

**PETITION – WITHDRAWAL OF MODIFIED SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT AND RESUBMISSION OF A NEW PLAN**

**Executive Summary**

Woking Borough Council has received a petition which asks the Council to withdraw the modified Site Allocations Development Plan Document and to submit a new Development Plan Document.

In accordance with Woking Borough Council's arrangements for petitions, the matter has been referred for consideration by the Council.

**Recommendations**

The Council is requested to consider the petition and determine accordingly.

<b>Background Papers:</b>	None.
<b>Reporting Person:</b>	Ray Morgan, Chief Executive Email: ray.morgan@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3333
<b>Contact Person:</b>	Frank Jeffrey, Democratic Services Manager Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Gary Elson Email: cllrgary.elson@woking.gov.uk
<b>Shadow Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Graham Chrystie Email: cllrgraham.chrystie@woking.gov.uk
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a New Plan**

# **Petition – Withdrawal of Site Allocations Development Plan Document and Resubmission of a New Plan**

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 A petition has been received which asks the Council to withdraw the Site Allocations Development Plan Document and submit a new Development Plan Document. The petition has been received through the Council's online e-petition scheme and contains 2,739 confirmed signatories and 216 unconfirmed signatories.
- 1.2 The number of signatures exceeds the threshold required for a petition to be referred to a meeting of Full Council and accordingly the Petitioner or their nominee has been invited to present the petition at Council.
- 1.3 The petition has been submitted in the following terms:

**“We the undersigned petition Woking Borough Council to withdraw the modified SADPD and resubmit a new plan based on current information and the proposed legislation to the benefit of current and future residents.**”

WBC's Development Plan should be withdrawn. The modified Woking Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) fails to recognise the recent increases in actual and planned housing numbers, fails to consider brownfield/alternate sites, ignores proposed national planning legislation and overrides the feelings of residents. We petition Woking Borough Council to withdraw the modified SADPD and resubmit a new plan based on current information and the proposed legislation to the benefit of current and future residents.”

- 1.4 The on-line petition went live on 25 September 2020 for a seven week period up to 13 November 2020.

## **2.0 Petitions Scheme**

- 2.1 As the number of signatories exceeds 400, the petition falls to be debated at full Council. In accordance with the Council's scheme for dealing with petitions, the petitioner has been invited to attend the meeting and present the petition. The presentation of a petition is limited to not more than three minutes, and should be confined to reading out, or summarising, the purpose of the petition, indicating the number and description of signatories, and making supporting remarks relevant to the petition.
- 2.2 Following the presentation, Members will have the opportunity to ask questions of the petitioner. Thereafter, the Council will discuss the petition and determine what action, if any, is to be taken.

## **3.0 Officer Comments**

- 3.1 The Government is keen to see local plans progress through the system as a vital means for supporting economic recovery once the COVID 19 pandemic is over. It is also critical that the Site Allocations DPD is prepared expeditiously to enable the delivery of the Core Strategy and avoid speculative development and planning by appeal. Withdrawing the DPD at this stage and restarting the process will lead to unacceptable delay and potential loss of control of the Council's ability to manage development across the borough.
- 3.2 The preparation of the DPD has evolved over time with public involvement as a key part of the process. This includes Regulation 18 consultation, Regulation 19 consultation, consultation on land east of Martyrs Lane and consultation on the main modifications to the DPD. The petitioners and local residents still have the opportunity to submit any concerns they have about the DPD to the Independent Inspector to take into account. The Council has also ensured that the evidence base used to inform the DPD is up to date. The DPD is

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presently going through an Independent Examination, which is the last stage of the process until the Inspector submits his report to the Council.

- 3.3 The Secretary of State has appointed an independent Inspector to conduct the Examination of the DPD. The Inspector's main task is to consider whether the DPD as submitted complies with the legal and procedural requirements set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) and its associated Regulations. He also has to consider the soundness of the DPD against the criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This includes whether the DPD meets objectively assessed development needs, is deliverable, and takes into account reasonable alternatives, informed by proportionate evidence and consistent with national policy. These cover the matters raised in the petition.
- 3.4 The Council has provided evidence to the Inspector and the Examination to demonstrate that the DPD is informed by up to date and credible evidence base studies such as an assessment of brownfield land to meet housing need and a Green Belt boundary review to ensure that any land taken out from the Green Belt will not undermine its overall purpose. The Council has also provided evidence to prove that the DPD is in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework, meets legal and procedural requirements, and the Council has consulted and taken into account comments received during public consultations. In this regard, it is important for the Council to allow the DPD to run its course, and for the Inspector to make a judgment on these matters. The evidence submitted by the Council to the Examination can all be accessed by this link:
- <https://www.woking2027.info/allocations/sadpdexam>.
- 3.5 The issues set out in the petition were also broadly raised during the Regulation 19 consultation and comprehensively discussed at the Examination Hearings. Many comments received so far to the consultation on the main modifications to the DPD makes reference to the petition. The petitioners should therefore be advised to submit the petition as part of their representation to the consultation on the main modifications so that the Inspector can take it into account before submitting his report to the Council.
- 3.6 Given that the petitioners have sufficient time and opportunity to submit representations of their concerns for the Inspector to consider before submitting his report, there will not be any justifiable reasons to withdraw the DPD at this stage and restart the process. The consultation on the main modifications to the DPD closes on 14 December 2020.

REPORT ENDS