



Surrey Structure Plan – implications and next steps

Local Committee for Woking 12 June 2003

KEY ISSUE:

The Structure Plan for Surrey has implications wider than housing.

The Executive of Surrey County Council at its meeting on 24 June 2003 are due to consider all of the representations made to the Plan and its responses to them. It will also consider whether to propose any pre Examination in Public (EiP) changes. Thereafter any pre EiP changes will be published for public consultation. The EiP is due to commence on 18 November 2003.

SUMMARY:

Housing growth in Woking would have implications for transport, health services, education, and many other services. The Local Committee should ensure that all agencies are able to take the Structure Plan into account in their own strategic planning.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to agree:

- a. that the Local Committee draw the issues identified in this report to the attention of relevant decision-makers and planners across all relevant agencies in Woking and the Local Strategic Partnership
- b. that the Surrey County Council Executive notes this report in its discussion of future drafts of the Structure Plan
- c. that the Surrey County Council Executive draws the issues identified in this report to the attention of relevant decision-makers and planners across all relevant agencies in Surrey and the Surrey-wide Strategic Partnership.

Background

1. As Members know, the results of consultation on the draft deposit structure plan for Surrey are now being analysed. Surrey County Council Executive on 24 June 2003 will consider all of the representations made to the plan and its responses to them. It will also consider whether to propose any pre Examination in Public changes. Thereafter any changes will be published for public consultation. The Examination in Public is due to commence on 18 November 2003.
2. Provisional Timetable leading to the adoption of the deposit draft Surrey Structure Plan 2002.

Date	Item
24 June	Executive consider Report on pre Examination in Public changes.
11 July – 22 August	Pre- Examination in Public changes placed on deposit for 6 weeks. Notice of EiP Issues published
18 Nov	Examination in Public starts
19 Dec	Examination in Public closes
Feb 2004	Examination in Public Panel report published
March 2004	Modifications to the deposit draft Structure Plan published
June 2004	New Surrey Structure Plan adopted

The consultation

3. The Local Committee made comments on the deposit draft Surrey Structure Plan 2002 at its meeting on 22 January 2003. Altogether, around 2,550 representations have been received. The main issues raised by the representations fall under the following topics: the Spatial Strategy, the Housing Distribution, the Green Belt, the Countryside, the Urban Environment, Waste, General Aviation and Transport.
4. Two issues make up the bulk of the representations. One concerns the proposed housing provision in the Housing Provision Policy LO7 - in particular the strategic allocation to Guildford and the related proposals for possible urban extensions of the town. The other is the continued opposition (particularly from the Guildford and Capel areas) to incineration of waste together with concern that the Waste Management Policy DN19 seeks to safeguard sites in waste management use for future possible facilities.

Wider context

5. Until the Surrey County Council Executive meets on 24 June, we will not know how many new houses it proposes should be in Woking, and how many more extra people this means will be living in the borough (in addition to those who would have come here anyway). The remainder of this report is written on the assumption that there will be an increase.

6. Whenever the Structure Plan has been discussed at the Local Committee for Woking, Members have emphasised that it is essential that housing need and provision are not addressed in isolation. Unless thinking and preparation is done in advance, new housing will be developed without the infrastructure to support the people who live in it. To avoid fracturing the social fabric and planting seeds for future problems, the infrastructure needs to exist before the new housing.
7. More people will want to move about. The implications of the Structure Plan need to be considered by and reflected in the strategic planning of:
 - a. Surrey County Council as the Highways Authority, with its Local Transport Plan, and Safer Routes to Schools strategy;
 - b. the Highways Agency;
 - c. the Strategic Rail Authority, and those responsible for rail transport in Surrey;
 - d. those responsible for airport provision;
 - e. bus service providers;
 - f. local campaigning groups for pedestrians and cyclists
8. More people will need medical care. The Local Delivery Plans drawn up by Primary Care Trusts and approved by the Surrey and Sussex Strategic Health Authority need to address the implications for the number of GPs, dentists, chemists, health visitors, and other primary health care services, including staffing numbers and space requirements, as well as increased demand on hospital and secondary health services.
9. More children will need education. As Education Authority, Surrey County Council carries out regular reviews of school provision. The Structure Plan will affect long-term forecasts of the probable number of pupils in future, which may mean that schools need to be kept open even though places are surplus to existing needs.
10. More people will use all the other services provided by Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council: adult learning, fire and rescue, leisure facilities, libraries, services for old people and people with disabilities, waste collection and disposal, youth services. Some of these services are provided by voluntary organisations, who will therefore need not only more funding to provide the service itself, but also more support and investment to manage growth.
11. More people will be concerned about crime, need advice and reassurance, and one would guess that the level of crime would increase pro rata with the increase in population. This has impacts for the Police Service.
12. There will also be more pressure on existing commercial services such as shops and entertainment venues, and a need for new facilities in areas with significant housing growth.

13. Human resourcing is another issue. Recruitment and retention are among the biggest problems facing public services in the area. More people, and more pressure on services, is likely to make things worse, unless care is taken to ensure that the housing is suitable for public service staff. This means that it must be affordable – whether mortgaged or rented - and in the right locations.
14. The need for additional infrastructure is not the only way in which the Structure Plan affects other fields. Those who are responsible for other strategies need to take into account the implications of the Structure Plan, even if the connection is not immediately obvious.
15. For example, the Surrey Minerals Plan: the location of new housing, and the roads and services related to it, need to inform decisions about extraction, movement and storage of minerals in Surrey; the Waste Strategy; the Rural Strategy.
16. Finally, there is the direct impact of additional housing on the character of Woking. If it is outside the town centre, it may reduce the identity of the villages, and the greenery between them. If in the centre of town and in apartment blocks which increase the average building height, the character of the town centre may change.

Ethnic minority implications

17. Because of the significant ethnic minority community in Woking, it will be important to take their needs into account: consultation; size and location of new housing; and related infrastructure.

Conclusions and reasons for recommendations

18. Depending on the size of increase in the population, the implications could be profound for Woking, affecting most agencies and needing to be reflected in the Woking Community Strategy.
19. The Surrey County Council Executive needs to take the issues described into account when receiving a report on the results of the consultation and officers' recommendations for revisions to the draft plan.
20. The agencies responsible for health, transport, education, mineral extraction, rural affairs and other issues listed need to consider the implications of the Structure Plan in their own strategic planning.
21. And since more housing means more people means higher demand for services means higher costs, those responsible for public sector budgets nationally and locally need now to work out how to pay for future need.

22. It is therefore recommended that the Local Committee draw the issues identified in this report to the attention of relevant decision-makers and planners across all relevant agencies in Woking and the Local Strategic Partnership, and that the Surrey County Council Executive notes this report, and takes action to do the same across Surrey.

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