

## **Regulation 30(d)(iii): Summary of the main issues raised by the representations made pursuant to Regulation 25**

### **Appendix 3b – Officer summary of the key issues raised during the Issues and Options Consultation**

#### **1. Concern about further growth and its impact on the attractiveness of the Borough**

A number of people have expressed concern about the incremental growth of the Borough, in particular, significant growth in housing provision. It is claimed that the vision of the Core Strategy unnecessarily promotes growth that is not needed in the Borough. Others feel that the Borough is already overdeveloped and this is having adverse impacts on the attractiveness of the Borough. Further growth, it is claimed, would exacerbate this trend. The need for significant provision of affordable housing has also been questioned.

These concerns strike at the heart of the requirements of the Core Strategy. For example, Planning Policy Statement 3 requires the Council to make provision for a rolling stock of five year housing land supply. To accept the case made by some of the respondents, the Council will need to demonstrate with robust evidence that there is no need for further housing development in the Borough up till 2026. No such evidence has been provided to back the claims.

Contrary to the comments expressed above, there is enough evidence to support the need for growth in the Borough. The population of the Borough is projected to increase from 92,200 (2008) to 94,488 by 2026. Within this population growth are changing dynamics in household formation that are going to have implications for the provision of services and the nature and types of housing. For example, the rate of growth of the elderly population is increasing at a higher rate than other cohort groups and the Core Strategy will have to be sensitive to this evidence by addressing the needs of the elderly. There is also evidence through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) of significant unmet need for affordable housing. Furthermore, the South East Plan requires the Council to make provision for 5840 net additional dwellings between 2006 and 2026. The Employment Land Review carried out by the Council identifies a projected need for office, retail and industrial development in the Borough. Based on this evidence it is clear that growth is needed and can be justified and the Core Strategy should provide the necessary framework to enable that to be delivered.

However, it is important that any further development is carefully controlled to ensure that it is in at sustainable locations and well integrated into the character of the area. In future, the Council may wish to continue to invest in design expertise to ensure that development is of high quality and designed to enhance the character of the area. This will assist with the delivery of the Core Strategy.

#### **2. There should be no encroachment of development into the Green Belt**

Potential encroachment of development into the Green Belt has been a source of concern for many respondents. The protection of the Green Belt at all cost is a view expressed by many.

The Core Strategy will have an overriding objective to protect the integrity of

the Green Belt. The South East Plan allows scope for the selective review of the Green Belt Boundary to the south of the Borough (Policy SP5 of the South East Plan). Accordingly, a Green Belt Study is presently being carried out to determine whether there are any parts of it that does not contribute to its overall objectives and if when released for development will not significantly undermine its overall integrity. It is expected that this study will be completed by the end of January. The outcome of the study will inform decisions about whether there is a case for the review of the Green Belt boundary. Furthermore, Members should be aware that the Green Belt is protected by national planning policy and PPG2 includes robust policies to ensure its protection. Officers are therefore fully aware that the Core Strategy will be judged to be unsound if it threatens the objectives of the Green Belt without clear evidence to justify any such action.

If parts of the Green Belt were to be released for development, majority of respondents (about 59%) would prefer the release of smaller parcels for development to the release of one large parcel. This information will be taken into account if the Green Belt boundary will have to be reviewed in the next stages of Core Strategy.

**3. Concern over the impact of development on existing infrastructure**

Concern has been raised by a number of respondents that development would impact negatively on the existing infrastructure network and that additional infrastructure would be required to support new development.

It is essential that the necessary social, physical and green infrastructure is put in place to support the level of growth proposed through the Core Strategy. The Council is required to demonstrate how this will be achieved in order that the Core Strategy is considered sound upon Examination. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to support the LDF (and any future planning obligations tariff/ Community Infrastructure Levy) is currently being prepared. The first stage in preparing the IDP is to establish the existing capacity of infrastructure services and facilities and to predict the likely impact of development and population changes on that infrastructure. Work on the IDP is due to complete in May 2010. Officers will report on progress of the study and on any developments on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) at the next meeting of the Working Group. The mechanism for securing developer contributions towards infrastructure provision will be decided when the Government's detailed proposals for the introduction of the CIL are known in April 2010.

**4. Climate Change**

Majority of respondents would like the theme of climate change to run through the entire policy framework of the Core Strategy. In particular, they would like the Core Strategy to set high standards of design and sustainable construction.

The need to minimise the impacts of the policies and proposals of the Local Development Framework on climate change is a key objective of national, regional and local planning policy. Woking Borough Council has long been committed to protecting the environment and its commitment to tackling climate change was recently recognised by the Government when the Council was awarded the Beacon Award for Tackling Climate Change (2008 - 2009). The Core Strategy will seek to ensure that sustainability is at the heart of its vision to provide a sense of focus for its policies and proposals. High standards for the sustainable design and construction of development and proposals to maximise efficient use of energy and reduction of carbon dioxide emissions will

be included in the Core Strategy. However, such standards will have to be justified by robust evidence base and the Council is carrying out the necessary studies to provide that. The outcome of the studies will be used to inform the preferred options of the Core Strategy.