



Planning & Countryside Service Annual Report

Local Committee for Woking 14 October 2004

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 2004.

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:

1. to note the report
2. to comment on the performance of the service in the Woking area.

1. Introduction and background

1.1 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.

1.2 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.

2. The local profile

2.1 The local profile was dealt within a presentation to this committee on the Census Data in July 2003.

3. Transportation development control

3.1 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.

3.2 Number of responses to applications dealt with within 14 days:
Woking Borough Council (WoBC) consulted TDC on 1357 planning applications in 2003/04. TDC responded to 1270 (94%) of these applications on the same day or the next day after consultation. TDC selected 87 (6%) applications for further action and responded to 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. Local planning authorities like WoBC are under increasing government pressure to determine planning applications quickly, within fixed timescales. TDC's fast consultation response to planning application helps WoBC meet its performance targets.

4. Transportation gains

- 4.1 Where appropriate TDC continues to request transportation improvements from planning applications. The type and level of transportation benefits sought depends on the nature of the development proposed. Development proposals vary between the districts and the individual areas continue to have their own characteristics.
- 4.2 For Woking borough many of the applications approved in the 2002/3 year are now under construction; some are completed and occupied. The single largest residential development reported last year that is now being built is the Barratt Home's 'Centrium' development on Victoria Road / Station Approach in Woking town centre. This development in three blocks, totalling 288 apartments yielded almost £2 million of transportation improvements. Another larger residential development reported last year, now under construction, is the Berkeley Homes 54 apartment block at the former Litten Tree PH in Constitution Hill, Woking. Aside from residential development, the large office development approved in 1999 for the Broadoaks site off the Parvis Road in West Byfleet has not been built. This development carries a planning obligation to construct a package of highway improvements along the A245 corridor between West Byfleet and Byfleet villages. In the last year there have been a couple of 'false starts' where it appeared that the developer would commence the development. Unfortunately these 'starts' have not materialised and it remains a concern that the development and hence the highway works have not started. Officers will continue to allocate reasonable resources to help the developer enter into a highway agreement for the A245 corridor works.
- 4.3 In 2003/4 year there have been further medium to high density residential schemes approved in and around Woking town centre. The borough council approved applications for about 350 apartment style dwellings that yielded transport related financial contributions amounting to around £200K and physical highway improvement works valued at around £100K. More recently there have been applications for small to medium scale residential apartment style developments in larger village centres, including Knaphill and West Byfleet.
- 4.4 Housing developers continue to promote apartment style developments. Within Woking borough these developments continue to be proposed close to commercial centres, maximising the use of previously developed urban land in transport accessible locations. This type of development accords with the aspirations of SCC draft deposit Structure Plan policies and helps Woking meet its housing supply targets without using green sites.

5. Working in partnership

- 5.1 Normally Woking planners and members support TDC's planning application recommendations. Planning committee members often have questions about specific highway and transport points on individual applications. However these are usually capable of being resolved at the committee meeting by the TDC officer answering member's questions. It is rare for applications to be determined against county advice. Many planning committee member concerns relate to parking on developments and the current policy of parking restraint continues to be a topical issue. To assist the borough council understand this issue TDC has participated in a Woking member training session. Woking is formulating its own development parking standards for future adoption as supplementary planning guidance. It is hoped that these standards will echo the thrust of the current national policy as articulated in SCC's adopted parking strategy.

6. Countryside and Heritage

6.1 Rights of Way

Our work on public rights of way included replacing 107 missing signposts and clearing over 24,000 square metres of surface vegetation, as well as surface repairs and drainage works. We also arranged for adjoining residents and landowners to cut back overhanging vegetation and repair broken stiles, and for the removal of other obstructions such as fallen trees or fly-tipping

6.2 Heathland Countryside Management Project

The Surrey Heathland Project has worked on heathland management throughout Woking particularly at Brookwood Heath, Prey Heath, Sheets Heath and Smarts Heath and in support of the management of Horsell Common.

Bisley and West End commons are part of the County Council's Countryside Estate, now managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust and the new management arrangements are progressing well.

7. Strategic consultations

- 7.1 During 2003/04 the Spatial Policy Group has continued preparing the Surrey Structure Plan which reached its crucial Public Examination stage in November 2003. The final Structure Plan is expected to be approved by the County Council in October 2004. The Local Committees have had opportunities throughout the process to comment on the plan as it developed. The Group has also been very involved in the preparation of the South East Plan (being prepared by the Regional Assembly) and in particular, has acted as the lead officer support for the preparation of various sub-regional strategies. The group has also played a key role in the continuing push for more affordable housing in the county and has taken a lead role in the proposed 'S' developments being promoted by the County Council using its own land.

8. Minerals, waste and county council development

- 8.1 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).
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.

9. County Matter Decisions

- 9.1 During the year the County Council issued decisions on 31 county matter applications (28 permissions and 3 refusals) and 16 submissions for approval of details required pursuant to conditions on an existing planning permission (details pursuant) or schemes of conditions on Interim Development Order permissions or Review of Old Minerals Planning permissions (all approved). None of the 31 county matter applications determined were for developments requiring an environmental impact assessment (EIA) to be undertaken and the applications accompanied by Environmental Statements. No decisions were issued within the Woking Borough Council area.
- 9.2 Of the 47 county matter decisions (applications, details pursuant and schemes of conditions) issued in 2002/03, 47% were determined under delegated powers by the Head of Planning and Countryside, and 53% by the Planning and Regulatory Committee.
- 9.3 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.

- 9.4 BVP109 only applies to decisions on county matter applications not accompanied by environmental statements. Of the 31 decisions to which BVP109 applies, 32% (10) were determined within 13 weeks exceeding the target set for 2002-2003 of 25%. Given the very small number of cases involved no meaningful statistics can be produced for each of the Districts.

10. County development decisions

- 10.1 During the year the County Council issued 60 decisions for county development proposals (56 permissions and four details pursuant submissions approved). Details of the decisions issued within the Woking Borough Council area can be found in Annexe 1 of this report.
- 10.2 Of the 60 decisions on county development applications and submissions, 67% (40) were determined under delegated powers by the Head of Planning and Countryside, and 33% (20) by the Planning and Regulatory Committee.
- 10.3 There are no Best Value performance indicators which apply to county development applications. However, of the 56 planning permissions issued for county development applications in 2003/04, 70% were determined in less than 13 weeks.

11. Applicant satisfaction surveys

- 11.1 In 2003/04 the County Council was required by Best Value Performance Indicator BV111 to survey applicants who had received a decision on a minerals and waste application over the period 1 April to 30 September 2003. The survey questions, set by government were designed to investigate applicants experience with the planning service delivered by the County Council, and their overall satisfaction with the service. Eleven applicants were surveyed of which nine responded. Of these six (66.6%) were very or fairly satisfied, one (11.1%) was fairly satisfied and two (22.2%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the service provided.
- 11.2 Although the County Council did not achieve the BV111 target of 75% satisfaction and the satisfaction level is down on the 2000/01 survey 76.9% satisfaction level, rapport with applicants is generally good. The small number of applicants dealt with means that disproportionate percentage swings can result from slight variations in results.
- 11.3 As BV111 only applies to applicants receiving decisions on minerals and waste applications the County Council decided to run a similar survey for applicants who had received a decision on county development applications (County Council applications). The survey was conducted in the same way as the BV111 survey.

- 11.4 20 applicants were surveyed on the county development survey, of which eight responded. Of these six were very satisfied and two fairly satisfied with the service, giving an overall satisfaction score of 100%.

12. Summary of minerals and waste planning enforcement activities during 2003

- 12.1 The 2003 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.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 In the Borough of Woking, 7 monitoring site visits to authorised mineral and waste sites took place with a further 4 investigative visits to sites reported as unauthorised waste operations. Details of the site visits can be found in Annexe 2 to this report.

13. Ethnic minority implications

- 13.1 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.

14. Equalities Implications

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

15. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 15.1 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.

Report by: Roger Hargreaves, Head of Planning and Countryside

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Roger Hargreaves, Head of Planning and Countryside

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 020 8541 9302

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Version No. one

Date: 22 September 2004

Initials:RH

No of annexes:Two

COUNTY DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS ISSUED IN 2003/04

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

WO03/0533 Land at Woking Pupil Referral Unit, 45 Kingsway, Woking	Construction of new hard play area approximately 23m by 13 m maximum	Granted 28/07/03
WO03/1044 Knaphill School, High Street, Knaphill	Construction of two single storey pitched roof extensions to provide additional cloakroom facilities	Granted 20/10/03
WO03/1450 The Hermitage School, Oakwood Road, St Johns, Woking	Construction of single storey infill extension to provide new facilities for special education needs	Granted 10/02/04
WO03/1343 Land at West Byfleet Community Infant Scholl, Camphill Road, West Byfleet	Construction of a single storey extension comprising two new classrooms, toilets and link corridor to existing building	Granted 03/03/04

Schedule of Enforcement Activity during 2003

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	3	Use of depot for importation and storage of aggregates.
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	Site now operating in line with Certificate of Lawful Use.