

# Dunsfold dream a bit closer

OUTLINE plans were submitted by Dunsfold Park on Monday to build a new "Surrey Village" comprising 1,800 new homes in the space of a decade, with the promise of room for thousands more if required within the next 25 years.

Dunsfold Park will continue to be the home of *BBC's Top Gear* show, which will return to our screens with Chris Evans in the driving seat in May, if full planning consent gets the green light further down the line.

The airfield's popular annual 'Wings and Wheels' show will also continue if the scheme is approved and the Second World War runway is dug up and replaced with a green "runway park". Aerial displays by iconic aircraft will still be staged but as flyovers rather than landings.

Pressure has been building on Dunsfold Park to submit its outline application amid mounting calls from residents in Farnham and Cranleigh for Waverley to protect their green fields from development and build a major residential development on its largest brown-field site.

Supporters argue it is the best way to meet increased government housing targets for 9,861 new homes to be built in the next 16 years.

Anti-greenfield campaigners have urged more than 3,400 houses, the maximum suggested by Waverley in its recent Local Plan housing consultation, should be built at the airfield. But objectors have protested "dumping it all at Dunsfold" is not sustainable due to its remote location and the increased traffic generated.

Dunsfold Park's scheme for 1,800 homes was exhibited in Cranleigh in July for public feedback before submitting an application.

It is the lowest figure in three airfield housing scenarios suggested by the borough council in its Local Plan consultation, which were for 1,800, 2,600 or

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3,400 new properties.

Dunsfold Park calculates it is also the lowest figure that can deliver a day nursery, a primary school, a medical centre, cafe, retail space and a church to make the development more self-sustaining.

The scheme will include starter homes and key worker housing to help people on low incomes and would increase employment opportunities on site.

Under the plans, the airfield's business park – currently Waverley's largest employment site – would be expanded to create new jobs.

Fears over transport played a leading part in Waverley's decision to refuse an earlier application for an eco-development of 2,600 houses, which was also refused on appeal in 2009.

A new road with a new bridge over the Wey and Arun Canal close to the airfield's Compasses Gate to connect the development to the A281 is proposed in the latest application in a bid to improve transport connections.

To ease A281 traffic congestion, residents have urged the footpath and bridleway on the old railway line from Cranleigh to Guildford could be shared with an electric bus. Dunsfold Park supports the plan and could provide a link from its development to the new bus route.

Waverley has not yet completed the expert transport assessment it commissioned on the impact 1,800 homes would have on local roads, and approval for the outline plan will depend on the report's findings.

Dunsfold Park chief executive Jim McAllister told *The Herald*: "These are outline plans. If full planning permission is granted, we can build 1,800 homes in 10 years or so.

"If Waverley subsequently agrees to 3,400 houses they could be built in 20 to 25 years. Building houses

here protects against developing the green belt.

"We have got the jobs here and it means we can provide homes near jobs and it will all be within beautiful parkland. All we can do is to make the best case we can. Dunsfold Park is the largest brownfield site in Waverley to meet Waverley's housing needs and we hope we have put together a persuasive application.

"We will wait to see how Waverley approaches it.

"Farnham and Cranleigh are taking a pounding on their greenfields and most people see this as a way to reduce development on green fields and the green belt.

"This village has a lot of the eco-principles from the 2008 scheme, but we have made advances in having a solar farm and are starting to build an anaerobic digestion plant to generate more green energy."

Dunsfold Park's application has not been registered and it will be a few weeks before it goes "live" allowing residents to submit comments to the council.

Chiddingfold Parish Council considers a major residential development is still unsustainable due to the traffic increase and joined forces with six other neighbouring councils to commission an expert transport report, which supported concerns about the traffic impact on country lanes leading to the A3 and Witley and Miford stations.

Parish council chairman Ritchard Hogsflesh said: "Chiddingfold and many other villages around the site do not share Dunsfold Aerodrome's excitement about its potential to benefit the community.

"What we remain concerned about is the impact this development would have on rural roads in the area. All westbound traffic from the site would travel along High Street Green and through Chiddingfold on a 'C' class road.

"This is not acceptable."