

PETITION – SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

Executive Summary

Woking Borough Council has received a petition which asks the Council to review the provisions within the SADPD which relate to Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford.

In accordance with Woking Borough Council's arrangements for petitions, the matter has been referred for consideration by the Council. Details of the petition, together with officer comments, are set out in this report.

In considering the proposals of the petition, the following key points should be highlighted:

- i) That the petitioner be thanked for the petition which has been carefully considered.
- ii) The Site Allocations Development Plan Document and Proposals Map continues to provide a sustainable, sound and legally compliant basis for planning across the Borough, as outlined by the Inspector's Final Report and accompanying modifications (main and additional) and adopted by the Council on 14 October 2021. The SADPD is vital to achieving delivery of the Council's planned housing requirement and other development requirements. In adopting the SADPD, the Council acknowledged that while in the main the document presented a sustainable way forward for the development of the Borough, some elements of the document were not what Councillors and local residents would want. Notwithstanding this, it is clear that the failure to timely adopt the recommendations would result in a worse outcome for the Borough as a whole.
- iii) The Site Allocations Development Plan Document, Infrastructure Capacity Study and Delivery Plan - East of the Borough and Borough-wide Study together with various supporting studies provide the Council with a robust approach to infrastructure delivery to meet the demands and mitigate impact from development. The Council is committed to ensuring adequate infrastructure delivery in the Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford areas, as well as across the Borough, as part of its approach to sustainable development. The IDP will continue to be updated to account for new information.
- iv) The SADPD includes specific key requirements on provision of essential infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of development. It should continue to be given full weight for the purposes of determining development management and all other planning decisions.

Recommendations

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

Background Papers: Petition received 30 August 2022.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A petition has been received which asks the Council to review the provisions within the SADPD which relate to Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford.
- 1.2 The petition has been received through the Council's online e-petition scheme and contains 714 confirmed signatories.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 The petition has been submitted in the following terms:

"We the undersigned petition the council to Want the council to over hall the SADPD as since the Pandemic it is not fit for purpose. We also want it known that we wholly object!! to the building of 555 houses and 15 travellers pitches until a thorough investigation has been done of the infrastructure!!!!!!

Justification:

The people of Byfleet village, West Byfleet & Pyrford Do not want this to go ahead as the infrastructure i.e. Parvis road will not be able to handle the extra volume of traffic that this will cause, let alone the extra toll on the other utilities, school places, and surgery places. The council needs to find another part of the borough rather than trying to build in the Byfleet's as it is destroying what little greenbelt we have left!!!"

- 1.5 The on-line petition went live for a twelve month period up to 30 August 2022.

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 Comment

- 3.1 Woking Borough Council adopted the Site Allocations DPD and Proposals Map on 14 October 2021. Alongside the Core Strategy (2012), the Development Management Policies DPD (2016) three Neighbourhood Plans and the Surrey Minerals and Waste Plans, it makes up the Borough's Local Plan. The Site Allocations DPD is a key delivery document to the Core Strategy, allocating land for housing, employment and infrastructure to meet its development requirements. It includes a commitment to release Green Belt land between 2022-2027 to provide at least 550 new homes to meet housing need, and in particular, need for family homes.
- 3.2 The SADPD is founded upon a comprehensive evidence base including a Green Belt Boundary Review which comprehensively assessed the Green Belt to identify the most sustainable and suitable land to release from this designation to meet the Borough's housing

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need. Through the SADPD the Council has committed to the protection of the Green Belt, with the adoption of a robust and defensible Green Belt Boundary. The sites released to meet housing need equated to less than two per cent of the Borough's Green Belt land area, with strong protection for the remaining Green Belt to remain open, as a valuable green resource for the Borough, its residents and wildlife.

- 3.3 The SADPD is also supported by Housing, Transport and Infrastructure Studies, and a Sustainability Appraisal. These documents ensure that the Site Allocations DPD is robust, justified and effective in meeting the Borough's development requirements, and were considered at Public Examination by the Inspector. The Inspector concluded in his Final Report of 6 August 2021 that the DPD was sound, legally compliant and its preparation had met the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate, subject to inclusion of main modifications. These modifications were made in the SA DPD adopted by the Council.
- 3.4 Concerns about infrastructure capacity and provision relating the area have been previously noted through extensive consultation at various stages of the SA DPD's preparation and were acted on by the Council. This led to the preparation of the Infrastructure Capacity Study and Delivery Plan - East of the Borough (2021) which provides an up-to-date summary of infrastructure needs identified in the West Byfleet and Byfleet ('the Byfleets') area to support new development and mitigate its impacts. This was presented to Council at the same meeting as the adoption of the SADPD, on 14 October 2021, and was noted and approved. It includes detail of the mitigation proposals and improvements needed, in terms of the road network and transport, education, health and flood alleviation, and brings together the extensive array of background reports that support the SADPD. In this respect, a thorough investigation of infrastructure capacity and needs has been carried out, as called for by the petition.
- 3.5 To ensure effective implementation of development, SADPD Policy GB9 and GB9A: Land surrounding West Hall, Parvis Road, West Byfleet specifically requires development to contribute to a range of essential infrastructure, including the transport and education infrastructure necessary to mitigate the impacts of development of the site. This is being taken forward as part of Development Management discussions.
- 3.6 In addition, relevant to the Development Management process and the implementation and delivery of development, as part of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, as amended, an Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report has been submitted by the proposed developers of sites GB9 and GB9A and a Scoping Opinion given. EIA is a structured process for identifying 'likely significant effects' of a development on the environment and the mitigation that may be required in order address any adverse effects. The submitted Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Report covers Transport, Air Quality and Noise, Ecology, Water Environment, Flood Risk and Drainage, Climate Change and Socio economics and Health, and the Council's Scoping Opinion finds the proposed scope of the submitted EIA Scoping Report is accepted, subject to certain points made within the Opinion being fulfilled. The submission and scoping opinion is available on line, at <https://www.woking.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/review-or-comment-application> under planning ref PLAN/2022/0786.
- 3.7 At the point of adoption, the Council noted concern expressed by some residents to the SA DPD, including a previous petition signed by over 2,700 residents of Byfleet and West Byfleet. The Council had to make a binary decision to adopt the Inspector's recommendations and SA DPD in full, or not to adopt. It was considered that in the main the SADPD presents a sustainable way forward for the development of the borough taking into account housing requirements, and that a failure to adopt the recommendations would result in a worse outcome for the Borough as a whole. It should be noted that where Local Planning Authorities do not have adopted, up to date local plans, which show where development requirements will be met, there is a risk of an ad hoc and unplanned approach to development led by developers on a site by site basis. Where there is demonstrated unmet housing need, national planning guidance (National Planning Policy Framework, para 11) sets out the presumption in favour of

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sustainable development. This can result in less suitable and sustainable sites being granted approval, either by the Council or at planning appeal. The adopted SADPD, as a key part of the Borough's local plan, helps the Council avoid the risk of unplanned and unsustainable development going forward.

- 3.8 Any review of sites contained in the adopted SADPD would need to be undertaken through a review of the Local Plan, which is a lengthy process outlined at paragraph 3.13. It should be noted that the site (GB9 and GB9A: Land surrounding West Hall, Parvis Road, West Byfleet) is a key element of land allocated for family and affordable housing (with hundreds of family homes expected to be provided and a requirement for 50% affordable housing across the site) both of which are in very short supply. The Council's Housing Land Availability Assessment and other evidence supporting the SADPD shows there are no other available sites that could provide this scale and type of housing provision. Failure to take the site forward would have profound implications in terms of delivery of a range of housing types to meet local demand, and would exacerbate existing shortages of both family and affordable homes in the Borough. A further consequence of not taking forward the site's allocation is outlined below regarding the Housing Delivery Test (paragraphs 3.10 to 3.12). As detailed above, the SADPD and Infrastructure Capacity Study and Delivery Plan (2021) sets the policy framework and assessment to enable the development of the site with adequate supporting infrastructure to mitigate and deal with the impacts of development.
- 3.9 There is no evidence to indicate that the SADPD is out of date, less than a year after its adoption, and good evidence to show that it is vital to ensuring sustainable development, including housing delivery, in the Borough, as detailed below.
- 3.10 The Government introduced a Housing Delivery Test (HDT) in July 2018, revised in February 2019, which is an annual measurement of housing delivery against the planned housing requirement, in the case of Woking Borough is 292 dwellings per year. The HDT is measured and published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. It expects Local Planning Authorities to deliver the planned housing requirement in full. If a local authority fails to deliver the required number of homes, sanctions are applied, and appropriate actions have to be taken.
- 3.11 The latest Housing Delivery Test was published on 14 January 2022 and found that Woking had delivered 78% of its housing requirement. This means that it has to identify 20% buffer of housing land supply to improve the prospect of achieving the planned housing requirement and also prepare an action plan to demonstrate how the planned growth (100% or average of 292 dwelling) can be achieved. The Council has therefore prepared and published a Housing Delivery Test Action Plan, in June 2022 (Executive meeting, 16 June 2022), which overviews housing delivery in the Plan period, examines wider macro-economic circumstances (and so provides an element of up to date, post-pandemic analysis) and specifies the actions proposed to help improve the prospect of achieving the planned housing requirement in future years. The main cause of under provision identified was the impact of the pandemic and the associated problems with the construction industry such as labour shortages and supply-chain blockages, as well complications arising from development on previously developed land.
- 3.12 Key to achieving the housing development needed to deliver the planned housing requirement is delivery of the Site Allocations DPD (alongside major development in the pipeline and the growth identified in the draft Town Centre Masterplan). The SADPD strengthens the prospect of delivering the Borough's housing requirement by providing certainty to developers, through establishing the principle of development for certain uses at specific allocated sites. Therefore, the evidence included in the Council's Housing Delivery Test Action Plan demonstrates a pressing need to support continuation of SADPD delivery as a key part of the Council's Development Plan.
- 3.13 While the SADPD should be continue to be given full weight for the purposes of determining development management and all other planning decisions for the plan period to 2027, in line

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with the National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Policy Guidance and the Town and Country Planning Regulations 2017, the Local Plan including the Core Strategy, will need to be reviewed by October 2023 (being five years from the date of the last review of the Core Strategy, in October 2018). This review will take account changing circumstances affecting the Borough, and of any relevant changes in national policy. It will include a review of local housing need as well as a review of other policy areas that may be in need of updating. The Planning Policy team will soon commence work on this review, to ensure any update to the Core Strategy is in place by October 2027.

REPORT ENDS