



## **Woking Local development Documents**

**Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) –**

**Woodham and Horsell Neighbourhood Forum**

**Issues and Response Topic Paper**

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**Produced by the Planning Policy Team**

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## Introduction

The proposal for consultation simply reads:

*This 112.1 hectare site has been identified for consultation in respect of the possibility of substituting it for the sites safeguarded in the draft Regulation 18 version of the Sites Allocations DPD to meet the long term development needs of the Borough between 2027 and 2040. It is anticipated that the site is sufficient to enable the delivery of at least 1,200 net additional homes and the necessary green and other infrastructure to support the potential development of the site. Any safeguarded land that will be identified in the adopted Site Allocations DPD will only be released for development as part of the future review of the Core Strategy and/or the Site Allocations DPD. Specific key requirements to ensure the future development of the land is acceptable will be set out as part of the review of the Site Allocations DPD.*

The safeguarded sites that are proposed to be replaced by the land east of Martyrs Lane and their indicative capacities are:

- Land south of High Road, Byfleet (Proposal GB4 in the draft Site Allocations DPD. Anticipated capacity is 85 dwellings);
- Land to the south of Murray's Lane, Byfleet (Proposal GB5 in the draft Site Allocations DPD. Anticipated capacity is 135 dwellings);
- Land to the north east of Saunders Lane, between Saunders Lane and Hook Hill Lane, Mayford (Proposal GB10 of the draft Site Allocations DPD. Anticipated capacity is 171 dwellings);
- Land to the north west of Saunders Lane, Mayford (Proposal GB11 in the draft Site Allocations DPD. Anticipated capacity is 210 dwellings);
- Land rear of 79 – 95 Lovelace Drive, Teggs Lane, Pyrford (Proposal GB12 in the draft Site Allocations DPD. Anticipated capacity is 223 dwellings); and
- Land east of Upshot Lane and south of Aviary Road, Pyrford (Proposal GB13 in the draft Site Allocations DPD. Anticipated capacity is 200 dwellings).

The Woodham and Horsell Neighbourhood Forum have sent standard comments containing 17 distinct representations. A number of residents have signed up to the representations either in part or in full. This issues and response topic paper summarises the representations and sets out Officers response to each one of them.

1 The land east of Martyrs Lane makes an important contribution towards preventing urban sprawl. Safeguarding it for future development needs will lead to urban sprawl and the merging of settlements. This is highlighted by the Council's own evidence. There are no special circumstances to justify the release of the land from the Green Belt for development. The Council went against Green Belt guidance to grant planning permission for McLaren to develop the northern part of the land, and as such the non-implementation of the planning approval should not be used as justification for promoting residential development on the site. The proposal does not take into account significant proposed developments in adjoining boroughs such as the proposed Fair Oaks Garden village proposal in Surrey Heath Borough. Cumulatively, these developments will lead to urban sprawl.

### **Officer's response**

The Core Strategy sets out the development plan policy context for identifying land within the Green Belt to meet future development requirements of the borough. The Core Strategy identifies the Green Belt as a potential future direction of growth to meet housing needs, in particular, the need for family homes between 2022 and 2027. The NPPF also encourages the safeguarding of land between the urban area and the Green Belt in order to meet longer term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period. This is necessary to ensure the enduring permanence of the Green Belt boundary. To release land from the Green Belt for development, the Core Strategy requires the Council to make sure that this will not undermine its overall purpose and integrity. The purposes of the Green Belt are defined by paragraph 80 of the NPPF and Policy CS6: *Green Belt* of the Core Strategy. These purposes amongst others include:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; and
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

There is a degree of relationship between these three purposes.

The Core Strategy prescribes the Green Belt boundary review as the means for making sure that the purposes of the Green Belt are not undermined when identifying specific deliverable sites to meet future development needs.

In accordance with this policy background, the Council has carried out two relevant studies:

- Woking Green Belt review (2013) by Peter Brett Associates; and
- Landscape assessment and Green Belt review (2016) by Hankinson Duckett.

Based on the outcome of the two studies, Officers broadly accept that the development of the land east of Martyrs Lane as envisaged in the consultation document will lead to a degree of urban sprawl and a significant incursion into the Green Belt.

The Peter Brett report assessed the land east of Martyrs Lane (identified within Parcel 2 of the report) and concluded that it has low suitability for removal from the Green Belt. There is potential for development to lead to the perception of merging with development on the part of the site owned by McLaren. The parcel of land has 'strong character with extensive woodland which contributes to enclosure and defines the northern setting of Woking. The land has limited capacity to accommodate further significant development without significant adverse effects on important landscape features and prevailing strong character'.

The Hankinson Duckett Associates report specifically assessed the land east of Martyrs Lane against the purposes of the Green Belt. Its conclusions are broadly similar to the Peter Brett's report. The land is critically important in its contribution towards the purposes of the Green Belt. In particular, it concluded that the land has critical importance to the Green Belt with regard to urban sprawl and the prevention of towns merging, but the Bourne River and associated flood zone to the north of the site acts as a very strong durable boundary in preventing encroachment beyond that point.

The conclusions of the two studies are sufficiently clear to demonstrate that the development of the land east of Martyrs Lane would lead to urban sprawl and an incursion into the Green Belt.

In other representations, reference has been made to the Case Officer's report relating to PLAN/2011/0823, which had stated that the development of the part of the land in the ownership of McLaren for a 60,000 sq.m technology centre would not lead to urban sprawl, contrary to the conclusions of the consultants' studies. This is acknowledged, and it is accepted that the planning decision and the planning history of the site is a material consideration that needs to be taken into account. Nevertheless, it is highlighted that the determination of a planning application is a distinct planning process different from a Site Allocations DPD process. The Site Allocations DPD process and the question for the Martyrs Lane consultation in particular are in an entirely different context whereby the relative merits of alternative sites are being considered across the entire plan area. This is different from a development management process that seeks to determine a planning application based on the individual merits of the particular proposal. Whilst not underplaying the significance of the Case Officer's report the conclusions of the two studies are sufficiently clear and must be given far greater importance in this particular regard.

It is important to emphasise that the overall purpose of the planning system as set out in the NPPF is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, and the Council's ultimate decisions must be seen within this overall context. Each policy in the NPPF, including the Green Belt policies is servant to the overall goal of achieving sustainable development. Regarding the spatial distribution of future development across the borough, meeting this goal would include in addition to the purposes of the Green Belt, the consideration of other factors and evidence base studies such as the sustainability appraisal, proximity of sites to services and facilities, potential to encourage sustainable modes of travel and minimise adverse impacts on climate change, land

availability and deliverability and the realistic prospect for mitigating development impacts, amongst other things. The decision by the Council about its preferred site(s) for the purposes of the Regulation 19 consultation should rest on balancing all these factors. Other sections of this Issues and Matters paper address some of these other factors in detail.

The decision to consult on the possibility of substituting the Land east of Martyrs Lane for the six safeguarded sites was appropriate and reasonable. It is important that Members of the Council are sufficiently informed before they make decisions about the version of the Site Allocations DPD that they wish to submit to the Secretary of State for Examination. In this regard, Members need to be satisfied that all reasonable options have been assessed. The conditions attached to the latest planning approval at the McLaren site west of the A320 (PLAN/2014/1297) presented a change in circumstance to justify the Martyrs Lane consultation. Representations received during the consultation will provide useful information to inform Members on their preferred approach to safeguarding.

It is stressed that all planning applications at the McLaren site including the one on land east of Martyrs Lane (PLAN/2011/0823) had been determined in accordance with national policy and the policies of the development plan. The Green Belt policies of the NPPF allow scope for such developments to be accommodated in the Green Belt, if they can be justified by special circumstance. The planning approvals on the site met this test.

The Council has worked in partnership with Runnymede and Surrey Heath Borough Councils to undertake a study to assess the cumulative transport impacts of major developments within the three authorities on the A320 corridor. The study identifies measures of mitigation to address/minimise the development impacts. The authorities are working together to secure funding on the back of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to deliver the improvements.

- 2 The land has high risk of flooding and parts of it are in Flood Zones 2 and 3. There are real recorded incidences of flooding on the stretch of the A320 near the site. There are other areas within the Borough of lesser risk that could be developed. Development will exacerbate existing flood risk in the area, and the cost of mitigation would be significant enough to affect the viability of developing the entire land. In accordance with the NPPF, the development of the site will require a site specific flood risk assessment by reason of its scale. The risk of flooding could affect the insurance of properties.

#### **Officer's response**

Policy CS9: *Flooding and water management* of the Core Strategy expects development to be directed to Flood Zone 1 where there is minimum risk of flooding. The land east of Martyrs Lane has a total area of about 112.14 ha. 102.6 ha (91.53%) of this is in Flood Zone 1, 3.16 ha (2.82%) is in Flood Zone 2 and 6.34 ha (5.65%) is in Flood Zone 3. It is always the intention of the Council that if the land is to be safeguarded, development will be concentrated on the part of the land that is in Flood Zone 1 and the consultation document makes this point very clear in paragraph 2.5. By releasing Green Belt land for future development, the Council also has to make sure that there is a strong defensible Green Belt boundary. The areas of the land covered by Flood Zones 2 and 3 are included within the safeguarded designation to make sure that there is a strong defensible Green Belt boundary. Given the location and size of the land, a detailed flood risk assessment will be a requirement of any development proposal on the site that would come forward for determination. This is a key policy requirement that will have to be met for the development to comply with both the policies of the NPPF and the Core Strategy. Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy also allows circumstantial evidence to be taken into account on a case by case basis and for sustainable drainage systems to be incorporated into development such as this. Based on the above, it is not envisaged that the occupants of the development on the site would face unacceptable risk of flooding. Insurance of properties that could be developed on the site would not be adversely affected and the development of the site would not exacerbate flood risk elsewhere.

- 3 The original proposals in the draft Regulation 18 Site Allocations DPD would distribute development traffic across the borough. The Martyrs Lane proposal will concentrate all the traffic impacts on one heavily congested area. There is lack of public transport in the area, the surrounding roads are already congested and the additional development will exacerbate the situation. Roads that will be severely affected are the A320, Martyrs Lane, Woodham Lane. This could have implications on operations at McLaren, on local residents and would increase pollution.

**Officer's response**

The Council is fully aware of local resident's concern about the existing traffic conditions on various transport routes and takes those concerns seriously. In this regard, the Council has carried out the following separate studies to quantify and forecast vehicular trips that would be generated by various development options to enable the delivery of the Core Strategy and future development needs, and to help determine appropriate mitigation to address the adverse impacts of the development:

- Transport Assessment (2010);
- Cumulative assessment of future development impacts on the highway network (2011);
- Green Belt boundary review sensitivity test – Strategic Transport Assessment (2015);
- Green Belt boundary review sensitivity test – addendum report to Strategic Transport Assessment (2016).

The collective outcomes of these studies have provided a good understanding of the highway impacts for developing the various sites tested for development.

It would be simplistic to assume that the forecast trips generated from development of the six original safeguarded sites will be distributed across the borough whilst development at Martyrs Lane will concentrate all the traffic impacts on one heavily congested area. The *Green Belt boundary review sensitivity test – addendum report to Strategic Transport Assessment* specifically calculates the quantum and distribution of vehicle trips resulting from various development options at land east of Martyrs Lane and other development scenarios, including the original six safeguarded sites and the forecast of the highway impacts of development of these sites. Overall, this assessment concludes that the scale of the forecast highway impacts varies in each of the Green Belt development options tested. This is a direct result of the number of additional trips generated from each scenario varying according to the number of proposed residential dwellings in each of the development scenarios.

The forecast highway impacts of the trips that will either be generated from development at Martyrs Lane or at the six safeguarded sites are likely to exacerbate existing levels of congestion, instead of creating new areas. Both sets of development options are expected to exacerbate the following same traffic hotspots:

- A245 Woodham Lane/Sheerwater/Parvis Road;
- A320 Chertsey Road/Guildford Road; and
- B382 Old Woking Road.

The A320 is appropriately acknowledged to be affected whether development happens at Martyrs Lane or at the other six sites.

In addition, it is also likely that the additional trips generated from development at Martyrs Lane would cause trips to re-route and thus generate additional pressure on areas such as Maybury, Pyrford and Sheerwater.

The development of any of the options considered for safeguarding will require necessary and appropriate measures of mitigation to address forecast traffic and ensure the sustainable development of the sites.

The studies recommend that both hard and soft measures of mitigation should be explored to deal with the forecast highway impacts. In addition, each of the allocated sites will be required to undertake detailed transport assessment to determine site specific mitigation measures that would be necessary to bring forward the development.

The Council is working in partnership with the County Council to explore and determine feasible and deliverable strategic highway measures of mitigation to minimise any development impacts. This work is on-going and will be completed before the DPD is submitted for Examination.

The County Council has also carried out for the Council an assessment of how accessible rail stations are by public transport from the various sites being considered for safeguarding. By this measure alone, it appears that the Martyrs Lane site, in particular its northern part will be relatively the least sustainable option when compared with the other six sites. Details of the modelling are background information which can be found on the website.

The Council has worked in partnership with Runnymede and Surrey Heath Borough Councils to undertake a study to assess the cumulative transport impacts of major developments within the three authorities on the A320 corridor. The study identifies measures of mitigation to address/minimise the development impacts. The authorities are working together to secure funding on the back of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to deliver the improvements.



- 4 There is lack of public transport connectivity. Only two bus routes serve the area and one is about to be withdrawn. Trains are under severe strain and punctuality is terrible. South West Trains provide appalling service.

#### **Officer's response**

Officers would agree that public transport infrastructure currently serving the vicinity of the Martyrs Lane area is relatively limited. However, this would equally be true for most of the other six safeguarded sites. Access to rail stations by public transport from the various sites has already been dealt with above. The land east of Martyrs Lane is indirectly served by public buses. Five buses operate in the general area. The 446 and 593 buses travel along the A320 Chertsey Road/Guildford Road and the 462, 556 and 592 buses travel along the A245 Woodham Lane. The 446 is a relatively reasonable hourly service and connects to Woking Town centre. The 592 only runs 3 days per week and three times on those days. The 593 operates 3 services per week whilst the 462 and 556 operate Monday to Friday once per day. The buses do not provide usable routes to access services and facilities at West Byfleet. It would therefore be necessary for the Council to work with providers to improve service provision and frequency, in particular the 592 if this site were to be safeguarded for future development. As emphasised above, bus services serving the other six safeguarded sites are also relatively limited and their development would equally require measures to improve services in these areas.

Recognising that there could be local variations and punctuality is slightly below national average the overall customer satisfaction rate for South West Trains (now South Western Trains) services in Autumn 2015 was 83%. This is 2% above the national average. For information, the Transport Secretary has awarded the franchise to the Hong Kong Metro to run South West Trains with First Group for seven years from August 2017. The new company has pledged to deliver about £1.2 billion investment for the seven year franchise and to increase punctuality to 91.1% against the current figure of 88.2%.

Network Rail, who is responsible for rail infrastructure has also identified a number of capacity improvement projects along the Waterloo to Portsmouth Line. These projects are set out in the 'Wessex Route: Summary Route Plan' report which is available on the Network Rail website. This includes the Woking Flyover, the construction of a new Platform 6 and the refurbishment of other existing facilities. These are likely to be delivered in Control Period 6 (2019 – 2024).

- 5 The area has not got a transport policy other than one that promotes a huge amount of car travel. This would lead to a judicial review of the Site Allocations DPD. The transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes.

#### **Officer's response**

A key thrust of the transport policies of the Core Strategy and the NPPF are to influence a shift from car based travel to sustainable travel modes such as public transport, walking and cycling.

The overall spatial strategy of the Core Strategy is to concentrate most new development at the main centres because they offer a range of key services and facilities to help minimise the need to travel and to encourage sustainable travel modes. Specific references are made to Policies CS1: *A spatial strategy for Woking Borough* and CS18: *Transport and accessibility* of the Core Strategy which clearly demonstrate the importance that the Council places on encouraging walking and cycling. These policies have been scrutinised at Examination and judged to be in conformity with the NPPF. In addition to the policies of the Core Strategy, a key objective of the Council's Parking Standards is to use parking provision as a tool to encourage walking and cycling, in particular, at locations where key services and facilities are readily available without undermining economic vitality. Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy makes this point very clear.

Woking was designated as a Cycle Demonstration Town in 2009 and received a significant amount of money (about £1.8M) to improve cycle infrastructure. The investment of this amount and other funding has had positive outcomes in the borough. For example, it has resulted in significant overall increase in cycle journeys across the borough. Whilst the Local Sustainable Transport Funding from government has ended, the Council continues to be committed to improving cycle infrastructure and this is reflected in the Regulation 123 list of projects to benefit from CIL contributions. The Council is currently investing about £24M to improve transport infrastructure at the Town Centre, including improvement to the bus/rail interchange near the Station to enhance public transport connectivity. The project will also improve pedestrian and cycle access in the Town Centre. Part of this funding is from the Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Council accepts that car ownership and usage is relatively high in Woking compared with the national average. However, based on the above, it is incorrect for the representation to suggest that the transport policies of the Council are all balanced in favour of encouraging car usage, and it is not envisaged that there are any basis for a judicial review on the basis of the Council's transport policies.

- 6 The A320 has experienced severe sink holes in the past few years. A strip of land to the north of the site is susceptible to collapse/subsidence due to piping and liquefaction.

**Officer's response**

The transport assessment has confirmed that the forecast highway impacts of development from either the six original safeguarded sites or at Martyrs Lane would exacerbate traffic impacts on the A320 Chertsey Road/Guildford Road. The implications, of any sink holes that would occur on the A320 would therefore affect traffic movement from any of the alternatives safeguarded sites being considered in the consultation and would not be unique to development impacts from Martyrs Lane. However, there is no doubt that sink holes could have severe implications on highway safety and congestion that needs to be generally investigated and addressed. The Council will work constructively with relevant agencies to investigate the causes and help minimise the likelihood of this re-occurring regardless of whether land is safeguarded at Martyrs Lane or at the six sites because the A320 corridor is also used by existing commuters, residents and visitors to and from the borough. An investigation of the ground conditions of the land will always be a pre-requisite of the development of the site. This will make sure that any potential for a sink hole or subsidence on the site is appropriately assessed and where necessary for development to be planned to take that into account.

- 7 The development of the site will not amount to sustainable development, contrary to the requirements of national planning policy.

**Officer's response**

The Council has carried out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to assess the environmental, economic and social implications of developing the site. The overall role of the SA is to ensure that the implications of developing the land and consequently of the Site Allocations DPD are managed to help achieve sustainable development. The outcome of the appraisal demonstrates that there are a number of negative, positive and neutral impacts for developing the site. The same Sustainability Appraisal Framework had been used to carry out a SA of the originally proposed six safeguarded sites. The SA Framework enables consistent information to be gathered to make comparative judgements between the sites. The Council therefore has significant information to inform decisions about the most sustainable site to safeguard for future development. It goes without saying that after balancing all the relevant factors, the Council will only safeguard the land east of Martyrs Lane to meet future development needs only if it felt that it will be the most sustainable land to develop when compared against the other reasonable alternatives. The main essence of this consultation exercise is to gather further necessary information to help Members make that decision. A judgment about the relative merits of the sites with respect to how they contribute to sustainable development will be made in the report to Members when all the other representations are analysed. It is important to note that the principle of releasing Green Belt land to meet development needs between 2022 and 2027 is in line with the spatial strategy for the borough.

- 8 The scale of the development will require major infrastructure of every conceivable type to support it. This will come at a significant cost that cannot all be borne by developers. It will also need significant public funding. The infrastructure needs of the development will need to be studied with appropriate consultation with the relevant providers. Residents might have to draw on infrastructure within other boroughs and there is no indication that those authorities have been consulted.

**Officer's response**

To ensure sustainable development, the Council is always concerned to make sure that development is supported by the necessary social, physical and green infrastructure, and would agree that a development of this nature and scale will require different types of supporting infrastructure to be sustainable. There are two stages for identifying the nature and extent of the infrastructure that will be needed. The first is during the plan making stage and the second through the development management process. As part of the plan making process, the Council has carried out a number of studies to quantify the broad nature and type of infrastructure that will be needed to enable the delivery of the Core Strategy. An example is the Infrastructure Delivery Plan which is available on the Council's website. These studies have or are being reviewed to bring them up to date. At the development management stage, detailed impact assessment of specific proposals will be fully assessed to help determine site specific measures of mitigation that might be necessary. Contributions under Section 106 Agreement will be secured to deliver these site specific measures.

The Council has adopted the community infrastructure levy (CIL) as the primary means for securing developer contributions towards strategic infrastructure provision. The levy is set at a rate that will not undermine development viability. A viability assessment has been carried out to demonstrate that residential development across the borough will achieve positive viability. Officers accept that the CIL Charging Schedule will continue to be reviewed in future to take into account new information. Nevertheless, it is not envisaged that the levy will be set at a level that will undermine development viability.

The Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and the Surrey Infrastructure Study provide useful information in quantifying the nature and type of infrastructure needed to support the future growth of the area and the likely cost of providing them. Both studies are on the Council's website and are presently being reviewed to bring them up to date. CIL and S106 contributions will provide significant funding for the infrastructure necessary to support the development of the site and indeed for the development of any of the other proposed six safeguarded sites. However, it has always been very clear to the Council that infrastructure funding has never been and cannot be met entirely by developer contributions. Public sector contributions have and will always be a significant part of infrastructure funding, and the Council works tirelessly with relevant agencies to secure public sector and other sources of funding for infrastructure projects. For example, the CIL Charging Schedule identifies the priority infrastructure to support the delivery of the Core Strategy, how much it will cost,

how much of the funding will be met from developer contributions and how much is expected to be secured from public sector sources. This gives an indication of the scale of public sector funding expected to help deliver the identified infrastructure.

The Council is aware that some of the infrastructure implications for developing the site at Martyrs Lane could have cross boundary significance. This would also be the case with development impacts resulting from within the adjoining authorities that could have impacts in Woking. An example is the traffic implications for developing the Martyrs Lane site and the potential developments at Fair Oaks in Surrey Heath and Longcross in Runnymede.

There are also some types of infrastructure that due to their catchment areas of service provision, their patronage crosses administrative boundaries. These are common and examples are secondary schools, hospitals, transport and drainage. The Council is aware and works with providers and the neighbouring authorities to take that into account.

Under the Duty to Cooperate the Council has informally and formally consulted all the neighbouring authorities about the Martyrs Lane proposal. This includes Runnymede, Surrey Heath, Waverley, Guildford and Elmbridge Borough Councils. In particular, the Council has been in discussions with them about how best to quantify and address the cumulative implications of proposals within the respective boroughs that could have cross boundary significance. The neighbouring authorities have made their respective representations as part of this consultation, which the Council will take into account. The Council is also working constructively with Surrey County Council who is the education and transport provider for this area to quantify the transport and education provision needed to support the development and how they could be delivered. All other relevant infrastructure and utility providers are also consulted to help assess the infrastructure needs to support future growth. The Council is satisfied that if the site were to be safeguarded, it can be sustainably developed with the necessary infrastructure delivered to support it without undermining development viability.

- 9 Most of the land has remained untouched for many years and is wildlife rich. There are protected species such as bats, owls, nightjar and Darford warbler on the land. There has not been any formal study to assess the ecological significance of the site.

**Officer's response**

The land is not covered by any absolute environmental constraints. The constraints on the site can be fully assessed and appropriate mitigation put in place to address any potential adverse impacts. The land is not a designated Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or common land. The site would have been designated as SPA by Natural England if any presence of Darford Warbler and Nightjar were significant enough to justify designation.

The flooding issue has been addressed in Section 2 above. It is acknowledged that there is an Ancient Woodland towards the northern part of the site and this will be protected as part of any development of the site if the land were to be safeguarded. The land could be wildlife rich, and the Council will make it an essential requirement for it to be fully assessed by requesting any development proposal to be accompanied by a landscape assessment, ecological survey and tree survey to determine the levels of biodiversity and valuable landscape features on the site and for the design of any proposal to have regard to biodiversity opportunities on the site. This would include matters such as TPOs, woodland and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas. The Council will also require that the design of any development builds in wildlife features and corridors to enhance biodiversity where feasible. These requirements would apply to any of the Green Belt sites that the Council decides to safeguard.

The Core Strategy and the Development Management Policies DPD contains robust policies to make sure that important trees and biodiversity are protected as part of any future development. Particular reference is made to Policies CS7: *Biodiversity and nature conservation*, CS8: *Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas*, CS21: *Design*, CS24: *Woking's landscape and townscape* of the Core Strategy and Policy DM2: *Trees and landscaping* of the Development Management Policies DPD.

The Council accepts that it has not carried out a detailed ecological assessment of the site, and recognises the importance for doing so. However, the appropriate time to undertake such a study would be at the development management stage. The land will only be released for development as part of the review of the Core Strategy and or the Site Allocations DPD, and that will be the most appropriate time to set out the key requirements for any development to be acceptable.

Environmental organisations such as Natural England, Environment Agency and Surrey Wildlife Trust have all been consulted and their representations will be taken into account to inform decisions about the preferred approach to safeguarding and how the potential ecological integrity of the land can be protected.

- 10 The site contains an area of Ancient Woodland, which is likely to have veteran trees. In accordance with Government policy, Ancient Woodland has to be protected. A survey has to be undertaken to assess whether any further areas would not be classified as Ancient Woodland. A lot of the trees on the site are subject to TPO.

**Officer's response**

The Council is aware of the existing designated Ancient Woodland towards the northern end of the land. Should the site be safeguarded for future development needs it is not intended that this part of the land would be developed. The Council is also aware of the Government's commitment to protect Ancient Woodland and veteran trees. This is highlighted in the Housing White Paper. This particular Ancient Woodland is designated on the Council Proposals Map for protection. Policy CS7: *Biodiversity and nature conservation* of the Core Strategy seeks to protect Ancient Woodlands from any development that will be anticipated to have potentially harmful effects or lead to its loss. The nature and type of some of the surveys that will be required to accompany any development proposals are set out in Section 9 above. The surveys will make sure that those trees and other features of environmental and amenity significance are fully assessed and protected from development, where necessary.



- 11 The site will be under several flight paths due to the expansion of Heathrow and flights from Fairoaks. It will not be suitable to live under the flightpaths by reason of noise and potential accidents.

### **Officer's response**

Despite the efforts made by the Airports Commission to reduce aviation noise to and from Heathrow and the number of people that are affected, the Council is aware that aircraft noise is still a problem for some people. The recent consultation on the Heathrow Northwest runway has not indicated that any part of Woking would be significantly affected by flightpath noise<sup>1</sup> although that is not to say that there might not be some noise disturbance or annoyance to some people. It is not envisaged that noise disturbance or annoyance would be significant enough to prevent development on the site. The final flightpath for the proposed runway scheme is being subjected to more detailed design assessment and consultation as part of the development. The Council will take the opportunity to send representations when it is published if the evidence demonstrates that residents will be adversely affected. The Council has recently written to Heathrow Airport Limited reminding them of the need for the Council to be consulted on proposals at the airport.

The Government has recently published a draft Airports National Policy Statement: *new runway capacity and infrastructure at airports in the south east of England for consultation*. The policy statement sets out strict requirements to be met before expansion at the airport can be supported. This includes noise pollution. When approved, the requirements will be binding if development consent is to be granted. The Council believes the aviation noise levels will be mitigated to an acceptable level but will continue to monitor and engage with the relevant stakeholders regarding the development of the flight paths and make the necessary representation if that were not the case..

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<sup>1</sup> [www.heathrow-airport-expansion-map.co.uk/public](http://www.heathrow-airport-expansion-map.co.uk/public)

- 12 The site includes a recycling centre that already generates significant traffic. There are also social and environmental reasons for not living near a recycling centre.

**Officer's response**

The traffic implications for developing the site have been addressed in Section 3. Any detailed transport assessment will take into account background traffic generated by the existing uses on the site, including the recycling centre. Similarly, any measures of mitigation to address forecast traffic impacts will seek to address the cumulative traffic impacts generated from the entire land.

The social and environmental implications of the recycling centre will be fully assessed as part of the development management process, and appropriately mitigated. There are environmental standards for development to achieve and the Council will make sure that they are met. For example, policies DM5 to DM8 of the Development Management Policies DPD require development to be designed to avoid unacceptable impacts on the quality of life of communities from noise, light and environmental pollution. These would be considered at the Development Management stage.

- 13 Canalside Ward will be the only Ward to be significantly developed. The development of the site would require the Council to use its compulsory purchase powers to acquire land. No Government minister will approve a Compulsory Purchase Order application as there are other better options. The Council is already financially stretched. The fact the Council is focusing all its development needs at a single location will be used as a reason for a judicial review.

**Officer's response**

The spatial strategy of the Core Strategy seeks to focus most new development in the main centres which have a range of services and facilities to minimise the need to travel. The Site Allocations DPD reflects this strategy. It is also agreed that Green Belt land will be released to meet future development needs between 2022 and 2040.

For the Site Allocations DPD to be found sound, the Council has to identify the most sustainable land to meet its future development needs. This must be the most sustainable when compared with all other reasonable alternatives. A lot of studies have been undertaken to enable the Council to make an informed decision on this matter. The spatial distribution of development is therefore driven by sustainability and the overall spatial strategy for the borough and not by Ward boundaries. The Council is satisfied that there would be no basis for a judicial review solely on the grounds that it had identified a single site (rather than multiple sites) to meet its future development needs.

Compulsory purchase powers are powers that the Council will only use as a last option when all avenues for negotiation have failed. Nevertheless, it is a power that the Council possesses which is backed by legislation and would be used if it is deemed necessary and justified.

- 14 The make up of the LDF Working Group is unrepresentative. The councillors on the Working Group are only from the south of the borough and are biased towards certain areas. The Group should be re-formed to make it much more representative. The decision of the Group was based on 'not in my backyard' mentality.

**Officer's response**

The Council has a laid down procedure for selecting Members to serve on Working Groups. This has been followed in selecting the Members of the Local Development Framework Working Group. In this regard, there is no intention of re-constituting the membership of the Group as a result of this particular representation. It is important to emphasise that the decision to consult on the possibility of safeguarding the land east of Martyrs Lane was made by a vote of Full Council and not by the LDF Working Group. As an advisory Group, the Working Group appropriately carried its duties by making recommendations to Council. The Group gave clear and specific reasons for its recommendation. The Council took them into account before coming to its decision to consult on the land east of Martyrs Lane. All Members of the Council will once again have the opportunity to consider the representations to this consultation and decide which overall strategy they wish to publish for Regulation 19 consultation and submit to the Secretary of State for examination. For information the membership of the Working Group has changed since the publication of the DPD for Regulation 18 consultation. This is not due to this representation but mainly as a result of the local elections and the consequent selection of members to serve on various committees and Working Groups.

- 15 Many parts of the land will not be available for development. The owners of the New Zealand Golf Course have openly confirmed that their land will not be available for development as envisaged by the Council. Potentially, the land in the ownership of McLaren will also not be available for the proposed development. The Council via a Councillor has stated that the whole proposal is a waste of time, effort and public money.

### **Officer's response**

It was appropriate and proper for the Council to carry out the consultation exercise. National planning policy requires an assessment of all reasonable alternatives before preferred options are identified. The changing circumstances regarding the planning status of the McLaren site post dates the Regulation 18 consultation of the draft Site Allocations DPD and justifies the consultation to enable that option to be tested. The availability of land is a significant consideration but not the only consideration regarding the allocation of land. The overriding consideration in this regard is to identify the most sustainable land when compared against all other reasonable alternatives. The information that is gathered from the representations is useful evidence to inform the Council's decision on the matter. The consultation exercise is therefore not a waste of time, effort or public money, and certainly the Council has not said so through any Councillor.

Availability of land is a significant material consideration for the Council to take into account in deciding its preferred approach to safeguarding for the purposes of the Regulation 19 consultation. The land east of Martyrs Lane is in multiple ownership, and the New Zealand Golf Course and McLaren collectively owns a significant proportion of the land.

Paragraph 182 of the NPPF deals with examination of local plans. It requires the Council to only submit a plan for examination which it considers sound. Amongst other things, to be sound, the plan:

- Should be deliverable over its period;
- Should be the most appropriate strategy when compared against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence.

Footnote 11 of the NPPF provides clarity on what a deliverable site is. To be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be available with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable. Whilst five years is emphasised in the footnote, its relevance should be seen in the context of the details of the representations received from the owners of the land.

The New Zealand Golf Course has written to the Council and has made formal representation as part of the consultation to confirm that the part of the land that is in its ownership will not be made available now, in the future and never to meet future development needs as envisaged in the consultation document. In this regard, there is no expectation for a change in their position within and beyond

five years. The representations from the New Zealand Golf Course are addressed in full separately.

McLaren Technologies Group Limited has also made representations. Whilst it would generally support in principle the release of the land from the Green Belt, it would only allow its land holding to be used as a strategic employment site to support its own future expansion programme. McLaren will also not allow its land to be used as envisaged in the consultation. If the Council were to decide not to release the land east of Martyrs Lane from the Green Belt, McLaren have provided reasons why its land should be designated as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt. The representations from McLaren has been addressed in full separately.

The lack of availability of the above sites could cast doubt on the deliverability of the land if it is safeguarded. To put it into context, assuming the two sites will not be available to meet future development needs and the Surrey County Council's Waste Safeguarded Site is also not available, the residual land will only deliver about 300 dwellings (at 30 dph) as against the 1,200 dwellings that the Council wish to safeguard land. If the Waste Safeguarded Site is made available, there will be sufficient land to enable the delivery of about 600 dwellings at the same density. This is still significantly short of what is needed. Importantly, the Council has to make sure that any land that it safeguards would not lead to an isolated development within the Green Belt. The development of the land without the Golf Course and the McLaren site could lead to an isolated development in the Green Belt and/or in the countryside.

It is emphasised that the lack of availability of the two sites does not entirely rule out the development of the land or any part of it. The Council can bring forward the development of the land by using its Compulsory Purchase Powers. This is something that Members may wish to consider if it concludes that the land is the most sustainable when compared with the original six safeguarded sites.

16 The Council has failed to comply with the requirements of its own Natural Woking Strategy. The Strategy states that the Council will:

- Identify measures to affect the recovery of specific priority wildlife species population, by reducing habitat fragmentation and ensuring their favourable condition.
- Protect and, where possible, enhance designated sites, protected and priority species, and wildlife in the wider environment. Ensure ecologically important green spaces, routes and nature reserves are well managed, including supporting biodiversity and improving connectivity.
- Reduce flood risk to people, wildlife and property in the borough through flood risk management and by identifying and bringing forward opportunities for Flood Alleviation Schemes.
- Improve the water quality and ecology of the main channels and their tributaries in the borough: the River Wey, Hoe Stream, the Basingstoke canal, River Bourne and the Wey Navigation.

The Council has gone against the above.

#### **Officer's response**

It is not envisaged that the development of the site if it is safeguarded would be contrary to the provisions of the Natural Woking Strategy. The site can be developed without compromising the nearby Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Its safeguarding would not be contrary to Policies NRM6 of the South East Plan and CS8: *Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Areas* of the Core Strategy if sufficient SANGs could be identified to support the development and a contribution is made towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring. Any mitigation will also take into account the proximity of the site to the designated SPA. The Core Strategy has robust policies to make sure that harm to the SPA as a result of development is avoided, and this will apply to any future proposal for development. Policy CS7: *Biodiversity and nature conservation* is sufficiently robust to protect the ecological integrity of the site if it were to be developed. There are no absolute environmental constraints on the site. However, the Council agrees that the development of the site must be informed by a detailed ecological assessment, and this will be made a key requirement for the development of the site to be acceptable. The consultation statement makes it clear that if the land is to be safeguarded, development will be directed to the part of the land in Flood Zone 1 (about 91.53% of the site) where it is acceptable for development to occur. The Council is aware that the northern part of the site is in Flood Zones 2 and 3 but has always stressed that it is included in the proposal to endure a defensible boundary of the Green Belt. The development of the site would include measures such as SUDs to minimise surface run off and incidental flooding. Policy CS9: *Flooding and water management* of the Core Strategy will apply to any development of the site to make sure that the development of the site does not exacerbate flood risk elsewhere. There is no evidence to suggest that the development of the site will compromise water quality. Based on the above, the Council is satisfied that the site could be developed to be in conformity with the Natural Woking Strategy.

- 17 The Council's landscape assessment undertaken by Hankinson Duckett Associates has concluded that the site is of critical importance to the purposes of the Green Belt by helping to prevent urban sprawl and an encroachment into the countryside. The site is also of critical importance to the landscape character of the wider area. Potential development of the site would need to be of the entire site or Parcel B (the Golf Course) alone. Parcel A, even with the proposed McLaren extension revoked would be too isolated to be a standalone development. Parcel B is not available, and without it there will not be a defensible boundary. Officers and independent experts have all concluded that the land east of Martyrs Lane is not suitable for future development.

**Officer's response**

This matter has been comprehensively addressed in 1 above. In summary, Officers have acknowledged the conclusions of the Hankinson Duckett's report and agree that the development of the site would lead to urban sprawl and an incursion of into the Green Belt, and this is one of a number of material considerations that the Council has to take into account in making its decisions about the preferred approach to safeguarding. Officers have also noted the conclusion of the report regarding the contribution that site makes to the overall landscape character of the area and agree with the representation. At this stage, the consultation relates to the entire red-line area as defined in the consultation document. The master planning of the site will determine which parts of the site would be used for what purpose. The availability of the Golf Course has been addressed in 15 above.



## Other issues

- New Zealand Golf Club established in 1895 is in top 100 golf courses in the UK -  
*The information is noted.*
- Area has very poor mobile connectivity.  
*The Council will work with providers to improve mobile connectivity in relevant parts of the borough. The Development Management Policies DPD includes a policy to help improve telecommunication in the area.*
- Area has poor broadband connectivity –  
*Surrey Council has a programme to roll out super broadband across Surrey.*
- Would change the aspects of Woking Borough forever.  
*Comment noted. If safeguarded, the site will enable the provision of much needed homes to meet the needs of the community. The Council will make sure that the adverse impacts of any development is minimised, including making sure that the design of the development does not significantly detract from the general character of the area.*
- This would have major impact on neighbouring boroughs.  
*The Council is working with neighbouring authorities under the duty to cooperate to address the cross boundary implications for developing the site.*