



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday 13 September

PRESS RELEASE

“LET’S WORK TOGETHER AND PLAN A SHARED VISION FOR GUILDFORD”

In the wake of legal advice from two Queen’s Counsel that the way the town centre of Guildford was being planned was flawed¹, Guildford Vision Group (GVG) is calling on everyone to work together and find a better way of agreeing a strategic vision for Guildford.

Says John Rigg, Chairman of GVG, “We hope good can come from the legal advice that the previous approach to planning our town centre was inappropriate. Everyone can benefit from the halting of the two flawed town centre documents², if we now embark on a better, more accountable and strategic process. We need better community engagement and a more joined up approach that tackles the big challenges facing our town, such as traffic congestion”.

Says Gerald Bland, of GVG, “Time is short to get a robust and forward looking Guildford Plan in place by 2014³. We hope that rather than being further distracted by interim documents² and legal debate, everyone can now focus on getting the answers to the big issues addressed by the main Guildford Plan right. If we can crack that, everything else will fall into place.”

GVG believes the community needs to be given the opportunity to debate matters such as:

* Do we want a new road link across the river and railway to unite the town and to relieve the congested gyratory? If so, do we need to safeguard land for this near the mainline station rather than allow development there in a shortsighted way?

* Do we want a state of the art, central bus interchange that links all parts of Guildford and, if so, where will it go?

*Do we need to rethink how Guildford links with the A3 and should we even plan ahead for a tunnel for through traffic?

* How do we open up the river as a feature of our town?

* How much retail expansion is sensible with the growth of internet shopping and should we be doing more to encourage high tech and creative businesses?

* Where will we provide affordable housing and are we using sites owned by GBC wisely?

Says Michael Jeffery Chairman of the Guildford Society and a member of the GVG Steering Committee, "We are very careful not to promote answers. We believe passionately it is for the community and its elected representatives to decide these questions. Our concern is that at present residents are being shut out even though there has never been a greater need to discuss these crucial issues. We very much hope we can work closely with the Council to secure the best possible future for Guildford and bring in new development in a way that revitalises rather than gridlocks our town."

Ends

Notes for Editors

1. See the 37 page Opinion of leading planning silk, David Elvin QC, and other legal advice obtained by GVG on our website

2. Guildford Interim Town Centre Framework and North Street Guildford Design and Development Brief both published for adoption in August 2012

3. The borough wide Guildford Local Plan needs to be in place by April 2014. The narrow focus on retailing in the town centre is a distraction and a wider masterplan prepared by external consultants will help facilitate the new Local Plan.

Guildford Vision seeks to work collaboratively with councillors, council officers and all stakeholders to ensure Guildford sustains and improves its appeal as one of the most attractive locations in the South East in which to live, work and spend leisure time.

For more information, see www.guildfordvisiongroup.com or contact Yvonka Wilkinson, Campaign Manager, Vision for Guildford Ltd on 07767 251040