



Westfield Common Residents' Association
8 Moor Lane
Woking
Surrey GU22 9QY



8 October 2009

Peter Bryant
Head of Legal Services
Woking Borough Council
Civic Offices
Gloucester Square
Woking
Surrey GU21 6YL

Dear Peter,

Consultation on Proposed Exchange of Common Land at Westfield Common

Thank you for your letter of 21 September 2009 concerning the proposal for the exchange of common land referenced in your letter. Our comments on the proposal are laid out below:

Reason for Proposed Exchange

The rationale for the proposed exchange is to enable housing developers to build a road to access as yet unapproved housing development. The access route, in question, is in itself subject to planning approval and that matter has not yet been decided by the planning committee. The previous access application for the same access route was rejected on the grounds that the form and scale of the proposed housing development was unclear.

Clearly, as the access planning application has not yet been decided it is premature to consult until any common land exchange until the final access points have been determined and a formal application for common land exchange brought forward to the Secretary of State.

With the road access matter not decided we simply have no reasonable means to determine if the proposed land exchange is a fair and equitable exchange and for that reason alone we cannot support the proposed land exchange nor can we devote any serious consideration of a land exchange which has at best a theoretical reality of being the land exchange brought forward to the secretary of state.

Other Matters

Section 39 of the 2006 Act requires consideration of the following in determining any application for common land exchange.

- Interest of those occupying or having rights of the land.
- Interest of the Neighbourhood.
- Public Interest.
- Other relevant matters.

Again, we are unable to comment on specifics because of the undecided nature of the planning applications to which this consultation is related. We can however state that we are not satisfied with the proposal and think that any proposal has a material detrimental impact on the common, existing residents and visitors. We therefore don't accept the proposed exchange.

Our intention, is to formally respond to the final land exchange proposal when it is brought before the Secretary of State and will make our representations know at that date to them and the Open Spaces Society.

Comments on the Proposed Area for Land Exchange

From our consultations with the developers and Woking Borough Council we were informed that the motivation for the selection of the replacement land was that it contained high value Oaks trees as identified in the Preliminary Arboricultural survey.

We would like to remind the Council that this in itself is insufficient reason for the land selection. The selection of any replacement land should be made on the same criteria as detailed in section 39. The public's interest in conservation would be more strongly served by placing the aforementioned tree immediately under preservation orders (has this been done?) and we would remind the Council again that the Common as a whole should be returned to active management to help maintain the entire fabric of the common.

Timetable for Formal Consultation

In the meantime I would be grateful if you could please confirm the expected timetable for the formal notification and provide guidance on how this will be proactively communication to local residents and other interest groups.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Corney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bill Corney, Chairman, Westfield Common Residents' Association