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16th July 2015

Dear Mr Amoaka

Re: Draft Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and its accompanying Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report and Habitats Regulations Assessment.

In response to your letter of the 16th June 2015 in connection with the above draft report I am pleased to provide herewith my comments for your consideration.

It would be impossible for me to provide my comments on all aspects of the Draft DPD document and associated support documents of the SA, TAA, WGBR and HS so I have focussed my attention on an issue that I have written on before and that is the issue of housing within the Borough and the loss of green belt to facilitate this anticipated need.

In this respect I have made no distinction between residential, low cost, social or Traveller Accommodation.

The Draft DPD proposals have identified numerous potential sites in and around the Borough, located on brown field and urban sites; however the majority are contained within the existing greenbelt.

Whilst appreciating that over the last 20 years or more Woking Borough has endeavoured to fulfil the need for additional housing using the existing stock of brownfield, derelict or unused sites and that the majority of such sites have now been developed there is a perception that greater and greater numbers of new housing is required (to compete with the surrounding Boroughs of Guildford and Kingston – as identified in section 7.1.2 to 7.1.4 of the Sustainability Appraisal Report dated July 2011) and that the only option remaining is to absorb areas of greenbelt into the Urban environment. In the late 60's and 70's this was known as 'Urban Sprawl' a term which I thought would never be used again as Local Authorities and Planning Departments became more conscious of the impact of such actions.

The DPD includes plans for great swathes of Greenbelt to be lost to the South of Woking not only losing the natural environment and but also merging villages into a central urbanisation, the loss of

identity, facilities and amenity for affected residents and many others in the surrounding areas within the Borough would be a major issue and one that could not be reversed.

Likewise the loss of heathland, farmland and woods impacting on the attenuation of surface water and affecting the flood plain would be considerable.

In some instances barely only 1 field or heathland area exists to separate one Ward/Village from each other, the loss would be unacceptable.

I can see no justification in the current trend of exchanging one area of greenery for another (offsetting) just to enable developers the opportunity to exploit significant revenue from preferred locations. Indeed as a Construction Estimator of 38 years I am well aware of a developers requirements perhaps more so than others.

Picking and choosing which parts of the green belt are acceptable to lose is like putting diesel fuel in your petrol car – it will work for a while and then it simply will not work at-all.

I have noted that at present there appears to be an even distribution of electorate within the wards and an overdevelopment to South of Woking would upset this balance and add an undue strain on the existing infrastructure and services. I refer to the 'Analysis of the Appraisal' of the 'Sustainability Appraisal Report' which identifies this aspect and warns about the dangers and disastrous effect of an overdevelopment of Woking Borough.

I appreciate that Special Circumstances will exist for the development of additional schools, and such facilities, and that the only deliverable areas for these are likely to be on the green belt, however duplications such as additional sports facilities are not required since the Borough is well served already and additional facilities will only serve to reduce / undermine the usage of existing sites, such additional facilities should be avoided.

Ultimately I do not believe that the need for any amount of additional residents and their associated accommodation within the Borough should be outweighed against the needs and requirements of the existing 100,000 residents who currently enjoy living and/or working in and around the Borough's 60% greenbelt. The DPD does not address this depletion in any aspect.

The Woking Core Strategy vision to be achieved by 2027 states (extracted from section 15.2 of the SA):-

Woking will be a Borough of high environmental quality and standards where people choose to live, work and visit, an exemplar in the achievement of sustainable growth.

Woking will be a regional focus of economic prosperity centred on a vibrant, enhanced town centre that provides a good range of quality shops, jobs, cultural facilities, services and infrastructure to cater for the Borough's needs, surrounded by distinct communities anchored by attractive district and local centres providing convenient access to everyday shops, services and local community facilities.

Woking is a sustainable community where the benefits of growth and prosperity are shared throughout the Borough without pockets of deprivation. New development in the Borough will be well designed to respect the character of the area. New housing development will help meet the needs of all sections

of the community.

A green Borough where people will have easy access to good quality green spaces and infrastructure for recreation and leisure.

The Borough will have a balanced and sustainable multi modal transport system that links homes, jobs and key services and by doing so improves the overall health and well-being of all residents.

The above statements are certainly true now – but if the DPD moves forward in its current direction then these statements are certainly at risk for being inaccurate.

In conclusion I believe that the draft DPD document goes too far in addressing sites for future developments, that far more effort should be implemented to make better use of existing urban, brownfield, derelict and underused areas and developments within the greenbelt should only occur where 'extremely' special circumstances exist and then only permitted in those areas where engulfment does not take place.

It would be my intention to submit separately using the Regulation 18 consultation questionnaire my additional comments regarding specific sites detailed within the draft DPD document.

Trusting the above comments assist you in the further development of the Draft DPD Document.

Yours sincerely

Mr Glenn Sawyer