

REVIEW OF WOKING CORE STRATEGY

Executive Summary

As a consequence of an amendment to Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 brought about this year, a local planning authority is now required to review a local development document within the following time periods:

- (a) in respect of a local plan, the review must be completed every five years, starting from the date of the adoption of the local plan, in accordance with Section 23 of the Act (adoption of local development documents); and
- (b) in respect of a Statement of Community Involvement, the review must be completed every five years, starting from the date of adoption of the Statement on Community Involvement, in accordance with Section 23 of the Act.

The 2017 Regulations were published in December 2017 and came into force on 6 April 2018.

Paragraph 33 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) clarifies this further by emphasising that policies in local and spatial development strategies should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. The review should be completed no later than five years from the adoption date of the plan, and should take into account changing circumstances affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy. Relevant strategic policies will need updating at least once every five years if their applicable local housing need figure has changed significantly, and they are likely to require earlier review if local housing need is expected to change significantly in the near future.

The Woking Core Strategy was adopted in October 2012. It is nearly six year old. It therefore has to be reviewed to satisfy the above requirements, and to determine whether a modification might be necessary. If Members felt that a modification is required, a programme to do so would be prepared and reflected in the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS).

There is no detailed Government guidance on what the five yearly local plan reviews should cover or the process for undertaken the review. Similarly, there are no other authorities that Officers are aware of who have undertaken the review to provide example. Officers have therefore sought clarification from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), which has confirmed that there is a clear distinction between 'review' and 'modification' and what the Regulation requires first and foremost, is a review of the Local Plan to determining whether a modification might be necessary. Given that the Woking Core strategy is over five years old, MHCLG has advised that the Council must undertake a review to assess whether modifications to the plan would be necessary. MHCLG expects the Council to publish the outcome of the review on its website. If the review were to lead to modifications, MHCLG expects a programme for the preparation of the revised Plan to be prepared and for it to be reflected in the Local Development Scheme. The outcome of the review does not require the approval of MHCLG to be published on the website.

Officers have undertaken the review of the Woking Core Strategy and have concluded that there is no immediate need to modify it either in part or as a whole. Consequently, the Core Strategy continues to be considered up to date to provide the necessary strategic policy framework for managing development across the Borough. The reasons for arriving at this conclusion are set out in the review. Full details are attached in Appendix 1. Once approved, the details of the review will be published on the Council's website.

Review of Woking Core Strategy

The latest Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was approved by Council on 12 February 2015. Its review is therefore not due until 2020.

Recommendations

The Council is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the review of the Woking Core Strategy included in Appendix 1 be approved;
- (ii) the Woking Core Strategy continue to be up to date for the purposes of managing development across the Borough;
- (iii) the details of the review be published on the Council's website as soon as it is reasonable to do so after Council's approval;
- (iv) authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to approve any minor changes to the review to reflect new information, including any national guidance before it is published.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers: Statement of Community Involvement (February 2015)
Woking Core Strategy
Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) regulations 2017

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1.0 Implications

Financial

- 1.1 No additional financial implications.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 1.2 No additional human resource, training and development implications.

Community Safety

- 1.3 There are no community safety implications.

Risk Management

- 1.4 It is a statutory requirement for local plans to be reviewed every five years. Given that the Woking Core Strategy is nearly six years old, it will need to be reviewed to comply with Government Regulations.

Sustainability

- 1.5 There are no specific sustainability impacts associated with reviewing the Core Strategy. A Sustainability Appraisal was carried out to inform the preparation of the Core Strategy. It concluded that overall, the Core Strategy would contribute towards the sustainable development of the Borough.

Equalities

- 1.6 There are no specific equality impacts associated with the review of the Woking Core Strategy.

Safeguarding

- 1.7 There are no safeguarding implications for reviewing the Core Strategy.

2.0 Conclusions

- 2.1 The Council has to review the Woking Core Strategy to satisfy the requirements of the Regulations and the NPPF. The review covers an assessment of how the Core Strategy is delivering against its intended objectives and the Council's key priorities. The extent to which the Core Strategy is also in general conformity with the revised NFFP has also been assessed. Whilst there is no clear Government guidance on what the five yearly review of a local plan should contain, Officers consider this review to be robust and sufficiently comprehensive in assessing the performance of the Core Strategy against its objectives and the requirements it needs to satisfy. Overall, Officers' have concluded that there is no need for the immediate modification of the Woking Core Strategy. The Council should rather continue to focus on its comprehensive delivery without delay.

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