

COUNCIL – 18 OCTOBER 2018

REVIEW OF WOKING CORE STRATEGY – SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

Executive Summary

Item 10 on the agenda for Council meeting tonight deals with the review of the Woking Core Strategy. The Council has received representations from Guildford, Waverley and Runnymede Borough Councils regarding this item. The representations are attached at Appendix 1. In summary, they raise the following concerns:

- The Council failed to consult its neighbouring authorities prior to deciding on the review;
- The review should make clear that based on the revised 2016 household projections, Woking will no longer have an unmet need to be met by neighbouring authorities;
- There needs to be a proper review of the Council's evidence base, including a Green Belt boundary review to inform the review of the Core Strategy;
- The review should take the opportunity for Woking to identify more land, including further land in the Green Belt to meet its full objectively assessed housing need.
- Green Belt sites in Pyrford and Mayford which have ability to deliver much needed housing are being recommended to be retained in the Green Belt whilst Guildford and Waverley are being required to meet Woking's unmet need.

Members are advised to note that paragraph 33 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) require Councils to review their Local Plans to assess whether they need updating at least every five years. The review should be completed no later than five years from the adoption date of the plan. The Woking Core Strategy is over 5 years and the review is therefore overdue. Without the review, the Core Strategy is considered out of date, and in that case the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies. An out of date Local Plan could also have significant implications for calculating the Council's five year housing land supply. For example, without an up to date Local Plan, instead of calculating the housing land supply using the Council's annual housing requirement, the local housing need figure will have to be used. There are therefore serious consequences for delaying decisions on this matter, and Members are advised not to delay their decision as a result of the attached representations.

Regarding the representations themselves, they raise nothing new or significant enough to justify delaying a decision on the matter.

As highlighted in the Officers' report, there is no prescribed guidance on the format of the review either in the NPPF or in planning legislation. There is also no good practice elsewhere by other local authorities to draw from. The available national guidance only requires the Council to review the Local Plan and publish their reasons if they felt that no modification is necessary. If the Council were to decide that a modification is necessary, then the timing for doing so will be reflected in the Local Development Scheme for that to be done through the formal plan making process, involving the necessary consultation that it entails. Whilst the concerns of Guildford and Runnymede Borough Councils regarding the failure of the Council to consult them are acknowledged, there is no requirement for the Council to do so given that the Council is not proposing to modify the plan.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) sets out what could be considered when undertaking the review of the local plan. Officers have comprehensively considered them in undertaken the review. The review also deal with the evidence base used to inform the decisions on the matter and are satisfied that the evidence base is robust to withstand scrutiny. In particular, no further Green Belt land could be released for development without significantly undermining its purposes and integrity. Paragraph 3.5.22 of the Green Belt boundary review report makes this

conclusion very clear. Members have since reviewed this evidence and found even less of the limited recommended land to be developable.

Paragraph 60 of the NPPF requires local housing need assessment to be conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance. The national planning guidance expects the latest household projection to be used in calculating the need. In accordance with the above, it is estimated that the local housing need will be 266 dwellings per year. By committing to continue with the 292 annual housing requirement, there would be no unmet need arising from Woking as raised by Runnymede Borough Council.

The review sets out the implications of the various objectively assessed housing needs on the unmet need arising from Woking. It is clear from the analysis that by using the 2016 household projections to calculate the need, there will be no unmet need arising from Woking. Officers have already previously acknowledged and in responding to Councillors questions going to Council tonight that whilst their estimate of the housing need using the 2016 household projections is 266 dwellings per year, there are other calculations that estimate the figure to be 263 dwellings per year. The difference is marginal to give any cause for concern and it is due to how figures have been rounded during the calculation.

Based on the above, Officers will recommend that the representations raise nothing new or significant enough to justify delaying deciding on this matter.

Recommendations

The Council is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the representations received from Guildford, Runnymede and Waverley Borough Councils are noted, and that they raise nothing new or significant enough to justifying delaying a decision on the review of the Woking Core Strategy.

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

Background Papers: National Planning Policy Statement (NPPF)
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

The representations are noted, however, they raise nothing new or significant enough to justify delaying a decision on the review of the Core Strategy.

REPORT ENDS