

# Allotment-holders not keen to move if Slyfield homes plan proceeds

ALLOTMENT holders in Slyfield are worried about their fate, as Guildford Borough Council ploughs ahead with its housing plan for the area.

The council wants to start work on the Slyfield Area Regeneration Project (SARP), which would involve up to 1,000 homes being built in an area covering more than 40 hectares, adjacent to the industrial estate and residential land.

Little progress has yet been made, because Guildford Borough Council would need to pay to make private land available, including relocating Thames Water's sewage treatment works.

There is a large area

containing more than 100 allotments in Bellfields Road and the council has sought to reassure allotment users that they will not lose out.

Brian Rowe, 73, said he and other users had been told that if the project goes ahead, the allotments would be moved elsewhere.

They are concerned that the land may not be as good for growing and that their new plots may be far away from their friends.

"You built up friends when you're working on the allotments; you talk to the people nearby," said Mr Rowe. "A lot of us down there are retirees."

"It takes many years to get your allotment how you want it. Some things can be dug up

and moved but others can only be moved at certain times of year.

"I think a lot of people won't want to start again, which is a real shame because the allotments are a big part of the community."

Last month, SARP made it onto the government's 29-strong shortlist of bids for 'housing zones' in the UK and the council has admitted that in order to proceed, it would need 'high up-front capital'.

Mr Rowe said allotment-holders wanted the council to answer questions on how they would be provided with new plots.

A council spokesman responded: "A new allotment

site adjoining Clay Lane and alongside the Bowers Lane allotment site has been identified through the SARP masterplan work for relocating the Slyfield allotments.

"At this stage, there are no definite timescales for moving the allotments. However, the council will work with the allotment-holders, if and when it happens, to ensure a smooth transition."

Councillor Matt Furniss, who is heavily involved with the SARP, said: "Everyone who has an allotment will retain one."

He said there were no plans to make the allotment plots smaller and people could even end up with larger plots than at present.

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