

Site Allocations DPD Main Modifications Consultation Analysis

Introduction

Please note that this is a summary of the over 1000 pages included in the Development Plan Document (DPD) and the current modifications that the council list, as such the details will be a little short for most of these comments and if there is something that interests you it would be best to look into the relevant document. In addition it is probably best to have a look at the map and their inserts first, you can go to the relevant parts of the council website by following the links below. On these maps the sites that are planned to be developed in the town are surrounded by red dotted lines, while the planned site in designated greenbelt space has thick(ish) vertical green bars on it. There are a number of different types of sites listed on the map so it does look rather confusing, but those two types of site are the main ones of interest here.

Main map:

<https://www.woking2027.info/allocations/sadpdexam/mmconsultation/modifiedpropmap>

Map inserts:

<https://www.woking2027.info/allocations/sadpdexam/mmconsultation/modpropmapinsets>

The DPD is really a collection of documents covering the general plans for building work over the next few years in Woking. Work began on it in 2018 and the council started consulting the public in 2019. The work they are currently consulting the public on is the modifications to the plans following previous public comments and the work of various analysts. As such we may comment on documents listed under “Consultation Documents” here (<https://www.woking2027.info/allocations/sadpdexam/mmconsultation>) but not the rest of the documents. You can also download the relevant forms to pass comments on the above page as well as instructions on sending in your comments about the DPD. They do state that if an issue has already been raised it doesn't need to be raised again.

Due to COVID and the rules that have been put in place to deal with it councils across the UK are expected to put documents online for public review rather than making hard copies available. If residents without internet access want to review those documents there should be methods that allow them to do that. As such WBC has made a commitment to provide alternative ways for people to access and make comments on the documents including sending out copies via CD or USB stick when a request is made. Previous consultations may be flagged

Topic Paper concerning High Court judgments and ONS Projections

This is an example of a document that will not be changed as a result of comments made because it is there mainly as information. It concerns how both a High Court judgement (Aireborough Neighbourhood Development Forum v Leeds City Council (2020)) and the Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2018 household projections are related to the DPD.

The summary of the legal ruling here is that there must be reasons that are both sufficient and clear to build on greenbelt land. In the case of Leeds City Council it was found that the planning work did not give good enough reasons so the court went against the council in that instance. In comparison the inspector who is working with Woking Borough Council (WBC) states that the estimates for land needed due to housing requirements WBC are using were arrived at carefully and had not been changed by any other work since. These estimates and difficulty finding space for the homes it implies are needed that the council is using a special circumstances justification to use green belt land to build around 550 homes (flats, houses etc.).

With regards to the 2018 ONS projections the inspector states that these do not noticeably change the estimates that WBC are using in their work.

The Habitats Regulations Assessment Addendum

This document lists nearly 300 changes to the council's plans and notes that the vast majority of these do not have an effect that is large enough to be of serious concern. That said they do discuss they flag 9 of these for further analysis because they change the number of houses and flats. The overall change to the number of dwellings is 327 and this results in the requirement of more land used as a suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG). How this SANG space is assigned is discussed for a while and the proposed plot in Brookwood Farm is mentioned as is the council plans to designate further spaces over the next few years and an in principle agreement with the Horsell Common Preservation Society. However the majority of the SANG area requirements appear to be fulfilled using the sites that are already assigned that status but are not at capacity according to the calculation that is used to talk about their use.

The effects on air quality are discussed as well. This analysis essentially says that there will be some effects on air quality but that they should be negligible and that given the rate air quality is improving currently this shouldn't cause any issues for residents or wildlife.

We would also like to point out that this analysis may already be slightly out of date as it included work near Woking Football Club which has now been put on hold, however this would only have contributed a relatively small number of dwellings so this probably won't significantly change the requirements.

Summary of greenbelt plans

The map specifies a large number of areas in the greenbelt, some of these are only to go over what those areas are. We will talk about the references used on the map where appropriate.

It appears that the only land that is still classified as greenbelt that will be released for development is around half a mile east of Old Woking and at the end of Carters Lane. A large part of this land has actually already been built on, so in that respect we are relatively happy with the council's decision. However some of that site goes into an area that has been designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance and we do question to the use of that part of the land. The other issues with this plot of land is that it is very close to the Hoe Stream so we would question like to know about the chances of it being affected by flooding and the land is also very close to some areas of "High Archaeological Potential"

Two extremely small plots of land in Sutton Green and Mayford have been redefined, going from green belt to urban land. These areas however have all been built on already and it appears that the original definition as greenbelt may be a mistake. It is also unclear if the council intends to build there or if this is merely redefining the land. In a similar issue An area in West Byfleet near the junior & infant school has been changed from an open area serving the school to an urban open area. It appears that this is just a change of designation and not an indication that it will be built on.

Sites GB4, GB5 and GB8 are safeguarded sites that appear to not be being built on.

GB7 on the map specifies a site which is going to be built on and this area includes the Hoe Valley School. Including the school in the site for development appears to be an admin issue as they plan to build on the fields around it. It is also explained that there are some trees around the site that have Tree Protection Orders on them, but the analysis is that this will not have much effect on any building works there.

GB9 and GB9A refer to areas near West Byfleet that include fields and significant amounts of woodland. We are disappointed that this area has been relabelled as non-greenbelt land, it is probably worth making clear that this area is being made available using the same special circumstances justification mentioned in earlier. It is also worth noting that the council has made a commitment to planting trees over the coming years and this effort is going to be made more difficult if they cut down these woodlands.

GB13 represents a 1.2 ha SANG site at Brookwood Farm that we mentioned earlier and will not be built on. There are a number of other SANG sites including GB15, GB16 (both just south of Old Woking) and GB12 (between the M25 and West Byfleet)

GB17 represents an area that includes Woking Palace. It is currently treated as an area of historical

importance, but this might change as there is going to be a Heritage Brief prepared on the site.

Summary of urban development plans

There is an extremely large number of sites for development in urban areas. Here we will try to give a summary of some of the main sites of interest. Please note that the majority of the urban sites are in Woking town centre and these are too numerous to go through in detail, however in the map inserts sheet the various planned sites are shown. The developments going up in the town centre are mostly not shown as planned areas on this map, most of these are in the solid blue area (primary shopping frontage). Work has however started on site UA10.

UA1 refers to plans to redevelop an area that includes the Byfleet library to increase housing and build a new library.

UA20 and UA21 refers to plans to build a number of homes in what are currently gardens in the Barnsbury estate. This suggestion seems like an unpleasant and unfair to treat residents of the estate.

We are relatively pleased with the plans regarding UA24 and UA26 as these are redevelopment plans in the Sheerwater area that are intended to include to improve the area for residents and, according to the plans, should be backed up by public transport plans to reduce car use in that area.

UA31 is the plot of land currently used as a car park off Oriental Road. This is planned to be turned into open spaces and new housing for around 250 families.

UA38 - UA41 are areas of West Byfleet that are due to be redeveloped. UA40 is a particularly important part of this as it covers large parts of the centre of West Byfleet near the station and it is intended to change the supermarket and other offices as well as add housing.

UA42 refers to the work that was planned on Woking Football club. It is our understanding that this has now been put off so we are not sure why this is still included in the map and plans.