



# **Woking Core Strategy EiP**

## **Statement on Matter 1 – Managing Growth**

**Prepared on behalf of:**

**The Burhill Group Ltd (Respondent No. 009)**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared on behalf of the Burhill Group Ltd in amplification of their objections made to the Submission Draft Core Strategy. This Statement relates specifically to Matter 1 and the issue of whether the Core Strategy represents a coherent and effective approach to meeting the Borough's land use and development requirements referred to in Sections 3 and 4 of the Core Strategy.
- 1.2 This Statement should be read alongside those made by the Burhill Group Ltd on Matters 2 (Natural Environment) and 7 (Housing).
- 1.3 Burhill Group Ltd is the owner of the Pyrford Estate, which consists of circa 1,000 acres of land located between Old Woking to the west, Pyrford to the north east, and the River Wey to the south. There are varying types and quality of arable land, woodland and open land within the Estate. There are also a large number of existing buildings located throughout the Estate, including the Hoebridge Golf Centre, a pay and play course open to the public.
- 1.4 The Burhill Group Ltd understand that this Examination is not concerned with evaluating the suitability or otherwise of land within the Green Belt, which is for consideration through the Green Belt review in 2016/2017.

## 2. Matter 1 – Managing Growth

2.1 The Submission Draft Core Strategy has been prepared on the basis that it cannot be clear on where a substantial proportion of the required development will be accommodated. This lack of clarity relates to the last five years of the Plan period, and means that the Core Strategy does not fully meet the requirements of national planning guidance in PPS3 (paragraphs 7 and 55).

### **Issue 26 - Are development densities of 200 dwellings per hectare (dph) realistic and supported by the evidence base?**

2.2 With regard to this issue, and while on the basis of the current draft Core Strategy there will be a need to define location(s) to accommodate around 11% of the Borough's housing requirement to 2027, we consider that the Strategy is over-reliant on Woking town centre to deliver almost 50% of the Borough's overall housing requirement.

2.3 As is stated in Policy CS10, the provision of circa 2,300 new homes within the town centre equates to development at a density of at least 200 dwellings per hectare (dph). Developing at such a density means that the type of residential accommodation will be dominated by flats, and, if delivered, would create a significant concentration of relatively small new homes within an urban environment that can only cater to certain parts of the Borough's housing demand and need. The flaw in this spatial development strategy is acknowledged implicitly in Policy CS6 where it states that a Green Belt review is needed to allow land to be released for family housing because developing flats at high density in the town centre will not meet the need for this type of housing.

2.4 As is well documented elsewhere, the focus on delivering relatively dense residential development over the past decade has led to a surplus of such stock in many places, and the Government has taken steps to facilitate a better balance of new housing stock by removing the minimum density of 30dph that was included within PPS3.

2.5 The evidence base behind the Core Strategy (West Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2009) (WSSHMA) notes that Woking Borough has a higher proportion of flats than the national average<sup>1</sup>. The strategy of building more flats will exacerbate this over-provision until family housing is built at the end of the Plan period.

2.6 Table S10 of the WSSHMA acknowledges that the housing stock across the Study Area contains a large proportion of detached properties and that some rebalancing of the stock towards smaller, terraced and semi-detached properties could be encouraged, although it also notes that this would need to be done within strict limits given the character of the Study Area<sup>2</sup>.

2.7 Although Woking town centre has seen some relatively dense development within it over the past decade, we do not consider that there will be the levels of demand for smaller flatted units that would be required to sustain delivery of 2,300 new homes within the town centre. In our view this is unrealistic and results in a Core Strategy that is likely to prove ineffective in planning for the Borough's housing requirements over the Plan period.

2.8 With regard to growth in the housing needs of elderly people, we would underline the conclusions of the Housing Needs and Market Assessment Survey for Woking (Fordhams Research 2009) which found that almost a quarter of all households in the Borough contain only 'older people' (men aged 65+ and women 60+). This equates to over 9,000 households where the inhabitants are continuing to live either unassisted or with visits from family or friends/care workers to support their home life.

<sup>1</sup> West Surrey SHMA Pg.8 Figure S3 Dwelling Types (Fordhams Research 2009)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid Pg. 24 Figure S10 Key Themes and Drivers

- 2.9 This finding serves to highlight the significant level of demand for care home facilities, and underlines the need for the Borough Council to be proactive in allocating appropriate sites for new care home/care village facilities over the Plan period. This is a point that we return to in our Statement on Matter 7.
- 2.10 **With regard to the soundness of the Core Strategy, we remain unconvinced that the proposal to accommodate almost 50% of the Borough's housing requirement within the town centre is an effective strategy for meeting the Borough's housing demand and need.**
- 2.11 **Less emphasis should be placed on high density urban housing and more on achieving a balance of house types, in particular family housing throughout the Plan period, and not just in the period 2022/2027. Such a shift is in our view inevitable over time, as development will not come forward at the required density or rate, and simply underlines the urgent need to undertake a comprehensive Green Belt review now to allow land to meet the need for family housing to be met.**