

GVG ELECTIONS SPECIAL!

April 2017



Beware Callers!

Your front door will be working overtime over the next few weeks as eager County and National candidates and committed canvassers make their calls and litter your letterbox with election promises.

Local Matters Matter

While Brexit, the NHS, social care, taxes, schools and benefits are all important, let's not lose focus on key local matters.

The Town Centre Matters

GVG thinks Guildford Town Centre and its future is sufficiently important to merit attention in both elections. Guildford town contributes £4bn to the national economy each year. The centre of Guildford is a big business, thanks to many fine enterprises including the University, Research Park and commercial and retail businesses.

Hustings – We've Got A Problem

We've got the draft Local Plan with its ambitions for new housing (but not much else), with all the extra pressures that will bring on our already struggling infrastructure. Guildford's a big transport hub that's going to get bigger. It's a place that people still want to visit to enjoy its fine heritage and sylvan surroundings. It contributes to our society in so many ways. But we are told it has the worst congestion of any town in the UK, with record accidents and fatalities in the centre. Commuter congestion is costing drivers £45mill a year.

Challenge The Candidates On The Town Centre

So challenge the candidates on what they plan to do to improve the quality of life in the town centre and to make it better and safer for people and not an ugly canyon for cars.

What Are They Going To Do About The Centre?

When are they going to do something about it? How are they going to make things better for pedestrians and cyclists? Or are they happy just to

report on their pothole strategy, vague road improvements and how nice the setts in the High Street look now (which they do).

Your Vote Should Count

The temptation for all of us is to vote tribally. But you should let the candidates know you care about our town and in giving your loyalty you expect results.

Separate People And Cars

To see how people and cars can be separated better and safely you only have to look at the GVG Plan. Have the candidates actually looked at it? Please ask them and let us know what they say. You can find it on our website at <https://youtu.be/snTphUE-n-0>

The Cost Of The GVG Plan Brings Benefits

We won't be surprised if they say our ambitious Plan, with all its big community wins, is too expensive. There's a figure going round of £1bn to improve and remodel the core of the town centre below the High St and North St across to the railway station. That's true and we first quoted it after commissioning a consultant's report.

£200 Million Puts People First

But the key figure within that sum is nearer £200 million. That's the infrastructure cost of removing the conflict between people and cars to achieve the benefit of a more pedestrian-friendly town centre plus a revitalised riverside. That's the cost of putting people first and taking record pollution and congestion out of areas like Bridge St and Onslow St by way of a new East/West crossing and associated improvements.

Guildford Can Afford It

The local council could easily manage funding or borrowing at that level for such an important investment. National and county government should also see it as a worthwhile investment, along with our Local Enterprise Partnership.

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Great Development Pays

The other £800million is the cost of new homes, shops and offices that should be met by income from sales, leases and rents in an exciting, co-ordinated development that delivers a market place, squares, boulevards and a leisurely riverside experience.

The Council Has To Commit

GVG knows of developers happy to contemplate development on that scale. But GVG also knows that no developer would commit and put up the funds without the wholehearted support and involvement of the local council. The latter would have to be seriously committed.

Bold Beats Piecemeal Planning

GVG wants to see a bold plan for the centre, with great wins for the community, not piecemeal development like the council is planning. They are currently seeking developer interest in 20 sites in and around the centre. Not exactly joined-up planning, is it? Where are the community wins in that?

Six Questions For Candidates

So back to the candidates knocking on your door or addressing you at the hustings. Ask them, either directly or by email:

1. What is your plan for the town centre? How ambitious is it?
2. How will you tackle the blight of the gyratory, its congestion, poor safety and pollution?
3. Do you back a £200 million infrastructure spend for the town centre such as proposed by GVG, with all its big wins?
4. Why does GVG's Plan struggle to win councillor support and interest?
5. Why can't the council and the county council (they do roads, along with Highways) get together to create a better plan than GVG's?
6. Given its importance, isn't it time Guildford was more in direct control of its future? Isn't

better localism needed? What changes would you call for?

Please Help Us To Help You

There is a chance for the future of Guildford to feature in the elections. So please help us. Put the questions we've set out to the candidates, be they county or country. Don't let them get away with waffle. Pin them down to a meaningful commitment.

We Need Feedback

Feed back their response to us at action@guildfordvisiongroup.com We will keep you posted via our website and blog.