

# CIBS IQ Research

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## Victoria Arch Scheme

Predictive Equality Impact Assessment: Compulsory Purchase Order

Report to Woking Borough Council

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Final Report

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## Executive Summary

**Background and context to the EqIA:** In May 2020, Woking Borough Council (WBC) commissioned CIBS IQ Research to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) on its proposed CPO as it relates to the Victoria Arch Scheme. The scheme has three distinct and at the same time, interrelated proposals. These are as follows:

- a) Road infrastructure improvements along the Guildford Road, including the removal of the one-way gyratory system and the introduction of a two-way carriageway to facilitate easier traffic flow into and out of the town centre, and to provide enhanced pedestrian and cycle path facilities.
- b) The acquisition and demolition of all properties located on the island site known as *the Triangle* to enable the highway to be widened.
- c) The replacement of Victoria Arch with a widened bridge to allow four lanes of traffic together with a footway and cycle path on both sides of the road and in support of Network Rail's objectives of delivering a Woking Flyover.

**Approach to the EqIA:** The EqIA has been carried out using process that has involved identifying the likely impacts arising from the CPO and considering them in a positive, negative or neutral light, and where potential negative impact has been identified, assesses measures that have been taken and can be taken to lesson any impact. It also highlights any opportunities for furthering equality. The lines of inquiry have been structured around the EqIA assessment framework that is set out in *Appendix A*. To inform the CPO, a site visit has been carried out, and face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted with some of the key stakeholders, including a representative from WSP who carried out a consultation on the road infrastructure elements of the scheme, but which excluded Victoria Arch itself. The stakeholders interviewed are referred to in *Appendix B*. There were a number of sources directly linked to the scheme including relevant committee papers, and reports that were used, as well as background material, and these are set out in *Appendix C*.

**The legislative framework for equality:** The Equality Act 2010, provides legal protection from discrimination on the basis of groups with protected characteristics. These characteristics are age, disability, sex, race, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and religion and belief. The Council is required to take a considered view of its responsibilities and obligations in respect of groups with protected characteristics under the terms of the Equality Act 2010, and in particular, with reference to S149 of the Act which sets out a proactive and pre-emptive Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). There are also WBC's equality objectives which are reviewed, updated and published annually, and a range of statutory instruments, guidance, and national and local policies and strategies. These have direct relevance to equality in relation to the Victoria Arch CPO in terms of minimising potential disadvantage suffered by people due to their protected characteristics, and taking steps to enhance positive impacts. Thus, in exercising its powers of compulsory purchase, WBC, must consider the effect of any differential

impacts on groups with protected characteristics, assess negative impacts, take steps to mitigate them, assess negative impacts against long-term positive impacts, and enhance positive impacts. An EqIA provides a systematic and comprehensive tool to assist the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligations. In the case of the Victoria Arch CPO, it is by assessing the impact of the proposals, through the prism of equality, and the steps that have been taken to mitigate any potential negative impacts and unlawful discrimination, and to enhance positive impacts.

**The equality impacts:** The proposals for Victoria Arch will have a positive impact overall and where the potential for negative impacts have been identified, mitigating measures have been put in place by the Council where it has been possible to do so. This has been in terms of providing support and assistance to everyone directly impacted, including those tenants for whom the Council does not have a statutory responsibility. The measures underpinning the proposals bring forward a more useable, pedestrian-friendly, and connected public realm, reduce congestion, and enhance liveability and walkability. They also increase the proportion of affordable housing, enabling WBC to meet its housing targets, over and above its existing commitments. This means that there will be greater provision for protected groups who are disproportionately more likely to be impacted by housing shortage.

The proposals, in seeking to transform, open up the area, and reduce congestion, will have a positive impact in making the town centre and the areas around it, attractive places in which to live, work and invest. The local economy should see significant benefits this will therefore have a positive impact. In order for all protected groups to reap economic benefits from these, they will need to be conjoined with positive action measures that target protected groups. There is evidence of this in other parts of the town centre development where for example, black and minority ethnic businesses, have been moved from stalls located in the town centre, to restaurant establishments nearby at rents linked to current cashflow. Initiatives such as these that link to the overall development of the area will ensure that the benefits are evenly dispersed.

7.3 The consultation that has informed proposals for the road infrastructure has been extensive and intensive and geared to those with a variety of access needs. A variety of approaches to engagement were used and this is positive judging by the number of organisations that were represented in the consultation and the areas of activity they were engaged in. These organisations included representatives from across groups with protected characteristics.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- a) The Woking Access Group gets a Copy of this EqIA in sufficient time to make comments.
- b) The Woking Access Group continue to be engaged as the detailed implementation progresses.
- c) The EqIA be publicised and published on the Council's website.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 **Background and context to the EqIA:** In May 2020, Woking Borough Council (WBC) commissioned CIBS IQ Research to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) on its proposed CPO as it relates to the Victoria Arch Scheme. The scheme has three distinct and at the same time, interrelated proposals. These are as follows:

- d) Road infrastructure improvements along the Guildford Road, including the removal of the one-way gyratory system and the introduction of a two-way carriageway to facilitate easier traffic flow into and out of the town centre, and to provide enhanced pedestrian and cycle path facilities.
- e) The acquisition and demolition of all properties located on the island site known as *the Triangle* to enable the highway to be widened.
- f) The replacement of Victoria Arch with a widened bridge to allow four lanes of traffic together with a footway and cycle path on both sides of the road and in support of Network Rail's objectives of delivering a Woking Flyover.

1.2 **Approach to the EqIA:** The EqIA has been carried out using process that has involved identifying the likely impacts arising from the CPO and considering them in a positive, negative or neutral light, and where potential negative impact has been identified, assesses measures that have been taken and can be taken to lesson any impact. It also highlights any opportunities for furthering equality. The lines of inquiry have been structured around the EqIA assessment framework that is set out in *Appendix A*. To inform the CPO, a site visit has been carried out, and face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted with some of the key stakeholders, including a representative from WSP who carried out a consultation on the road infrastructure elements of the scheme, but which excluded Victoria Arch itself. The stakeholders interviewed are referred to in *Appendix B*. There were a number of sources directly linked to the scheme including relevant committee papers, and reports that were used, as well as background material, and these are set out in *Appendix C*.

1.3 **Structure of the EqIA:** The EqIA is structured in the following way: Section 2 sets the relevant legislative and policy context and Section 3 describes the Victoria Arch proposals, and includes some key relevant demographics. Section 4 describes the current situation at Victoria Arch, and the need for acquisition of the site. Section 5 discusses the programme of consultation and engagement that was undertaken by WPA on the road infrastructure proposals. Section 6 presents the findings of the EqIA and examines the potential equality impacts of the CPO in relation to the key elements of the development proposals. The final section 7 concludes the EqIA and sets out a series of recommendations.

## 2. Equality and policy considerations

2.1 **The legal framework and wider policy considerations:** The Equality Act 2010, provides legal protection from discrimination on the basis of groups with protected characteristics. These characteristics are age, disability, sex, race, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and religion and belief. The Council is required to take a considered view of its responsibilities and obligations in respect of groups with protected characteristics under the terms of the Equality Act 2010, and in particular, with reference to S149 of the Act which sets out a proactive and pre-emptive Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The PSED places a statutory requirement on public bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited under this Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

2.2 As well as the legal framework for equality, which is a central consideration in assessing the potential impact of the Victoria Arch scheme CPO, there are also WBC's equality objectives which are reviewed, updated and published annually, and a range of statutory instruments, guidance, and national and local policies and strategies. These have direct relevance to equality in relation to the Victoria Arch CPO in terms of minimising potential disadvantage suffered by people due to their protected characteristics, and taking steps to enhance positive impacts. Thus, in exercising its powers of compulsory purchase, WBC, must consider the effect of any differential impacts on groups with protected characteristics, assess negative impacts, take steps to mitigate them, assess negative impacts against long-term positive impacts, and enhance positive impacts. An EqIA provides a systematic and comprehensive tool to assist the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligations. In the case of the Victoria Arch CPO, it is by assessing the impact of the proposals, through the prism of equality, and the steps that have been taken to mitigate any potential negative impacts and unlawful discrimination, and to enhance positive impacts.

2.3 The Victoria Arch scheme is a planning CPO and Section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 empowers an acquiring authority, following authorisation by the Secretary of State, to compulsorily acquire land in its area. This is in circumstances where the authority can demonstrate that there is a '*compelling case in the public interest*' to do so in order to enable development, redevelopment or improvement likely to deliver the sustainable economic, social and environmental well-being of its area. The National Planning Policy Framework, 2019, sets out the more detailed requirements for the planning system to the extent that it is both '*proportionate*' and '*necessary*' to: support economic growth; achieve a wide choice of high-quality homes; widen opportunities for home ownership, and create sustainable inclusive and mixed communities. The National Policy Planning Framework is underpinned by a set of principles that include engaging and

empowering local people in the shaping of development plans. A socio-economic duty was initially included in the Equality Act 2010, but was subsequently removed, but socio-economic considerations are nevertheless integral to equality considerations, and planning legislation and policy. This is because group experiences intersect and are mediated through socio-economic factors. Moreover, the government has produced guidance on the application of EqIA's in CPO's and the guidance makes absolutely clear that in addition to assessing differential impacts on groups with protected characteristics, and balancing short term negative impacts with longer term positive impacts, consideration must be given to the impact on low income, as there is for example, a disproportionate representation of older people, disabled people and black and minority ethnic people in low income groups.<sup>1</sup>

2.4 At the regional and local level, Surrey County Council has adopted a Surrey Strategic Partnership Plan 2010-2020. This is an important consideration in the regeneration of the town centre as its principal objectives centre on high standards of sustainable social, economic and environmental development, and healthy lifestyles. These key objectives are mirrored in the Woking Core Strategy, 2012, which sets out the spatial planning framework for Woking to 2050, and its overarching strategy for development and the provision of supporting infrastructure.<sup>2</sup> It contains core policies to guide patterns of development which are supported by evidence. These objectives likewise centre on strong, sustainable and competitive economies and Woking town centre is specifically referenced as a critical area for targeted intervention in order to deliver the key aims and priorities of Woking to enhance its vitality.

2.5 The Council is required to use reasonable endeavours to deliver the project, and this includes CPO powers where they are needed. This EqIA therefore examines the following in relation to the Victoria Arch CPO:

- a) Whether there are any negative effects on protected group(s) resulting from the Victoria Arch CPO.
- b) Whether there are any negative equality effects that would give rise to unlawful discrimination for any protected group(s).
- c) Identifies measures that might be needed to mitigate negative equality impacts on protected group(s) that might arise.
- d) Identifies potential positive equality impacts and identifies measures that might maximise them.

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<sup>1</sup> Guidance on Compulsory Purchase Process and The Crichel Down Rules for the disposal of surplus land acquired by, or under the threat of, compulsion (DCLG, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> Woking 2027, Woking Local Development Document, Woking Core Strategy, October 2012

### 3. The scope of the Victoria Arch CPO and description of the proposals

3.1 **Woking Borough and demographics:** Woking is situated in northwest Surrey on the southwestern edge of the Greater London Urban Area and forms part of the commuter belt into central London. The journey from the town centre into London Waterloo station by train takes approximately 25 minutes. Woking is also accessible via the M25, exiting at junction 11, the M3, exiting at junction 3, and via the A3. The main arterial road into Woking is the A320 which passes through Woking town centre, connecting to the M25 to the north, close to its M3 junction, and the A3 to the south. There are other roads that connect the west and east parts of Woking to the M3 and A3. At the 2011 Census, Woking had a population of 99,198 but current projections estimate that it is now in excess of 100,000. The area has a number of shopping areas and its main centre is Woking town centre which falls within the Canalside ward.

3.2 The proportion of women in Woking is higher than the proportion of men at 50.5% and 49.5% respectively and this compares with the same pattern which is repeated in Surrey and England. Woking as a whole is ethnically and culturally diverse with a higher proportion of all non-white ethnic groups (16.4%) and all non-white British ethnic groups (25.1%) than is the case for Surrey (9.6% and 16.5% respectively) and England (14.6% and 20.2% respectively). The largest religious group in Woking is Christian (58.8%), compared with Surrey (62.8%), and England (59.4%). The next largest grouping is all non-Christian religions comprising dramatically smaller proportions in Woking (10.7%), compared with Surrey (5.0%), and England (8.7%). The next largest religious group in Woking is the Muslim religion (7.4%), and this compares with a dramatically smaller proportion in Surrey (2.2%), and England (5.0%). There are 23.1% of residents in Woking who describe themselves as having no religious affiliation, and this compares with 24.8% for Surrey and 24.7% for England.

3.3 The proportion of residents who are aged 0-4 and 5-15 in Woking is 7.3% and 6.3% in the case of both Surrey and England. The age of working age residents, that is, those aged 18-64 is higher in Woking at 62.6%, compared with Surrey and England where it is 61.0% and 62.3% respectively. There is, by contrast, a lower proportion of residents in the 65+ age range in Woking (15.0%) compared with Surrey and England (17.2% and 16.3% respectively). The proportion of Woking residents who consider that their daily activities to be limited, to some extent by having a disability or illness is 13.0%, and this lower than that for Surrey and England where it is 13.5% and 17.6% respectively. The proportion of residents who consider themselves to be considerably limited by having a disability is also lower for Working at 5.5% , compared with 5.7% for Surrey and 8.3% for England as a whole.

3.4 There are major gaps in equality data in relation to gender reassignment, and no local level statistics. According to a report by the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, the transgender population is estimated to be in the region of 650,000 people in the UK, and this may be an underestimate. There is also a dearth of reliable data on sexual orientation in England, for the UK, and at a sub-regional level. The ONS Integrated Household Survey (IHS) introduced questions on self-perceived sexual identity of adults in the UK, which is one component of sexual orientation. Data from 2017 IHS indicates that 2.0% of UK residents identified as lesbian or gay, an increase from 1.5% in 2012, 0.5% as bisexual, 93.2% as heterosexual or straight and 0.3% as other sexual identity.

The IHS found that younger people, age 16-24 were more likely to identify as LGB, 4.2% and that this correspondingly decreased with age with 0.7% of adults over the age of 65 being likely to identify.

**3.5 Description of the proposed project:** Town centres, across the UK play a pivotal role in civic, social, cultural, and economic life and the Victoria Arch proposals sit within the wider context of ongoing enhancements within Woking town centre, and borough, regional and national plans and strategies.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, town centres are adapting to global challenges bringing myriad changes that are without precedent.<sup>4</sup> These changes are reflected in different consumer spending patterns, different leisure habits, different patterns of work, and the rise of new employment sectors. The changing and dynamic nature of town centres means that a renewed and continued focus on them is necessary in order to respond to these wider influences, so that they remain successful and prosperous, desirable and welcoming to investors, and safe and attractive places for diverse groups of residents, visitors, and those who work in them.

**3.6** Woking town centre in common with many UK town centres, acts as a strong magnet, bringing together: residents and visitors spanning many cultures and nationalities. It has a thriving retail sector; a vibrant hospitality arts and entertainment sector, and varied office business functions. In sum, Woking town centre is a place where people live, work, eat, drink, shop, and enjoy a variety of leisure and cultural pursuits. To continue on its successful path, the town centre must continue to be poised to respond to global competition, as well as to competition from other centres in the South East and London. The Council is therefore seeking to secure a viable and prosperous future for the borough as a whole and for its main town centre. There has been considerable redevelopment in the town centre in recent years and it continues to be the focus for the delivery of a range of targeted and planned interventions. These will deliver physical improvements, provide better access to the public realm for everyone, and better access to shops and services, thereby improving and buttressing the commercial, cultural and civic value of the area.<sup>5</sup>

**3.7** In 2018, WBC, in partnership with Surrey County Council (SCC), and in consultation with Network Rail, submitted a comprehensive funding bid to the government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). The HIF is a competitive 5.5 billion government capital grant programme administered through Homes for England to support a small number of strategic and high infrastructure schemes that help to unlock development sites for the provision of new homes in areas with the greatest housing demand. The bid which was for the Victoria Arch scheme was formally approved in June 2019, and a grant of £95 million awarded to WBC, along with sole and attendant legal responsibility for its implementation. SCC and Network Rail remain key partners. As already detailed above, there

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<sup>3</sup> Woking Local Development Documents: Site Allocations Development Plan Document, Regulation 19 Consultation, Woking Borough Council 2018.

Woking 2027, Woking Local Development Document, Woking Core Strategy, October 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Revitalising town centres; A handbook for council leadership, Local Government Association, Guidance.

Written evidence from Centre for Cities, High streets and town centres ion 2030, Centre for Cities 2018.

High Streets and town centres in 2030, House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Eleventh Report of Session 2017-19, 21 February 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Woking Borough Council Town, District and Local Centres Study, Tym and Partners, Final Report, September 2009.

are three specific project deliverables to the Victoria Arch scheme which are summarised here again as follows:

- a) A320 integrated highway widening improvements
- b) Acquisition and demolition of the Triangle site to be released for housing, and to enable removal of a one-way gyratory system, and essential widening of the A320 to allow for a two-lane carriageway, thus facilitating better access through the town and feeding into a replacement bridge (see c below).
- c) The replacement of the Victoria Arch bridge which carries the railway over Guildford Road and its widening to accommodate the additional lanes of the carriageway, and rail replacement (as in b above).

3.8 The total cost of the scheme is estimated to be £115 million. Together with the £95 million HIF grant, a capital allocation of £10 million will be made by WBC, and a further £10 million by Network Rail to meet the full costs of the works.

#### **4. The current position in Victoria Arch**

4.1 **The existing road and transport infrastructure:** The A320 which links Woking with Guildford in the south and London and the M25 motorway in the north east is the main arterial route through Woking. The historic road layout is such that it narrows into a single lane carriageway at Victoria Arch and is unable to cope with the volume of traffic on the A320. This means that there is significant town centre congestion during peak times, with traffic queues often extending along Guildford Road. The traffic queues are a major problem as the Guildford Road provides an important link between Woking town centre and other key destinations in the area such as Woking Park, the swimming pool, and the leisure centre, as well as destinations beyond the borough. There are also knock on negative effects in that the growth of the town centre and housing development has been stifled for decades, and opportunities for people and investors severely restricted. The vehicle, pedestrian and cycle access through Victoria Arch is also extremely limited and therefore dangerous, and connectivity between the north and south of the railway line is further constrained by a single span overbridge that is no longer fit for purpose. The intention of the Victoria Arch proposals is to develop the road infrastructure so that it is able to accommodate a two-lane carriageway, and to deliver essential replacement and widening of the railway bridge that runs over the carriageway to enable expansion of the rail network. This will make it more efficient, and will increase passenger capacity throughout the region.

4.2 **The need for acquisition of the Triangle site and other commercial interests in the area:** The Triangle site is located on the southside of Victoria Arch, incorporating Guildford Road, Victoria Road, and Station Approach, and is surrounded by a one-way gyratory system. It comprises a mixture of retail, residential, and office buildings, and its acquisition and demolition is critical to facilitate the removal of the gyratory system, and to allow for the widening of the A320. The

proposed works include other necessary highway improvements, specifically, the installation of four new toucan crossings, shared pedestrian/cycle paths, that link Woking town centre to Woking Railway Station and Woking Park, and other enhancements to improve the attractiveness and accessibility of the public realm. After the site has been cleared, the Triangle site will be suitable for housing development and planning permission will be sought for that purpose. Indeed, a condition of the HIF funding is the provision of policy compliant affordable housing through the unlocking of an additional 3,554 high-rise apartments across 13 sites.

4.3 The Council has already acquired a significant portion of the site, which was held by a single owner, Prime Place LLP. The Council has also engaged with the owners of the properties within the Triangle that were not owned by Prime Place LLP and has successfully acquired the freeholds and long leaseholds whether the premises were occupied or not. The Council has also been successful in relocating the majority of occupants where it has been possible to do so. There are shops on the frontage along Guildford road and principally either offices or flats above the shops. The initial section acquired was Southern House which had a single occupier within the large office section. That occupier has been relocated to another office building within the town centre that is owned by WBC. Adjoining Southern House is a small office building, Jubilee House, which was not occupied, and Lynton House, another large building that was occupied by approximately 20 tenants engaged in a variety of business functions including recruitment, security, publication, wealth management and an office fitout company. The ground floor was a purpose-built veterinary practice. All of the occupants in Lynton House were on leases and did not come within the security of tenure provisions under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. The Council nonetheless has provided support and assistance where it has been able to do so. The result is that some occupants relocated of their own free will, others who were looking to change what they do or move elsewhere did so, and others were assisted by the Council in identifying other suitable locations. The veterinary practice bought a property in another area of Woking and has now relocated.

4.4 The residential units on the Triangle site are all located above the commercial units on the Guildford Road frontage. There are 22 flats in total and another building with two small flats and six houses in multiple occupation (HMO) rooms. The Council has now acquired the majority of these residential properties, 15 to date, with a remaining 6 to be acquired. All of the flats, with the exception of one had tenants living in them prior to acquisition, and they were either owned by the shops below them, or they were owned individually and let as investment properties. There is one remaining flat out of the 22 that is owned, occupied, and lived in, and the Council has assisted the resident by finding suitable alternative accommodation, and which the resident has accepted. The acquisition of that property has however been delayed because of the situation with COVID 19 and the lockdown. As the majority of the housing was privately owned, there have only been two instances where the Council has intervened as tenants have either been offered other opportunities, or have moved of their own accord.

4.5 The other commercial interests on the Triangle site include Evans Cycles, a Pizza Hut franchise operation, a nail bar, a pawnbroker, a baker, a local firm of solicitors, a hairdresser, a fish and chip shop, a bridal shop, and a shirts and cufflinks business that was converted to flats. There is a

recruitment company in Victoria House which has moved to a WBC owned property and a small office building to the rear of number 4-5 Guildford Road which has also been relocated to another building within the town that is owned by WBC. Finally, a softy play venue for young children which occupied the ground floor retail units of Southern House surrendered its lease as it was not commercially viable for some years prior to the decision to CPO the Triangle site. The Council is also currently in negotiations with Curchods Estate Agents situated at the mouth of the Triangle, and a number of businesses on a site on the opposite side of Victoria Arch, facing the triangle site. There are 11 shop fronts with upper parts rented out as offices or flats, 9 of the properties in one block are held by a single freeholder, and the remaining two properties in the other block are held by a single freeholder, There are a number of these businesses that are black and minority ethnic owned. The Council will need to CPO the properties to make way for the widening of the road to accommodate two-way traffic, pedestrians, and cyclists, and residential developments on the site.

4.6 All of the property interests described, and the action taken to date are summarised in the following table:

<b>Unite Number</b>	<b>Nature of Business</b>	<b>Action</b>
1 - 2	Evans Cycles	Lease came to an end and leasing something else in the town centre.
3	Pizza Hut Franchise	Offered alternative premises but do not feel they are suitable.
4	Nail Bar	Being relocated.
5	H&T Pawnbroker	Being relocated to WBC owned property.
6	Heaters Bakers	Paid agreed financial compensation is moving on so new premises are not required.
7	Firm of Solicitors	Relocated to offices in the town centre and are in the process of moving.
8	Hairdressers	The terms for buying their building are close to being agreed. The Council is purchasing another building for them which they are taking on and it is in close to where they are currently operate from.
9	Fish and Chip Shop	Chosen to close the business so new premises are not required.
10.	Bridal Business	Lease came to a natural end and owner has decided to cease operation so new premises are not required.
11.	Shirts and Cufflinks	The building is occupied by someone who bought the building and the business and converted it to flats but will close the business and will take compensation.
Victoria House	Recruitment Company	The business has been given a WBC owned property.
Southern House	Treasure Cove	This was a soft play type venue which occupied the ground floor retail units. The lease was surrendered because it was in significant arrears suggesting it was not commercially viable at the location prior to the decision to CPO, so new premises not required.
Lynton House	A variety of business functions including recruitment, security, publication, wealth	The lease came to a natural end, but the Council nonetheless provided support and

<b>Table 1</b>		
<b>Unite Number</b>	<b>Nature of Business</b>	<b>Action</b>
	management, an office fitout, and ground floor purpose-built veterinary practice.	assistance in identifying other locations where able. The veterinary practice bought a property in another area of Woking.
Rear of 4-5 Guildford Road	Small office building	Owner has been relocated.
<b>Parking Spaces</b>		
Nine parking spaces on the driveway at the rear of the shops will be lost. These are in single ownership, connected to the solicitors in No 7, and are privately owned. No public parking will be lost and any future housing on site will have parking provision to satisfy the planning authority.		
<b>Residential Units</b>		
A total of 22 flats in total and an additional set of buildings which is a set of HMO's. The Council has now acquired the majority of those residential properties and there are four remaining. The Council is in active negotiation with occupants of the remaining four.		
<b>Other Businesses to Acquire</b>		
Curchods Estate Agents at the mouth of Victoria Arch and businesses facing Victoria Arch comprising one block of 9 properties with upper parts with a single freeholder, and another block comprising two units with upper parts. The Council will need to CPO these properties in order to accommodate the widening of the road to accommodate two-way traffic, and cyclists and pedestrians, and a residential development.		

4.7 The CPO is essential, as a position of last resort to address the problems of an outdated infrastructure that is no longer fit for purpose, and which, is stalling the development, vibrancy and future prosperity of the town centre. The CPO will allow for sufficient and critical land assembly to enable the infrastructure works to go ahead. The works will also relieve the Victoria Arch traffic bottleneck, unlock development sites for much needed housing, and in tandem with a range of other highway, cycling and pedestrian enhancements, facilitate better access around and through the town centre. The HIF grant is providing the critical financial resource necessary to implement the Victoria Arch proposals, without which, the project would not be possible.

## 5. Consultation and Engagement

5.1 **Consultation and engagement leading to the CPO:** The Council's approach has been one where a comprehensive programme of engagement has been undertaken with the local community. This is critically important as local and national policies and legislation in respect of development and redevelopment have community engagement as a centrepiece. This section sets out the process and the various approaches to engagement adopted by WBC. It looks at who has been engaged, where, and in what way(s), and makes an assessment of the overall effectiveness.

5.2 In 2018, Woking Borough Council, in partnership with Surrey Council appointed WSP to conduct a detailed consultation on the proposals to change the road layout south of Victoria Arch already described above.<sup>6</sup> The proposed development area was shown for reference on consultation materials although the scope of the consultation focused exclusively on the proposed road layout changes and the area that falls within the scope of the CPO. It did not include the Victoria Arch bridge. Specifically, the consultation focused on:

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<sup>6</sup> The document is called Woking Borough Council: Proposed road layout changes: Guildford Road, Victoria Road and Station Approach, Consultation Report, February 2019 and was by WSP

- a) The replacement of the one-way gyratory on Guildford Road, and Victoria Road.
- b) The introduction of shared pedestrian and cycle paths with a section of the A320 Station Approach from Victoria Road to Heathside Road, open to pedestrians and cyclists only.
- c) The installation of four new toucan crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.
- d) Adapting the junction of Heathside Road with Guildford Road so that it becomes left turn exit only with no access for vehicles from Guildford Road.
- e) Improving the non-signalised crossing point with dropped kerb on the western side of Guildford Road near to York Road enabling easier access to Guildford Road bus stop.
- f) Resurfacing footways to encourage more local journeys on foot.
- g) Improving the informal pedestrian crossing linking the Guildford Road bus stop.

5.3 The consultation ran from 12 September 2018 until 24 October 2018, and its purpose was to raise awareness of the Victoria Arch proposals among residents, the general public, businesses, local community groups, religious centres, elected representative, and other stakeholders, and to explain the impact of the proposed changes. The purpose was to ensure that all those who were potentially affected received sufficient information about the proposals so that they could make informed judgements and an informed response. The consultation also sought to raise awareness about the benefits of the sustainable transport modes contained in the proposals. A full list of consultees is included at *Appendix D*. In order to secure maximum engagement in the consultation, opportunities to actively participate and put forward views were publicised through a wide range of channels. These included, local media, online and social media activity, the train station, the leisure centre, and via a consultation postcard that was delivered to the approximately 3,400 local residents and businesses in the affected area. In addition, two public drop-in sessions were held to provide people with the opportunity to speak face to face with members of the project team, and to obtain more detailed information about the proposals. This is detailed in the following paragraphs.

5.4 **The consultation activities:** The consultation was very widely promoted and employed various methods to encourage as many views as possible. These included a specific consultation website and online questionnaire which was the primary method that was employed, and which, elicited views from 1,315 respondents. The website also had a fly-through animation video based on the traffic modelling that informed the development proposals so that those clicking on the site could see traffic at morning and peak times. To take account of a range of access needs, hard copies of the consultation questionnaire were made widely available through various channels, and responses were encouraged either by direct mail to a consultation address, or via a specific consultation email address. There was also a dedicated telephone line that people could call to ask for further information and clarification about particular issues, and/or to request a paper copy of the consultation questionnaire or in other alternative formats. The consultation postcard already

mentioned above, which was distributed to the 3,400 properties in the area potentially impacted by the Victoria Arch scheme, set out information about the proposals, and signposted people to the website and to the online questionnaire. The engagement activity undertaken also included an email drive which sought to promote the variety of opportunities to participate. This specifically targeted a range of stakeholders and included local community groups, shops, colleges, residents' associations, religious centres, and WBC and SCC elected representatives. A press release was also issued which explained the proposals and promoted the engagement opportunities in local and regional media and included Woking News and Mail, Eagle Radio, Radio Jackie, BBC Surrey, BBC online, as well as through social media via WBC'S Facebook page and via WBC's Twitter feed. The latter had in excess of 7,000 followers at the time the consultation was undertaken and the majority of people who responded to the online questionnaire said that they had heard about the consultation via social media.<sup>7</sup>

5.5 WBC's approach to engagement was reinforced by a highly visible promotional presence through the placing of consultation banners in prominent areas of Woking. These promotional banners detailing the Victoria Arch scheme were placed in Woking station, Woking Library, the Pool in the Park, Woking Leisure Centre, and in the windows of Morris House, 34, Commercial Way. The banners were also displayed at two public exhibition events that took place in Wolsely Place Shopping Centre, in Woking Town Centre on Thursday 20 September from 12.30pm until 8.00pm, and again on Saturday 29 September from 10.00am until 4.00pm. The venue, times and days were carefully chosen to coincide with different shopping and leisure patterns, and periods when there would be the highest footfall, so as to maximise connection with a large and diverse number of people. The project team were on hand to answer questions on a face to face basis about the proposals, and to encourage people to complete the consultation questionnaire. These two events attracted in excess of 500 visitors over the course of the two days.

5.6 There were two stakeholder events held in Woking Council offices on 11 September, the first was for the Boroughs Local Access Group and took place from 3.00pm until 4.45pm, and was attended by three people.<sup>8</sup> The second was for the WBC and SCC elected members and took place from 6.00pm until 8.00pm, and was attended by eight elected members. The consultation was also promoted through a Woking Means Business event for small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) in and around Woking. That event was a breakfast meeting and was held at the HG Wells Centre, in the town centre on 17 October 2018, from 8.00am until 9.30am, and therefore, at the most convenient time for SME's prior to the start of the working day. To secure maximum attendance and participation, the event was advertised in the Woking Chamber of Commerce newsletter and Woking Works. A presentation on the proposals was given by WBC Chief Executive and its deputy Chief Executive, and the consultation postcards already described were also made available. There were also images, maps and computerised images to help participants visualise and understand how the area could look if the proposals were implemented. The Council also contacted all those with a

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<sup>7</sup> WBC Twitter now has 12.5K followers.

<sup>8</sup> The Woking Access Groups has 12 members

land interest within the area directly, as detailed above, visited all of the properties in the area as part of a land referencing exercise, and to explain the proposals, and actively supported business owners wishing to relocate to alternative premises, and tenants.

<b>Table 2</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Nature of Consultation</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	Consultation website and online questionnaire and hard copy of questionnaire by direct mail	Online questionnaire primary method elicited views from 1,315. The website had animation showing traffic at morning and peak times. either by direct mail to a consultation address, or via a specific consultation email address
	Hard copy of questionnaire	To allow access for groups without access to technology
	Specific consultation email address	Allowing enquiries from public
	Twitter and Facebook	To facilitate wider access WBC'S Facebook page and via Twitter through WBC's feed which had more than 7,000 followers at the time the consultation was undertaken. The majority of people who responded to the consultation questionnaire said that that they had heard about it on social media.
	Targeted Email drive	There was also an email drive that sought to promote the range of opportunities to engage and which specifically targeted and a range of stakeholders and including local community groups, shops, colleges, residents' associations, religious centres, and WBC and SCC elected representatives and other BME and various access groups
	Dedicated consultation telephone line	For people to call and ask for further information or request a paper copy of the consultation questionnaire
	Consultation postcard	Delivered to over 3,400 local residents and businesses in the affected areas. Setting out information in summary forms about the proposals and information and signposting people to the consultation website and online questionnaire
	Press Release	Woking News and Mail, Eagle Radio, Radio Jackie, BBC Surrey, BBC online, on
	Promotional banners	These areas were Woking station, Woking Library, Pool in the Park, Woking Leisure Centre, in the windows of Morris House, 34, Commercial Way. They were also displayed at two public exhibition events at Wolsely Place Shopping Centre in Woking Town Centre on Thursday 20 September from 12.30pm until 8.00pm, and again on Saturday 29 September from 10.00am until 4.00pm. Venue times carefully chosen for maximum footfall. The events over 500 people during the course of the day
11 September 2018	Stakeholder Events Woking Local Access Group	Range of accessibility issues Stakeholder event held in Woking Council offices from 3.00pm until 4.45pm, attended by three people.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Nature of Consultation</b>	<b>Comments</b>
11 September, 2019	Stakeholder Events Woking Local Access Group	The second was for the WBC and SCC elected members and took place from 6.00pm until 8.00pm, and was attended by eight elected members.
17 October, 2018	Woking Means Business event	For SME's in and around Woking. That event was a breakfast meeting and was held at the HG Wells Centre, in the town centre on 17 October, 2018m from 8.00am until 9.30am, and therefore, at the most convenient time for SME's. To secure maximum attendance and participation, the event was advertised in the Woking Chamber of Commerce newsletter and Woking Works.
Ongoing	Visits to all properties on the Triangle Site	Visited all of the properties in the area as part of a land referencing exercise, and actively supported business owners wishing to relocate to alternative premises, and tenants.

5.7 **The reach of the consultation:** The consultation sought to be broad based and inclusive, and to engage all of those in the area potentially impacted by the scheme. The approach was a deliberative one that included stakeholder mapping to ensure that all groups potentially impacted were made aware of the consultation. It also included the use of Census data around the protected characteristics where the data were available, and thus built in an explicit consideration of equality impacts. There were concerted efforts to engage with the diverse pool of stakeholders in the area to ensure that differing views were captured. The varied approaches to conducting the consultation also sought to expand the reach by responding to a range of access needs and to secure broad participation by considering barriers to engagement and ways of overcoming them. The suite of engagement activities offered disabled people, women with young children, religion and faith groups, groups representing black and minority ethnic communities, those for whom literacy might be a barrier, as well as people on low incomes, the opportunity to participate through different mechanisms. This is also evidenced by the diversity of the respondents to the consultation, and protected groups represented as detailed in the list of organisations consulted set out in *Appendix D*. The consultation questionnaire included an optional question on equality monitoring. As the collection of data was optional, it would provide only a partial picture, given that not all respondents chose to complete the section. It would nevertheless provide some important data, along with the activities carried out to inform the outcome of the consultation and the data collected should be analysed.

## 6. Equality Impacts of the Victoria Arch CPO

6.1 **The overall intended effects of the proposals:** As detailed above, the Victoria Arch scheme has involved consultation with a multi-stakeholder cohort, through a process of extensive and intensive inquiry. This has given voice to a wide range of interests and concerns where 80% of those who responded to the consultation survey strongly disagreed that the proposals for Victoria

Arch should go ahead. In addition, the Council received two petitions containing 807 and 618 signatures resisting some of the proposals. The resistance was largely on the grounds of impacts on property owners resulting from demolition, a change in access for the Day Aggregate Site from Guildford Road which was factually incorrect as the site is not being moved, and the banning of a left turn off the Guildford Road that has now been changed to accommodate a left turn. The Council is proceeding with the scheme as the proposals for Victoria Arch are part of WBC's wider vision for a strong, healthy, safe, sustainable, and vibrant town centre, and are in line with its strategic objectives. The works are scheduled to commence in the summer of 2020, and are expected to conclude in the summer 2021. The HIF funding is providing the financial resources that are crucial to realising the Council's wider vision, and offer a singular opportunity to take forward implementation of the proposals. The CPO is necessary as the strategic importance of the site is such that unless the site can be acquired and cleared, the overall project is not viable. The impact of the CPO will therefore be positive in bringing forward the opportunity to provide access to wider economic, social, environmental and health benefits for groups with protected characteristics, who live and work in Woking, to be realised in the longer term.

6.2 The remainder of this sections sets out the themes arising from the EqIA as they relate to groups with protected characteristics, and the potential impact. These are:

- a) Business property owners and tenants
- b) Public domain and accessibility
- c) Travel and transport
- d) Affordable housing
- e) Community safety and security
- f) Health and the environment
- g) Economy

6.3 **Business property owners and tenants:** The majority of property interests on the Triangle site have now been acquired, and the negotiations have been successful, and for the most part concluded (see Table 1 above). The Council appointed Curchod and Co LLP to conduct the negotiations, giving the company the specific brief to acquire the freeholds by private negotiation, to provide assistance in relocating those businesses that wanted to remain in Woking, and to minimise any disruption to them as far as possible. It is the case that many of the businesses on the Triangle site, were either run by people with protected characteristics, or they employed people with protected characteristics such as women, younger people, people from black and minority ethnic groups, and this includes groups within those categories who disproportionately tend to be lower paid. As an illustration, a nail bar, a Pizza Hut franchise, a hairdresser and other similar outlets. The assistance provided to the majority of the freeholders in moving their businesses to other locations either close to the town centre, or to other convenient locations in other parts of the borough, mitigated any potentially negative impact for those businesses, and for their employees. Indeed, the impact has actually been positive as those businesses that were directly impacted by the CPO are continuing to trade, having successfully resettled in their new locations.

6.4 There were some businesses visited by Curchod and Co LLP, that were looking to cease trading prior to the CPO and therefore, the acquisition of their premises came at an opportune time for them to activate their existing plans to cease trading, and/or to move on and do something entirely different. An illustration of this is a bridal business on the Triangle site that had been negatively impacted by market forces as a result of a shift to online orders and purchasing. In this and in other similar instances there has been no negative impact for groups with protected characteristics arising directly from the CPO given that a prior decision had already been made to cease trading. Rather, the impact has been positive in providing a fortuitous opportunity for those who were planning to close and/or change direction, and were compensated to vacate the site. There was a soft play business that was in significant arrears suggesting that it was not commercially viable prior to the CPO. The business did not require new premises as it surrendered its lease, and there are therefore no negative equality impacts directly arising from the CPO. In relation to the tenants who were running their businesses from Lynton House, while they did not have security of tenure under the Landlord and Tenant Act, 1954, the Council nevertheless, provided support to facilitate successful relocation where it was able to do so. Thus, any potentially negative impacts for businesses run by groups with protected characteristics were mitigated as far as it was possible to do so by the Council taking steps over and above its legal obligation.

6.5 The Council is in discussion with owners about acquiring the remaining properties including Curchod Estate Agent at the mouth of the Triangle, and the remaining 11 properties on the site facing. That process has recently commenced and visits to those premises have begun, a number of which are black and minority ethnic business. The process will mirror that for the triangle site in that, as well as discussions, the process will also involve assistance where there are particular needs, and equality needs identified, as well as help with identifying alternative premises to mitigate any potential negative impact.

6.6 **Public domain and accessibility:** Town centres play an essential role as economic, cultural and social hubs for the communities they serve. As such, they provide places with an identity, where people meet to socialise, to exchange ideas, or to sit back, relax, and take in their surroundings. The proposals for Victoria Arch connect with a high quality, accessible, and attractive public realm, and include the existing town centre plaza, and two new plazas, Victoria Square and Jubilee Square, that are in the process of development. The connections have been conceived in a way that offers a warm and welcoming sense of place for the whole community, and which act as a catalyst for a range of activities, with access to those activities centred around sustainable and environmentally friendly forms of transport. The importance of trees, landscaping, and flowers is integral to the Victoria Arch development and while the CPO will require the removal of two trees at the southern end of the gyratory, the proposals for Victoria Arch and the proposals for the contiguous area incorporate a planting scheme. This will involve the replacement of trees that are removed, as well as additional trees that will be planted, where possible, in line with WBC's and SCC's current practice. The plan for the town centre is to create footfall within an accessible area that is more attractive and appealing, that encourages a diverse community of people to live on sites such as the Triangle, and which is supported by integrated cycling and pedestrian links that take away the need for cars. The overall vision for the area is about creating an experience for people to

enjoy which includes eating, entertainment, arts, culture, and public functions, and where young people, older people, disabled people, black and minority ethnic people, people who are LGBT, and families and parents with young children can come together in safe communal spaces. The CPO is therefore necessary as the proposals provide the architecture that will enable the vision of an inclusive Woking in which all people can move about side by side in the common space of the town centre as they go about their daily business and activities.

6.7 The needs of protected groups have been considered during the detailed design process to ensure that the public realm is human in scale, single level access, and is safe and easy to navigate on foot or by cycle. SCC's safety audit team has examined the plans to make sure that they meet the required accessibility standard, and that they are legally compliant. As already highlighted in the demographics set out above, the number of older people is increasing. Moreover, the incidence of disability including physical mobility impairments and sight impairments increases with age. The need for a walkable, uncluttered and safe public realm, where potential hazards have been removed has therefore been considered from the outset. As an illustration, lighting has a significant impact on orientation, security and visual quality in the evenings and therefore WBC and SCC have taken a considered approach to lighting which has been designed to highway standards, providing the required level of illumination. This will also help to combat crime and fear of crime which some protected groups including LGBT groups, black and minority ethnic people, and disabled people experience disproportionately. The seating styles in the area will cater for a range of individual needs including seating without arm rests so that wheelchair users can pull up alongside a companion, and move freely, along with tactile paving strips at crossing points, rotating cones to assist visually impaired people, and sloped pavements for wheelchair and buggy accessibility. The planned improvement works will benefit all groups with protected characteristics by enhancing the public realm, and improving its functionality and will therefore have a positive impact.

6.8 **Travel and transport:** In choosing road configurations and traffic solutions, it is necessary to start from the perspective of people with a range of access needs, which, include modes of transport other than the car as the proposals for Victoria Arch have done. The public need to be able to move comfortably and safely around the town centre either on foot or by bicycle, and thus consideration must be given to children, young people, older people, and disabled people for example who wish to do so. The current traffic congestion at Victoria Arch, acts as a bottleneck in Woking, in and at the present time, walking and cycling are not at all attractive options. This is particularly the case under the narrow leaking bridge where pigeons roost. Indeed, the total lack of infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians means that both are forced to navigate the road in a situation that is risky, if not highly dangerous. The enhancements to the A320 that are necessary on the north and south sides of Victoria Arch will mean that the new dual carriageway will provide a seamless transition through that part of the town centre. The proposals are embedded in the Woking Integrated Transport Project and the Council has undertaken extensive traffic management modelling. This has shown that traffic flows will improve between both sides of the town if the works are allowed to proceed. The removal of the gyratory and the widening of the road will mean that there is greater equality between the various traffic groups in the provision of better access across the railway and to the railway station for cyclists and pedestrians, and in moving in and around the town centre, as well as to and from residential areas. This impact of this will be positive

as the approach to planning this has been firmly people focused. The configuration of space, as a shared commodity, has been linked in a fully integrated and holistic way to other developments, services and facilities towards the building of a dynamic mixed-use town centre. Achieving the vision of a lively, safe, sustainable and healthy Woking, will be strengthened immeasurably by increasing the concern for pedestrians and cyclists in attractive public spaces, and where a large part of the transport system can take place as green mobility, that is, travel by foot, bike or public transport in spaces where people feel safe and comfortable walking or cycling to locations, or to buses, and trains.

6.9 The fear of traffic accidents has a dramatic impact on cyclists and pedestrians as they move about congested areas. In Victoria Arch, conditions for pedestrians and cyclists have deteriorated over the years and, as already stated, are exacerbated by narrow pavements and street clutter. The risk of accidents can also be greatly reduced by physically mixing different modes of transport in a shared space, giving cars, motorbikes, bicycles, and pedestrians of all ages the opportunity to travel together. The implementation of the Victoria Arch proposals will provide a setting where there is good eye contact, and where strategically positioned toucan crossings that have been selected to suit preferred routes, and to enhance the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, also provide a link between residential areas and key locations and amenities including the town centre, the train station, and the leisure centre. The reorganisation of traffic and traffic principles for streets through a range of measures will bring more life in and around the town centre when people move more slowly and where 'feelings' of safety as well as 'actual' safety are increased. This is a critical equality consideration that has been taken on board in the proposals given that traffic accidents have a socio-economic dimension and therefore have more impact on groups with protected characteristics. As an illustration, the population of England as a whole is ageing and the projected proportion of older people in Woking, mirrors this with the largest projected growth over the next 25 years in the 55-64 age group, and the proportion of the population age 65+ and 85+ while remaining a smaller proportion of the overall population, showing a modest increase. Moreover, Woking as is the case nationally will also witness an older and increasing black and minority ethnic population. This carries major implications for the level of road casualties in the older age category given that the number of fatalities in the over 60 age range increased nationally from 559 in 2017 to 588 in 2018, an increase of 5%. The picture is similar for young people in the 17-24 age group which saw an increase in fatalities as pedestrians in 2018, compared with 2019, and children in the 15 or under age group who saw an increase in traffic accidents as pedestrians and car passengers.<sup>9</sup> The shift in policy bias away from cars to cycling and walking through a range of traffic measures will manage the growth of urban traffic, and will enhance the liveability of Woking for groups with protected characteristics.

6.10 The proposals promote the inclusion of diverse groups and communities across a wide variety of transport modes that link to a vibrant town centre. In line with best practice guidance, the proposed new shared cycle and pedestrian pathways will be a minimum of three metres wide and

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<sup>9</sup> Travel by car and walking are the forms of transport most commonly used by children Source – Department of Transport, Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain, Statistical Release, 26 September 2018.

four metres wide when they are adjacent to a building. While there are concerns about pedestrian cycle conflict, the experience of successfully introducing shared space elsewhere in Woking will continue to help shape the design as it progresses. The proposals have been the subject of a Road Safety Audit by the highway authority, Surrey County Council, in consultation with Surrey Police and will continue as the proposals are implemented. There will be a loss of parking on the Triangle site that is attached to the businesses that are being demolished. Any future housing on the site will have parking provision to satisfy the planning authority and there will also be parking in other locations to ensure accessibility for older people and disabled people. The effect of the proposed changes on local bus routes will be further assessed as the project progresses through more detailed design stages to ensure that bus services are not adversely impacted by the proposed layout and that where there are identified impacts for protected groups, that these are mitigated.

**6.11 Affordable housing:** The Woking Core Strategy has identified the need for approximately 5,000 new dwellings by 2027.<sup>10</sup> The town centre's brownfield sites have been designated as the primary focus for housing development in the borough. Although there are small developments on greenbelt land in Woking, building predominantly on brownfield sites such as the Triangle, which is close to the town centre, rather than on greenbelt land outside of the town, is in sympathy with conservation and preserving the greenbelt for a healthier Woking environment. The CPO, by enabling the development to go ahead, will have a positive impact on the community. This will benefit groups with protected characteristics living in the borough who are disproportionately more likely to live in inadequate housing that is of poorer quality. The scheme will unlock the development potential of 13 town centre brownfield sites, allowing for the delivery of a target of 35% policy compliant affordable homes from a total of 4,560 units across the 13 sites as a condition of grant aid. This is over and above WBC's existing housing commitments.

**6.12** The building of housing on the Triangle site will create increased footfall in the Town Centre and this will support the positioning of the area as one that includes a strong residential presence. The presence of residents will enhance community safety, particularly from the perspective of protected groups who are more likely to fear crime, to feel unsafe, and to have been victims of crime. As an illustration, according to ONS data, for the three years 2014 – 2017, younger people, and black and minority ethnic people are more likely to say they have been victims of crime. Moreover, the 2019 National LGBT Survey revealed that in the 12 months preceding the survey, 2 in 5 respondents reported that they had experienced an incident because they were LGBT such as verbal harassment or physical violence. The survey also revealed that 9 in 10 of the most serious incidents went unreported.<sup>11</sup> The importance of eyes on the street in enhancing feelings of safety has been extensively researched and documented.<sup>12</sup> Thus, allowing the CPO to proceed to secure the provision of homes will have a positive impact on groups with protected characteristics. The additional affordable housing generated will assist WBC in meeting its target for affordable housing and this in turn will be positive in its impact by benefitting groups with protected characteristics who

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<sup>10</sup> Woking 2027, Woking Local Development Document, Woking Core Strategy, October 2012.

<sup>11</sup> ONS data, for the three years 2014 – 2017.

National LGBT Survey: Summary Report, updated 7 February 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Han Gehl, *Cities for People*, Island Press, 2010.

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Random House, 1961.

are more likely to be on lower incomes, and therefore who need to have access to affordable housing. The housing proposals will also have a positive impact in fostering communities that are cohesive as there will be a balance of residential social groups in areas around the town centre.

**6.13 Community safety and security:** A central component of the Victoria Arch scheme is the direct links that it has to a safe and secure public realm that is accessible at all times, well-lit at night, and which caters to a diverse range of needs. Furthermore, given that the public realm is ‘dynamic’ rather than ‘static’, changing seasonally and in accordance with patterns of use, a detailed consideration of the safety and security of groups with protected characteristics is critical. The proposals for Victoria Arch are embedded in a wider vision for the area and the town centre to which it is linked. They are specifically designed to reinforce actual as well as perceived safety for all. As already described, black and minority ethnic people and people who are LGBT for example, are disproportionately more likely to be victims of crime than the population generally, and therefore, justifiably, fear becoming targets of crime in public spaces. As such feelings of safety as well as actually being safe are a prerequisite to the public realm being fully inclusive.

**6.14** The fact that issues of safety and security for groups with protected characteristics have been integral to the overall design of the Victoria Arch proposals will have a positive impact. Indeed, extensive case study evidence shows that where people are able to walk and spend time in common spaces, in almost in every situation both real and perceived safety actually increases.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the presence of other people in well-lit and sympathetically designed public places, provides an important and positive signal of safety. Indeed, this feeling of safety is reinforced where the presence of housing means that there is a connection to the public realm through the presence of eyes and ears on the street.<sup>14</sup> It is during twilight and late evenings when light from residential buildings will also provide a reassuring sign that there are people in close proximity.<sup>15</sup> The provision of housing as part of the Victoria Arch proposals, along with upgrading of the pedestrian and cycling network, improved surfaces, improved street crossings, and the removal of unnecessary street clutter and pavement interruptions will buttress feelings of safety and security. The space will be one where it is easy to walk or cycle at any time of the day or night without obstruction that could potentially compromise safety by causing an accident. The impact of the proposals will therefore be positive on groups with protected characteristics who will be freer and will feel more able to use the public realm than might currently be the case.

**6.15 Health and the environment:** As is the case in other areas of the UK, Woking faces myriad health and environmental policy challenges in a context in which cars have increasingly become the dominant mode of transport, even for short journeys, and where jobs are increasingly sedentary, and accompanied by longer working hours. As such, exercise is no longer woven into the fabric of daily life, but requires dedicated time, the ability to make an ongoing commitment, and the ability to exercise at least some control over work/life balance. The human cost of this can be witnessed in the increasing incidence of obesity, diabetes, other chronic diseases such as heart

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<sup>13</sup> Han Gehl, *Cities for people*, Island Press, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Random House, 1961.

<sup>15</sup> Op.Cit 12.

disease, and poor air quality. While life expectancy has increased overall, the gap between the more relatively affluent and less affluent groups, is widening as health inequalities follow a social gradient. The impact on children, black and minority ethnic people, older people, and to a surprising extent, younger people has been amply demonstrated.<sup>16</sup> The proposals for Victoria Arch, as part of a wider vision for the town centre and for Woking, is a response to some of these major health and environmental challenges. The proposals embrace physical exercise and concern for the environment as an integral part of daily life. This is through a carefully planned approach that induces people to walk and to cycle as much as they can in connection with their daily activities. The proposals coalesce around the notion that in order for people to be able to do this, a suitable physical infrastructure must be in place. This is in the form of high-quality walking and cycling routes that encourage people to use their physical energy as a form of transport, and safer and more pleasant roads where pedestrians and cyclists have priority. The provision of improved cycling and walking routes from Victoria Arch towards the station with living walls, rain gardens, and greenery, is therefore designed to encourage more local journeys either on foot or by cycle, thus helping to reduce congestion around the station in the future.

6.16 The physical environment greatly influences the number of road traffic injuries and their severity where cars, cyclists and pedestrians are vying for position. This is the case in areas like Woking that were built before use of the car was common, and where the historic road configuration and the available space places severe limitations on what can be done to reengineer the road to increase road safety. Furthermore, road safety, as already stated, has a socio-economic dimension and the Victoria Arch proposals have a range of road safety interventions that are designed to address this. The design is centred on improved consistency in vehicle speed, and a greater separation between, pedestrians, cycles and cars than is currently the case. This will help to tackle some of the road safety concerns, and will have enhanced health benefits through improved air quality by reducing harmful emissions.<sup>17</sup> The benefits that will accrue by allowing the CPO to proceed will therefore be positive for protected groups who are more likely to experience the impact of health inequalities as the proposals are part of a wider vision to secure a future for Woking that is healthy, safe and environmentally sustainable.

6.17 **Economy:** Woking is important as a regional hub and as such, the town centre and the borough generally should derive immense future economic benefit as a result of the infrastructure developments focused on and around Victoria Arch, and which are designed to open up the area. The proposals sit within an integrated and overarching economic development strategy for the town centre, and for the borough as a whole and therefore site acquisition are key elements in the overall town centre plan, and is the reason why a CPO is necessary. The proposals are embedded in plans to prove new economic opportunities and benefits; strengthen existing economic opportunities;

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Marmot and Richard G Wilkinson (ed) *Social Determinants of Health (Second Edition)* Oxford University Press, 2006  
Michael Marmot, *The Health Gap: The Challenge of an Unequal World*, Bloomsbury, 2015

<sup>17</sup> *Social factors in road safety: Policy Paper*, Royal Society of the Prevention of Accidents, April 2012  
*Understanding the link between disadvantage/deprivation and road safety*, DfT Road Safety Research and Dissemination Learning, 21 January 2009

transform the shopping environment; improve the retail and commercial offer, and provide an affordable residential offer that is open to a diversity of social groups.

6.18 The proposals encourage a variety of economic activities and employment, and coupled with the town centres' diverse cultural offering, will ensure that there are more visitors to the area during the day, as well as during the evenings. This will result in a more dynamic, vibrant, and prosperous town centre as economic and cultural offerings are inextricably linked. As a major commuter town, the Victoria Arch proposals, also link Woking to wider economic benefits and employment opportunities in other regional hubs. These will be made more accessible as a direct result of a more efficient road infrastructure, and as a direct result of the widening of Victoria Arch and replacement bridge. As already stated, pedestrians, cyclists and walkers will be able to access the station safely, and continue with their journeys locally or further afield. The CPO in facilitating the expansion of the rail network, will significantly increase passenger capacity through the South, South East, and South West regions, further underpinning both local and regional economic growth. An agile, thriving and diverse economy that serves all of the people will have a positive impact on Woking residents among which groups with protected characteristics are represented. This includes women, disabled people, young people, people from LGBT groups, and black and minority ethnic people. The overall vision must however align with positive action approaches to equality and to ensuring fairer economic outcomes as wider structural forces also shape where people live and the opportunities that are available to them.

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 **Summary of Impacts:** The proposals for Victoria Arch will have a positive impact overall and where the potential for negative impacts have been identified, mitigating measures have been put in place by the Council where it has been possible to do so. This has been in terms of providing support and assistance to everyone directly impacted, including those tenants for whom the Council does not have a statutory responsibility. The measures underpinning the proposals bring forward a more useable, pedestrian-friendly, and connected public realm, reduce congestion, and enhance liveability and walkability. They also increase the proportion of affordable housing, enabling WBC to meet its housing targets, over and above its existing commitments. This means that there will be greater provision for protected groups who are disproportionately more likely to be impacted by housing shortage.

7.2 The proposals, in seeking to transform, open up the area, and reduce congestion, will have a positive impact in making the town centre and the areas around it, attractive places in which to live, work and invest. The local economy should see significant benefits this will therefore have a positive impact. In order for all protected groups to reap economic benefits from these, they will need to be conjoined with positive action measures that target protected groups. There is evidence of this in other parts of the town centre development where for example, black and minority ethnic businesses, have been moved from stalls located in the town centre, to restaurant establishments nearby at rents linked to current cashflow. Initiatives such as these that link to the overall development of the area will ensure that the benefits are evenly dispersed.

7.3 The consultation that has informed proposals for the road infrastructure has been extensive and intensive and geared to those with a variety of access needs. A variety of approaches to engagement were used and this is positive judging by the number of organisations that were represented in the consultation and the areas of activity they were engaged in. These organisations included representatives from across groups with protected characteristics.

7.4 It is recommended that:

- d) The Woking Access Group gets a Copy of this EqIA in sufficient time to make comments.
- e) The Woking Access Group continue to be engaged as the detailed implementation progresses.
- f) The EqIA be publicised and published on the Council's website.

## Appendix A – EqlA Assessment Framework

EqlA Assessment Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the current situation in Victoria Arch?</li><li>• What is the existing situation in relation to all groups, in particular those with protected characteristics in the area?</li><li>• What is the specific impact of the CPO on commercial and owner-occupiers, leaseholders, and tenants who share protected characteristics?</li><li>• How can potentially negative impacts be effectively mitigated and in what way(s)?</li><li>• Are there any protected groups that are disadvantaged and if so in what way(s)?</li><li>• Are there any protected groups on which there is a positive impact and if so in what way(s)?</li><li>• What is the potential for positive medium and longer-term impacts of the CPO for Victoria Arch?</li><li>• How can potentially positive impacts be enhanced and in what way(s)?</li><li>• To what extent does the CPO and its associated proposals potentially reduce the degree and/or the extent of disadvantage among and between groups with protected characteristics in Sheerwater?</li><li>• How will the CPO directly impact and contribute to the realisation of the potential equality effects of the associated proposals?</li><li>• What is the potential impact of the CPO and associated proposals on community cohesion?</li><li>• How will the results of the EqlA be publicised and monitored?</li></ul>

## Appendix B – EqIA Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Joanna McIntosh	Legal Services Manager, WBC
Louisa Calam	Strategic Project Manager, WBC and SCC
Ian Oswin	Ian Oswin Chartered Surveyor Curchod and Co LLP
Shahid Azim	Chairman, Asian Business Forum
Cllr David Bittleston	Leader of the Council
Cllr Rob Leach	WBC St John's Ward and Woking Access Group
Cllr Colin Kemp	Deputy Leader SCC, and WBC Executive
Cliff Bush	Chair, Woking Access Group
James Adler	Associate Engagement Team WSP

## Appendix C – References

Woking Borough Council Town, District and Local Centres Study, Tym & Partners, Final Report, September 2009.

Woking Borough Council, Proposed Layout Changes, Guildford Road, Victoria Road, and Station Approach, Consultation Report, February 2019, WSP

Land Management – HIF Land Acquisition Strategy, Woking Borough Council, 6 December 2018  
Housing Infrastructure Fund – Funding Allocation of £95 Million to Woking Town Centre, Woking Borough Council Executive, 6 February 2020.

Housing Infrastructure Fund Grant Determination Agreement (Forward Function), Home England and Woking Borough Council, 18 March 2020.

Woking Local Development Documents: Site Allocations Development Plan Document, Regulation 19 Consultation, Woking Borough Council 2018.

Woking 2027, Woking Local Development Document, Woking Core Strategy, October 2012

Jan Gehl, Cities for People, Island Press, 2010.

Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Random House, 1961

Revitalising town centre, Local Government Association: A handbook for Council Leadership.

High streets and town centres in 2030, Housing Communities and Local Government Committee, Eleventh Report of Session 2017 – 19, House of Commons, 13 February 2019.

Written evidence from the Centre for Cities, High Streets and town centres in 2030, Centre for Cities 2018.

Developing resilient town centres, Department for Communities and Local Government, Centre for Local Economic Strategies, Association of Town & City Management.

## Appendix D – List of Consultees

Sector	Stakeholder
<b>Elected Representatives</b>	
WBC Elected Members x 30, SCC Elected Members x 14, Member of Parliament x 1	
<b>Local Community Organisations</b>	
Business	Woking Chamber of Commerce
Business	Surrey Chamber of Commerce
Business	Woking Works
Business	Woking Asian Business Forum
Community	Woking Local Action 21 (LA21)
Community	Woking Area U3A
Community	Woking Association of Neighbourhood Watches
Community	Woking Association of Voluntary Service
Cycling	Breeze Woking
Cycling	Charlotteville Cycling Club
Cycling	CTC West Surrey
Cycling	CTC West Surrey
Cycling	Surrey Wheels for All
Cycling	Woking Cycle Club
Education	All primary schools within the Borough
Education	All secondary schools within the Borough
Fire	Woking Fire station
Healthcare	Dr O'Connell Smith Newman
Healthcare	Hillview Medical Centre
Healthcare	NHS England
Healthcare	Public Health England
Healthcare	Woking Community Hospital
Healthcare	York House Medical Centre
Housing	Quadrant Court
Local business	Belles Bridal
Local business	Curchod & Co Estates
Local business	Enzo's Bar
Local business	Evans Cycles
Local business	Faith Recruitment
Local business	Hart Brown Woking Solicitors
Local business	Heaters Bakery
Local business	Job Centre Plus
Local business	KFC Head office
Local business	Lynton House Vets
Local business	Pizza Hut Delivery

Sector	Stakeholder
Local business	Sovereigns
Local business	The Money Shop
Local business	Treasure Cove Play Centre
Local business	Working Smart
Local business	Ye Olde Fishmarket
Older people	Crossroads Care Surrey
Older people	Heathside Retirement Home
Older people	Woking 50+ Club
Older people	Woking Homes
Older people	Woking Hospice
Police	British Transport Police Authority
Police	Surrey Police
Police	Woking Police station
Resident Association	Sheerwater Residents Association
Resident Association	Goldsworth Park Community Association
Resident Association	Knaphill Residents Association
Residents Association	Brookwood Village Association
Residents Association	The Resident (West Byfleet, Byfleet and Pyrford)
Religious group	Shah Jahan Mosque, Woking
Religious group	Woking Vineyard Church
Religious group	Woking URC
Religious group	Welcome Church
Religious group	Christ Church Woking
Religious group	Faith Prayer International Church
Religious group	Christian Science Church
Religious group	Masjid Albirr - Mosque
Sport/Leisure	Freedom Runners
Sport/Leisure	Woking Athletics
Sport/Leisure	Woking Leisure centre and Pool in the Park
Sport/Leisure	Woking Town FC
Sport/Leisure	Woking FC
Utility	Thames Water
Walking	Woking and Runnymede health walks
Walking	Woking Ramblers
Youth	Girl Guiding - Guildford
Youth	Scouts
Youth	Surrey Youth Focus
Youth	Woking Youth Centre