



# **Surrey Structure Plan Proposed Modifications**

## **Local Committee for Woking 14 July 2004**

### **KEY ISSUE:**

To respond to the public consultation on the Proposed Modifications to the Surrey Structure Plan Deposit Draft, December 2002.

### **SUMMARY:**

The Surrey Structure Plan Deposit Draft was the subject of an Examination in Public in November and December 2003, in front of an independent panel of inspectors. The Panel's report was published in March 2004, and the County Council's Executive has now agreed changes to the Plan in response to the Panel's recommendations.

In general, the Panel has supported the overall Spatial Strategy set out in the Structure Plan and most of its recommendations have been accepted by the Executive. Key issues for consideration by the Local Committee relate to the maintenance of Woking as a Centre of Strategic Importance within Surrey and the potential impact of the deletion of the concepts of Strategic Housing Allocations and Comprehensive Urban Strategies.

## **OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Committee is asked to:

Comment on the Proposed Modifications to the Surrey Structure Plan Deposit Draft, 2002, as part of the formal consultation process.

## Introduction and background

1. The Deposit Draft Structure Plan was published in December 2002 and placed on Deposit for consultation in January and February 2003. In June 2003, the County Council considered comments received in the consultation and agreed a number of changes to the Plan which were published as Pre-Examination in Public Changes. 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.
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 2004. The outcome of the consultation process will be reported to Executive on 12 October 2004. 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 19 October 2004 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 towards the end of 2004 or early 2005.
3. 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.

## Implications of Modifications for Woking

### Spatial Strategy

4. The Modifications retain the overall Spatial Strategy for Surrey and the 5 sub-areas identified in the Deposit Draft Plan. Woking 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 Woking 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. As far as possible, the housing allocations should be delivered on previously developed land in and around Woking town centre.

### Housing Issues

#### i) Strategic Housing Allocations

5. The County Council has accepted the Panel's recommendation that the term 'Strategic Housing Allocation', as applied to Guildford and Woking should be deleted. Evidence presented by Woking Borough Council officers at the EiP indicated that the housing allocation to the area in and around the town centre could be met through existing identified housing potential. However, the retention of the concept of Woking as a Centre of Strategic Importance retains Woking's status within the Plan. The deletion of the term should, therefore, have no impact upon the future strategy for and planning of Woking.
6. The Deposit Draft Plan proposed that 1,000 additional dwellings should be provided in Woking town centre through the application of a Comprehensive Urban Strategy approach. This approach sought to ensure a more integrated process to the consideration of development proposals, ensuring that new development is adequately supported by new infrastructure provision and makes a positive contribution to improving the quality of life. Although the EiP Panel supported the aims behind Comprehensive Urban Strategies, it concluded that the concept could be better addressed through the newly emerging planning system and through community strategies, rather than through a discrete, but additional, process. This has been accepted by the Executive and references to the production of a Comprehensive Urban Strategy for Woking town centre deleted. The Modifications do, however, commit the County Council to reviewing the existing infrastructure best practice guide, with a view to ensuring that infrastructure provision (in its widest sense) keeps pace with the rate of new housing development.

#### ii) Affordable Housing

7. The County Council 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**

8. The County Council 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 the 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.

## **Countryside and Green Belt**

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.

## **Waste Management**

10. The Panel made a number of recommendations for amendments to Policy DN19 on Waste Management. The County Council 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.

## **Conclusions and reasons for recommendations**

11. The EiP Panel has, to a large extent, supported the overall strategy and policies in the Deposit Draft Structure Plan, and the majority of its recommendations have been accepted by the Executive. The Panel has endorsed the strategic role identified for Woking in the Deposit Draft Plan, and the potential within the town centre to deliver further higher density residential development. Although the Panel has recommended the deletion of the Comprehensive Urban Strategy process to deliver this housing, the

Executive considers that sufficient safeguards exist through the revised planning system, the community strategy process and best practice guidance in infrastructure provision, to ensure that the new housing can make a positive contribution to the quality of life in Woking.

12. Proposed changes to the Plan arising out of the Panel's recommendations have now been placed 'on deposit' for public consultation. The Local Committee is being asked to consider these modifications and provide comments to the Executive as part of this consultation process.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Document 1: Proposed Modifications, June 2004

Document 2: Panel Recommendations & the County Council's Response, June 2004

Deposit Draft Structure Plan, incorporating Proposed Modifications, June 2004

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