KEY ISSUE:

To consider the Proposed Modifications to Surrey Structure Plan Deposit Draft, 2002.

SUMMARY:

Having previously commented on the draft Surrey Spatial Strategy and then the Deposit Draft Surrey Structure Plan, the Local Committee is asked to comment on the Proposed Modifications to the Plan. This is part of the formal consultation process and the Committee’s views will be considered by the County Council’s Executive on 12 October 2004.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee is asked to comment on the Proposed Modifications to the Surrey Structure Plan Deposit Draft, 2002, as part of the formal consultation process.

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 The Deposit Draft Structure Plan was published in December 2002 and placed on deposit for consultation in January and February 2003. In November and December 2003, the Deposit Plan was the subject of an Examination in Public in front of an independent panel of inspectors. The
Panel report, setting out recommendations for changes to the Plan, was received by the County Council in March 2004. The County Council’s Executive considered the Panel Report at its meeting on 8 June 2004 and agreed detailed changes to the Plan, which have now been published as Proposed Modifications.

1.2 The Modifications have now been placed on deposit for public consultation for a period of 6 weeks, running from 25 June until 6 August July. The outcome of the consultation process will be reported to Executive on 12th October. Provided no further changes to the Plan are necessary as an outcome of the consultation, the Executive will be asked to recommend the Plan to County Council on 19th October for approval. At this point the Plan will become the formally approved Surrey Structure Plan 2004, but will still need to pass through various statutory processes, before it can be legally adopted. It is anticipated that this will be toward the end of 2004 or early 2005.

2 Panel Recommendations and Proposed Modifications
2.1 In general, the Panel Report endorses the proposals put forward by the County Council in the Deposit Draft Plan. The Panel has made a large number of recommendations, but most are concerned with detailed changes to aid understanding and delivery, rather than being critical of the overall strategy. The Executive has accepted most of the Panel’s recommended changes, with 3 notable exceptions:

a) the division of the county into sub-areas for planning purposes. The Executive believes that retention of the 5 sub-areas proposed in the Deposit Draft Plan would provide a more robust and comprehensive framework for future planning in the county than the approach recommended by the Panel, and

b) the treatment of the Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) within the Plan. The Executive has maintained its strong support for the AGLV and rejected the Panel’s recommendation that it should be deleted, and

c) the deletion of references to opposition to the expansion of Gatwick Airport. The Executive has retained its opposition to further expansion of Gatwick Airport, in light of the potential adverse impact of expansion on the county, contrary to the Panel’s view.

3 Implications of Modifications for Guildford
3.1 Spatial Strategy

The Modifications retain the overall Spatial Strategy for Surrey and the 5 sub-areas identified in the Deposit Draft Plan. Guildford is identified as a Centre of Strategic Importance within the county, as well as being a Regional Hub within the Regional Transport Strategy. The strategy and policy aims for Guildford as set out in the Deposit Plan have been retained,
seeking to provide additional housing to support the growth of the town as part of the longer term strategy for this part of Surrey.

3.2 Housing Issues

i) Strategic Housing Allocation

3.3 The Panel accepted the County Council’s view that additional housing should be provided within Guildford, but recommended a reduction of 470 dwellings (due to increases in Epsom and Ewell and Spelthorne). Despite this reduction, in the absence of a local housing capacity study for Guildford, the Panel concluded:

“there remains uncertainty as to its (Guildford’s) ability to absorb all 5,220 new dwellings without harm to its character and resident’s quality of life.”

3.4 The Panel further concluded:

“that the prospect of an urban extension to Guildford cannot be ruled out. It may be the best solution to meet the needs of Guildford for additional housing in the structure plan period and beyond. However, we consider that the size and phasing of the extension should be determined through the local planning process, following completion of a local housing capacity study.”

3.5 In terms of location for any urban extension, the Panel has endorsed the County Council’s view (as set out in the Pre-EiP Changes to the Plan, published in June 2003) that, land to the north west of Guildford Town should be deleted as a potential location for a new community, but that land to the north east should be retained. The Panel considered that:

“This could be planned so that it provided for any surplus housing requirement in the structure plan period and for requirements after 2016.”

3.6 The Executive carefully considered the Panel’s recommendations for housing at Guildford. It took into consideration representations received from local Members and Guildford Borough Council members, that the proposed urban extension should be deleted from the Plan and that the full housing allocation could be delivered from within the urban area. However, whilst mindful of the fact that considerable progress has been made in Guildford in delivering additional housing in the urban area, the Executive did not feel that the necessary technical work (in the form of a local housing capacity study) had been produced to demonstrate that the full housing allocation could be met within the urban area. Following a vote at the Executive, the Panel’s recommendations were, therefore, agreed. The Modifications retain the potential for a new community to the north east of Guildford Town, in the event that insufficient housing can be identified in the urban area. The decision on the need for this extension and its planning will be taken by the Borough Council through its Local Development Framework.

ii) Affordable Housing

3.7 The Executive has welcomed the Panel’s endorsement of the inclusion of a 40% target for affordable housing in Policy DN11, recognising the very special circumstances that exist in Surrey and the significant amount of
technical work undertaken on affordability issues by the County Council and the Borough and District Councils. This approach establishes that the affordability problems in Surrey are unique within the region, and nationally, and will be of significant value in bidding for additional resources for housing (including key worker housing) from Government.

iii) Density
3.8 The Executive has accepted the Panel’s recommendation that the policy on residential density standards should be deleted and the appropriate text incorporated into the Design Policy (SE4). This approach gives greater weight to issue of design and layout in the consideration of planning applications, than to the numerical density being achieved, which should help to ensure that higher density development can be better integrated into the physical fabric of individual towns.

iv) Countryside and Green Belt
3.9 The Panel endorsed the need for a strong and clear policy for the countryside as a whole and recommended the merger of the existing Countryside and Green Belt policies (Policies LO4 and LO5) to achieve this. The Executive has accepted this recommendation and considers that the change will not weaken or diminish the protection of the Green Belt in Surrey, but should emphasise the protection that exists for those areas of countryside that are not designated as Green Belt.

v) Waste Management
3.10 The Panel made a number of recommendations for amendments to Policy DN19 Waste Management. The Executive has accepted the principle of these amendments, adding:

a) a reference to contributing towards meeting regional waste needs, once these have been agreed by the County Council,

b) a specific reference within the Policy to the Best Practical Environmental Option (BPEO),

c) a reference to the need for specific waste site identification within the Waste Local Plan.

4 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendation
The Structure Plan Deposit Draft was considered at the Examination in Public and the EiP Panel have made a set of recommendations, which the SCC Executive have considered and proposed a number of Modifications. The Local Committee is asked to comment on these Proposed Modifications, as part of the formal consultation process.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:  
Document 1 - Proposed Modifications, June 2004

Document 2 – Panel Recommendations and the County Council’s Response