in 2010 shows that the rate of development in green belts is between 33% and 50% lower than comparable areas of land on the edge of English cities without green belt designation.*

Please tell me, what was the point in putting up such a far sighted Act as the Green Belt in 1938, if Councils like yours are quite happy to try and ride roughshod over it and/or try to find dubious ways of avoiding it, like so many others have tried (and some have actually succeeded) in the not too distant past. Will councils in South East England only be happy when they have finally covered the country in concrete - all ready to be flooded when the next big storm strikes?

I see this type of development happening already to a marked extent, e.g. Crawley rushing to join up with Horsham. Even in Horley, its North West development is not far removed from joining with Reigate via Sidlow. Similarly if the proposed so-called 'Garden Village' ever reaches fruition (heaven forbid), its western edge would be less than 2 small fields away from the East Surrey Hospital in South Earlswood. On the eastern end it would abut South Nutfield, an attractive and ancient Aerodrome

village. Therefore, by either knowingly supporting these potential links that can be made at a later date by using this cosy naming of a way to achieve them, or by deluding yourself by backing higher authority's wishes to build yet more houses south of London you are giving no real thought as to the serious potential future consequences.

If your Council hasn't given any serious thought about all these possibilities then it is about time it did. Also, can you truthfully say that you have also exhausted all other avenues so that you can comply with what Theresa May said in the House of Commons on 20 December 2017 as I have not seen any evidence of this in your present proposal?

***Once you build on the green belt you, I and many others who have enjoyed it over so many years of our life have lost it for EVER, you cannot get it back.***

### **Communication**

I think many of the reasons for dropping the proposed site at Chaldon applies more so to this one. If you mean to proceed with building 1300 houses in your 'SAFEGUARDED AREA' you obviously have already signalled your support for the proposal by Tandridge Council which implies the ultimate number of houses will be some 8000 although the present owners of Redhill Aerodrome suggests 9400. So any planning of roads, movement of traffic and their infrastructure, etc, must consider the final figure from the date of commencement. Even with a low average of 1.5 cars per household plus all the utilities and taking the 8000 houses proposal, you are looking at say 4500 to 5000 more vehicles wanting ultimately to move around this area. If you include any link roads to the M23 and 25 that you might consider, then these vehicle figures could rapidly increase from car owners from all around us in southern England also wanting to use them. The prospect of what is required to allow the above, most of which will have to be between Horley and Redhill, is just beyond ones imagination, especially as the existing system can barely cope today, particularly when any incidents on the M23 and 25 have to be closed. I can only see far more gridlocks occurring than we witness today and the level of communication would degrade to inner London's level today .

### **Loss of near-by vital services as well as its today's Amenities**

The two vital services resident on Redhill Aerodrome today must be considered as being of major importance. Both the helicopters of the Air Ambulance and the Police are not only now based, serviced and maintained there by skilled manpower with their dedicated equipment, but these are also strategically placed for motorway incidents and any assistance that Gatwick Airport may need from this central location, not forgetting its close proximity to Redhill Hospital, with its A&E department. To try to move them to another similar location, even if one could be found, which, in my opinion, is highly unlikely, should Redhill Aerodrome be forced to close. It would be nigh on impossible as I can think of no equally suitable site in the near locality from where they could operate with anything like the same efficiency as they have at Redhill. Say, for example, they were forced to re-locate to Shoreham or Biggin Hill, then think of the additional time it would take them to reach an incident, which could even be life-threatening and demand urgent attention? Would you like this on your conscience?

Redhill Aerodrome has been available for many years for anyone interested either learning how to fly in fixed wing aircraft or helicopters, or as a sport and pastime, yet we hear that no other licenced airfield will exist in Surrey in the very near future - where would they go? Also, the aerodrome currently hosts many companies involved in advanced technologies whose employees are extremely skilled. Similarly the air and ground maintenance crews have specialised skills. All would likely be lost to the locality and to the nation if you wipe out the existence of the aerodrome without another thought as you plan to do.

The Aerodrome also offers superb opportunities for the young to see light aircraft at close hand and talk to pilots and ground crew, and this must definitely be encouraged, not taken away. This is vital as airline and RAF recruiting has to start from early stimulation and this can readily be gained at Redhill in a delightful countryside setting that cannot be equalled, certainly not at Gatwick, where any form of 'spotting' by visitors, young or old has, for security reasons, been discouraged - a sad state of modern day life that we now have to live with, but we certainly do not wish to loose it at Redhill.

The "Pilot's Hub" café off Hangar No.9 at Redhill is a venue where whole families can enjoy the food and watch any aerial activity in comfort, either inside or, if the weather permits, outside and have an interesting day out into the bargain. This part of Surrey is extremely fortunate to have such an amenity

- what other local sites in this part of Surrey can boast the equivalent and you are proposing to eliminate it.

### General Comments

England is renowned for its huge variety of villages and overseas visitors often spend much of their time exploring them. Most have evolved over many years, often decades, usually by those who worked and lived in them. Few if any are identical though many possess similar features, ie, a green, a pub, a church, a farm or two, a pond, and a few old or ancient houses. I have no idea what a "Garden Village" would or could consist of today in the middle of a tremendous road system outlined above as Tandridge is proposing and your council is cosyng up to today. I cannot believe that with the road system required there would be sufficient room left for a 'Village like' community to exist. Perhaps like other local developments I have witnessed in the past, developers might promise them originally but they rarely, if ever, appear to carry them out as the building work nears completion.

The possibility of this so-called "Garden Village" eventually leading to a housing jungle from the M25 south to Horsham via Gatwick, has already been mentioned above under **Location**, but it is one that **must** be considered as a distinct possibility or a morbid future outlook.

Many of the existing buildings on the Aerodrome were erected pre-WW2 when the RAF was rapidly expanding in the light of the inevitable war with Germany and the remarkable aspect of this is that all are still in use by commercial undertakings today. These include most hangars from No 1 to No 8, the buildings that were originally dormitories/billets for the volunteer pilots, the unique Civil Air Guard building (the only purpose built one of its kind in the country); the squash court, used by the Redhill Flying Club before the war and RAF personnel, and the two wartime buildings at the entrance to the aerodrome, to name but a few.

These buildings represent a true piece of British Aviation History and now form a part of what is left of our rapidly diminishing Aviation Heritage - they must never be destroyed but should be listed for posterity and promoted as such .

Redhill Aerodrome is unique, being probably the last of its kind in the UK, representing a 1930s civilian aerodrome requisitioned into service as a WW2 RAF Station in late 1939. Very few if any aerodromes today that commenced as a commercial undertaking yet played such a vital role in the nations' hour of need before returning to its formal glory in this part of Surrey can boast this claim.

I would have thought your Council and others would have realised this several years ago and worked with the greedy owners of Redhill Aerodrome to have exploited it in this part of Surrey, instead of apparently going flat out to have it covered in houses, thereby losing another piece of our illustrious past forever.

I consider your proposal totally unsound for purpose and would never agree to support it.

I wonder if someone on your Council might be asked in 2039, "Do we have anything to be proud of about WW2 in our part of Surrey?" **If you persist with your plans to include Redhill Aerodrome as part of a potential Garden Village (perish the thought), then the answer will have to be a resounding NO. It will all be because of what YOU want to do today.**

**Why not be proud of our National Aviation Heritage and throw this ill-conceived and ridiculous scheme out?**

Yours faithfully

**A very concerned resident**



**Do you really want to cover this lovely part of our Green Belt and countryside to destroy our national aeronautical heritage that is there within our locality?**