



**Planning & Countryside Service
Annual Report
Local Committee for Woking
23 July 2003**

KEY ISSUE:

The following is a summary of planning and development issues and also countryside and heritage issues relating to the Woking area for the year ended 31 March 2003.

SUMMARY:

The report contains local performance information for Transportation Development Control which has the responsibility of responding to consultations from all the planning authorities in Surrey, on behalf of the County Council or the Highways Authority, on the transportation implications of planning applications.

Surrey wide performance information is available for Minerals and Waste and Strategic Consultations on the County website at www.surreycc.gov.uk. The relatively small numbers of applications and consultations dealt with per district mean that the local statistics for these services will have little validity.

The report also highlights the work of the Countryside & Heritage Division including Rights of Way.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked:

- a. to note the report
- b. to comment on the performance of the service in the Woking area.

Introduction and background

1. The Planning and Countryside Service covers four broad areas:
 - **Strategic Planning.** The County Council sets a strategic planning framework for the county through the Structure Plan and associated policies. It is currently reviewing the Structure Plan which will determine the amount and general location of housing in the county. Other big issues include policies on airports, car parking standards and also general support to the preparation of local plans by district councils.
 - **Minerals and Waste Planning.** The County Council determines all planning applications for minerals and waste facilities, and also prepares minerals and waste local plans in order to set the policies for determining applications. It also undertakes restoration work on old sites.
 - **Transportation Development Control.** The County Council advises all planning authorities in Surrey on the transportation implications of all planning applications in the county.
 - **Countryside and Heritage.** The County Council has responsibility for administering rights of way, leads a number of countryside management projects in conjunction with a variety of partners, prepares rural and heritage strategies, and undertakes associated work on landscape, ecology, rural living issues, and also archaeology and other heritage issues.
2. This report includes an overview of major applications and policy developments over the past year and also any anticipated issues for the year ahead. The intention is that Members are kept informed of major developments. All statistics and performance data in this report are for the Woking area.

The Local Profile

3. The local profile will be dealt with in a report to the Local Committee later in the year once the ward census data is available from the Office of National Statistics.

Transportation Development Control

4. Transportation Development Control (TDC) has the responsibility of responding to consultations from all the planning authorities in Surrey, on behalf of the County Council or the Highways Authority, on the transportation implications of planning applications.

Number of responses to applications dealt with within 14 days

5. Woking Borough Council consulted TDC on 1556 planning applications in 2002/03. TDC responded to 1451 (93%) of these applications on the same day or the next day after consultation. TDC selected 105 (7%) applications for further action and responded to 97 (92%) of these applications within 14 days. The average TDC response time was less than five days. TDC aim to respond to 85% of applications within 14 days. For Woking, TDC exceeded its performance target in 2002/03. Local planning authorities like Woking Borough Council are under increasing government pressure to determine planning applications quickly, within fixed timescales. TDC's fast consultation response to planning application helps Woking Borough Council meet its performance targets.

Transportation Gains

6. Where appropriate TDC request transportation improvements from planning applications. The type and level of transportation benefits sought depends on the nature of development proposed. Development proposals vary between the districts and each area has its own characteristics. Application WO02/1417 was a notable development for 240 flats on land by Woking railway station. This high density town centre development yielded about £1.9 million of transportation improvements for:
 - a. Improved pedestrian and cycling facilities around the site,
 - b. A substantial financial contribution for station improvements,
 - c. Safeguarding land for future improvements to Victoria Arch.
7. There have been many medium to high density residential developments in and around Woking town centre. In 2002/03 Woking Borough Council granted planning approval for about 500 dwelling around Woking. Residential development close to town centres with good rail and bus services results in significantly fewer vehicular trips than development elsewhere. This type of development accords with the location and transportation strategy in draft structure plan policies. It also helps Woking meet its housing supply targets without eating into new green field sites.

Working in Partnership

8. Normally Woking planning officers and members support TDC's recommendations on planning applications. Occasionally planning committee members have reservations about highway or transportation matters on specific applications. However, these occasions have not resulted in Woking deciding against county advice. TDC welcomes the support of Woking planners and members and wishes to build on this business partnership.

Countryside and Heritage

9. In the Countryside and Heritage Division a major piece of work over the last year has been the preparation of the new Rural Strategy. The Local Committee discussed the consultation draft at its meeting on 19 March 2003.

Rights of Way

10. Rights of way in Woking are now maintained by the County Council's Rights of Way Officer for NW Surrey. Rights of way efforts this year have concentrated on establishing a proactive vegetation clearance programme and on improving signposting.

Heathland Countryside Management Project

11. The Project has worked in promoting heathland conservation through its varied work with the public, with organisations involved in the countryside and networking with heathland managers. In addition, the Surrey Heathland Project carried out the following practical work in Woking in the last year:
12. The Project organised cattle grazing on 88 hectares on five heathland sites over Summer 2002 - Brookwood Heath, Prey Heath, Smart's Heath, Sheet's Heath and Horsell Common. As part of its five year Heritage Lottery funded programme, 'Surrey's Last Wilderness' (commenced October 2002), the Project has carried out 9.5 hectares of scrub clearance on the first four of these sites.

Strategic Consultations

13. The Borough Council consults the County Council when applications raise particularly important strategic policy issues by reason of scale, policy interpretation or policy development. The County Council deals with a number of Strategic Consultations from Woking Borough Council each year. A monthly list of current and completed consultations can be found on the County's website under the Planning and Countryside Service. The County's response is in relation to the Government's national planning policy guidance and the policies of the emerging Structure Plan Review.
14. In particular, in the year ending 31 March 2003 the County dealt with Strategic Consultations relating to major proposals for high density housing schemes affecting different sites both in Woking town centre and Knaphill. No objection was raised in relation to policy and national guidance concerning housing and sustainable development. Objection was, however, raised to several proposals for speculative housing at Manor Farm, Byfleet on flooding grounds and inappropriateness on Green Belt grounds. Commercial proposals for the extension of retailing at Knaphill were subject to objection on the

grounds of sustainability and lack of proof of need. Redevelopment of existing warehousing units at Goldsworth was not found to be objectionable.

Minerals, Waste and County Council Development

15. Surrey County Council is responsible for deciding planning applications for:

- mineral developments (proposals for the extraction of minerals such as sand, gravel, clay, chalk and oil and gas or facilities for their initial processing);
- waste developments (proposals for the disposal, storage and processing of waste, such as landfills, energy from waste plants, recycling, transfer stations, composting facilities, etc); and
- developments the County Council needs to carry out for itself, or jointly with another body, to deliver the services for which it is responsible for providing (for example proposals at schools, social services facilities, the County Council's own office buildings, and new or significantly improved roads).

16. In this report applications for minerals and waste developments are referred to as 'county matter' applications and applications for the County Council's own development are referred to as 'county development' applications.

17. Within the Planning and Countryside Service the Minerals, Waste and County Development Division is responsible for processing both county matter and county development planning applications and reporting them, as necessary, to the Planning and Regulatory Committee.

County Matter Decisions

18. During the year countywide, the County Council issued decisions on 28 county matter applications (26 permissions and two refusals), 11 submissions for approval of details required pursuant to conditions on an existing planning permission ("details pursuant") (all approved), and one application for a modification to a Section 106 agreement (refused), totalling 40. Of the 28 county matter applications determined, two were for developments requiring an environmental impact assessment (EIA) to be undertaken and the applications accompanied by Environmental Statements. Details of the decisions issued in the Woking Borough Council area can be found in Annex 1 of this report.

19. Of the 40 county matter decisions (applications, "details pursuant" and Section 106 modification) issued in 2002/03, 77% were determined under delegated powers by the Head of Planning and Countryside, and 23% by the Planning and Regulatory Committee.

20. Due to the more complex nature of many minerals and waste development proposals longer periods are required to enable extensive consultations and negotiations, and to ensure that the proposed development is acceptable in all respects. In recognition of this no targets are set by Government to apply to county matter applications for Best Value performance indicator BVP109. Instead the County Council is required to set its own year on year target for determining county matter applications subject to BVP109 on the time taken for determining applications.
21. BVP109 only applies to decisions on county matter applications not accompanied by environmental statements. Of the 26 decisions to which BVP109 applies, 35% (nine) were determined within 13 weeks exceeding the target set for 2002/03 of 25%.

County Development Decisions

22. During the year the County Council issued 65 decisions for county development proposals (64 permissions and one "details pursuant" submission approved). Four applications for Listed Building Consent, processed by the County Council, were permitted by the Secretary of State. Details of the decisions issued within the Woking Borough Council area can be found in Annex 2 of this report.
23. Of the 65 decisions on county development applications and submissions, 88% were determined under delegated powers by the Head of Planning and Countryside, and 12% by the Planning and Regulatory Committee.
24. There are no Best Value performance indicators which apply to county development applications. However, of the 64 planning permissions issued for county development applications in 2002/03, 70% were determined in less than 13 weeks.

Summary of Minerals and Waste Planning Enforcement Activities During 2002

25. The 2002 Annual Monitoring Report, to be published later this year, will contain a chapter on Enforcement that gives statistical information regarding visits and complaints in addition to a broad-brush view of enforcement officers work and details several specific sites of particular interest that have been dealt with throughout the County during the year.
26. The associated appendix then details sites, the number of site visits and a brief individual site update on both the mineral and major waste sites within the 11 local planning authorities within the County.

27. In the Borough of Woking, nine monitoring site visits to authorised mineral and waste sites took place with a further five investigative visits to sites reported as unauthorised waste operations. At Brookfield Farm, Chobham, following the service of Enforcement and Stop Notice to cease unauthorised landraising, the steps of the notice were complied with. Details of the site visits within the Woking Borough Council area can be found in Annex 3 of this report. There may be discrepancies between the number of site visits listed in this report and those listed in the annex. This is due to the fact that investigations into minor sites, which may result in a site visit, will not all have been included within the annex.

Ethnic Minority Implications

28. The Planning and Countryside Service carries out its functions and work strictly in accordance with the County Council's Equal Opportunities Policy. In terms of human resources, emphasis is placed on such aspects as recruitment, training and working practices. The day-to-day provision of services from Planning and Countryside for the communities of Woking is aimed at reaching all sections of the community without discrimination.

Equalities Implications

29. Underrepresented groups such as visitors with disabilities are not overlooked and three easy access trails in Woking for are being advertised in the recent County Council publication "Easy Walks around Surrey".

Conclusion And Reasons For Recommendations

This report details the work and performance of the various aspects of the Planning and Countryside service in the Woking area. Members are asked to note the work of the service and comment on any of its aspects.

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 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

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Annex 1

MINERAL AND WASTE PLANNING (COUNTY MATTER) DECISIONS ISSUED IN 2002/03

Application No Applicant Site Address	Description of Proposal	Notice Issued and Decision Date
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WOKING

WO02/1109 BNB Management Warren Farm Mobile Home Park, Warren Lane, Pyrford	Excavation of a void and installation of a replacement sewage treatment plant followed by back filling to ground level together with a brick built blower housing.	PERMIT 15/11/02
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Annex 2

COUNTY DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS ISSUED IN 2002/03

Application No Applicant Site Address	Description of Proposal	Notice Issued and Decision Date
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WOKING

WO02/0270 Director of Education Woking High School, Morton Road, Woking	Two single storey extensions to provide: additional drama and music facilities and new classroom/study room as extension to the library.	GRANT 23/04/02
WO02/0677 Director of Education Woking Pupil Referral Unit, 45 Kingsway, Woking	Construction of demountable unit for multi- purpose food technology and dining area.	GRANT 02/09/02
WO02/0692 Director of Education School House, Engliff Lane, Pyrford	Change of use of former caretakers house to use as pupil referral unit.	GRANT 20/09/02
WO02/1205 Headteacher Oaktree Infant School, Gorsewood Road, St Johns,	Erection of glazed canopy to create covered play area.	GRANT 16/10/02

Annex 3
Schedule of Enforcement Activity during 2002

Site Name and Address	OS Grid Ref (eastings/ northings)	Activity	Operator	No. of Visits in 2002	Remarks
WOKING					
British Rail Down Yard, Woking	500115 158262	Rail Aggregate Depot	Day Aggregates	2	Use of depot for importation and storage of aggregates continues.
Martyrs Lane Civic Amenity site, Woking	502056 161315	Waste Processing / Transfer	Surrey Waste Management	3	Site operations continue to be monitored.
Mimbridge Nurseries, Station Road, Chobham	499107 160616	Waste Processing / Transfer	A. Greenwood	4	Appeal against Enforcement Notice regarding the use of the site for inert waste processing dismissed 15/01/02. Enforcement Notice upheld, terms of notice complied with by October. Site now operating in line with Certificate of Lawful Use.
Warren Farm Mobile Home Park, Warren Lane, Pyrford	504271 157687	Installation of a replacement sewage treatment plant	BNB Management	0	The planning permission issued in November 2002 for a replacement sewage treatment plant at the mobile caravan park.