

## **Woking Borough Council Core Strategy Examination – Response to Inspector Note ID/5 - Heritage matters**

In his continuous review of the submitted Core Strategy (CS) and evidence, the Inspector has raised the following concern about heritage matters, which he would like the Council to respond:

‘In relation to heritage matters, the evidence base appears not to be particularly extensive. The Inspector is interested in how the CS follows the advice of PPS5 upon this subject and would be grateful for clarification upon this matter; this could also take the form of a short topic statement and a SOCG with English Heritage’.

### **Woking Borough Council’s Response**

#### **Evidence base to support heritage matters of the Core Strategy**

National Planning Policy on heritage matters is set out in Planning Policy Statement 5 – Planning for the Historic Environment (CD/67). It defines heritage assets as ‘a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated assets and assets identified by the local planning authority during the process of decision-making or through the plan-making process (including listing).

Designated heritage assets are a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated as such under the relevant legislation.

The Council has a comprehensive evidence base on:

- Listed buildings;
- Locally listed buildings;
- Conservation areas;
- Ancient Monuments; and
- Historic Gardens and landscape;
- Historic Environment Record (provided by Surrey County Council).

This list comprises the relevant heritage assets of the Borough.

The Council had considered putting the details of the entire list of the evidence base as an Appendix to the Core Strategy, but decided that as some of them could change over time, it would be effective that this should remain a separate document to allow scope for regular updates to be made. To emphasise the extent of the evidence base that has informed the Core Strategy and in response to the Inspector’s concern, it has been agreed with English Heritage to add the above list of evidence in the evidence base box of Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy Publication Document as a proposed change. This proposed change is supported by the Statement of Common Ground agreed between Woking Borough Council and English Heritage. The Statement of Common Ground is a separate document (WBC/10), but is also attached to this topic statement. The Inspector’s attention is drawn to the fact that the Heritage of Woking – An Historic Conservation Compendium, which is part of the evidence base submitted to the Secretary of State and also on the Core Document list (CD/18) contains details of the entire evidence base. This information is already in the public domain on the Council’s website ([www.woking.gov.uk](http://www.woking.gov.uk)).

The Council has taken a proactive approach to heritage matters by carrying out a Character Assessment of the Borough. This is part of the evidence base to support the Core Strategy and expands further on understanding of the historic environment of the Borough beyond just designated areas. This proactive approach taken by the Council has made a significant contribution to ensuring that the heritage assets of the Borough, including Urban Areas of Special Residential Character are enhanced as a result of development, wherever that development happens to be.

The Council has agreed with English Heritage to take a proactive approach outside the Core Strategy process for assessing the condition of its heritage assets by survey on a rolling programme. This commitment is covered in the Statement of Common Ground and suggested as a proposed change to Policy CS20.

The Council and the general public also has access to Historic Environment Record provided by Surrey County Council. Reference to this is also proposed to be added to the list of evidence base.

Based on the above, the Council is satisfied that the Core Strategy is informed by adequate evidence base on heritage matters.

#### **How the Core Strategy follows advice of PPS5**

Policy CS20: Heritage and conservation of the Core Strategy deals with heritage matters. The policy broadly follows the requirements of national policy as set out in Planning Policy Statement 5.

The Government's overarching aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations. In line with this aim, PPS5 require local authorities to ensure that they have evidence about the historic environment and heritage assets in their area and that this is publicly documented, a positive and proactive strategies for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment and identify opportunities to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change when devising policies and making decisions about heritage assets.

Policy CS20 is informed by comprehensive lists of evidence base as demonstrated above. The policy is also robust and sufficiently comprehensively to conserve, protect and enhance the identified heritage assets of the area, including assets of local historic significance. In particular, it encourages new development to make a positive contribution to the character, distinctiveness and significance of the historic environment.

It has been agreed with English Heritage that Policy CS20 will benefit by including a sentence to ensure that the Council works proactively with all stakeholders to ensure the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the historic environment, including identifying opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change where that will not harm the integrity of the heritage asset. This proposed addition to the policy is set out in the Statement of Common Ground agreed between the Council and English Heritage (WBC/10).

A further proposed change is recommended to remove the words 'where appropriate' from the first sentence of the second paragraph of Policy CS20 as the enhancement of the historic environment is not a choice but necessary.

## **WBC/7**

Subject to the above proposed changes agreed with English Heritage, the Council is satisfied that the Core Strategy follows the advice of PPS5. For the avoidance of doubt, the proposed changes are listed below:

1. The words 'where appropriate' should be deleted from the first sentence of the second paragraph of the policy box of Policy CS20;
2. The following should be added to the evidence base box of Policy CS20:
  - List of Ancient Monuments.
  - List of Conservation Areas.
  - List of Listed Buildings.
  - List of Locally Listed Buildings.
  - List of Historic Gardens and Landscapes.
  - Historic Environment Record (provided by Surrey County Council).
3. The following sentence should be added to the policy box of Policy CS20 - 'the Council will work proactively with all stakeholders to ensure the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the historic environment, including identifying opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change where that will not harm the integrity of the heritage asset.'

The Inspector's attention is drawn to the fact that PPS 5 includes a number of development management policies that are material considerations for planning decisions. It is not intended that these are repeated in the Core Strategy.