

**Woking Local Development Framework
Core Strategy Issues and Options Workshop**

19th July 2005

HG Wells Conference Centre



INTRODUCTION

This report is a documentation of the views and ideas that were expressed during the public workshop that was held on the 19th July 2005 to help in the development of Woking's Local Development Framework Core Strategy document.

The group was given a presentation on the four options for development and how these related to the first stage of engagement which took place last year.

Participants were then split into groups and the workshop took the following format:

Session 1

Detailed discussions were had on each element of the options:

- Housing
- Transport
- Retail
- Economy
- Sustainability and the natural and built environment

Session 2

Participants were able to discuss each option as a whole

Session 3

Participants voted on their preferred option.

SESSION 1

Discussions on each element of the options:

HOUSING

- A. New apartments at high density in and around Woking Town Centre
- B. Apartments and houses on former office / industrial sites and waste land
- C. Redevelopment of existing houses and their gardens to provide more houses / apartments
- D. Houses/apartments on the existing "safeguarded long-term development sites" specifically to provide affordable family housing.

Sustainability Issues

- Promote 'Bedzed' type development – highly sustainable
- Importance of sustainability

Affordability

- Balance and range of housing stock important (e.g. price)
- Need affordable family accommodation (not just apartments)
- Remind people all the time that affordable housing is a priority
- Affordable place to live not just the cost of houses
- Provide housing for key workers
- How do you keep affordable housing affordable?
- 3 types of affordable-
 1. Just cannot afford to buy
 2. Need help to start
 3. Competitive housing matches cost in other parts of country

Community cohesion

- No ghettos
- Try to maintain communities (Council Tax)

Type of Dwelling Provision

- Not too many apartments
- Not to rush into apartments until we have learned lessons
- West Byfleet cannot take large apartment developments in the centre
- Prefer Woking town centre development rather than green space but need to be well planned and high quality – fit for purpose

Other comments

- If all district had higher housing numbers – impact on regional infrastructure?
- Long term future of 'buy to let' e.g. as an investment
- Brookwood site might be better than Moor Lane
- Car parking allocation to apartments is not a reality
- All dwellings should have at least one off-street parking space
- Encourage / incentive to share car parking
- Risk of overdevelopment? Call on halt

TRANSPORT

The possible elements include:

- A. Increases in road capacity for private cars on major roads in and around Woking Town Centre and major business areas
- B. Bus lanes on major roads in and around Woking Town Centre and major business areas
- C. Improved waiting areas and interchange facilities for bus and train users
- D. Additional safe cycle routes
- E. Additional safe walking routes
- F. Providing park and ride sites with public transport into Woking Town Centre

Use of the car

- Still strong demand for car - inadequate on-site parking provision
- Lack of alternative to the car – need to put public transport alternatives in place first
- Alternatives to the car need to be cost effective
- Alternative to car – car pool, car sharing, community mini buses
- Parents - school parking – use decriminalised parking enforcement (400m no parking zone)
- Increase parking standards

Alternatives to the car

- Will people change the mode of transport unless they have to?
- Public transport is not just trains and buses - needs to be flexible (e.g. taxis, car clubs)
- More subsidised travel for young and elderly
- Improved interchange facility - creating efficient hub
- Park and ride will only be used if easier than current alternatives; geography of Woking inappropriate; may generate additional traffic
- Public transport must be more attractive (e.g. ticket buying, more leg room, more luggage space, frequency and routes)
- School transport plans - congestion charge (£5 within 200m) ... this is not enforceable

Infrastructure

- Arterial routes needed (better links from major roads M3, A3, A25, M25)
- Victoria Arch – remove pavement and cycle lane and provide a separate tunnel
- HGV use – consider requirements for increase in new developments (retailing and business) what are implications?

Bus service provision

- Inadequate room for bus lanes
- Provision of direct bus routes and circle bus routes must be regular (5 minutes)
- Buses should not stop at 7pm (window of operation)
- Managing bus routes on major routes - Not like Camberley bus routes on A30

Cycling/ walking routes

- Stop wasting money on road based cycle routes - they are not used
- Need safe, off-road cycle/ walking routes

- Continuous network of cycle and walking with more (usable and safe)
- Use roads for cycle and walking use

RETAIL

The options include two ways of delivering additional retailing, These are:

- A. New shopping development in Woking Town Centre
- B. New shopping development in West Byfleet

Shops in Woking

- As a transport hub would people want to stay in Woking when they can catch trains to Guildford etc.
- Are there going to be enough people to enable Woking to develop as a competitor to Guildford etc.
- How can Woking be unique rather than copying other places?

Shops in West Byfleet

- How was the research done re: West Byfleet – who had the greatest say?
- Was Internet shopping (the increase) in the future considered when the research was done?
- How would big centre developments affect the sustainability of village centres?
- Development in Woking may require more departmental stores. Some say no development in West Byfleet
- Don't need competition of two shopping centres – Woking is enough – would rather no development in West Byfleet
- Smaller centres won't want/ need their own shops, not a copy of Woking.
- A second centre would allow for the mix of smaller shops that could not afford/ support development in Woking.
- Having two centres spreads the load and would not 'flood' Woking
- How does the emphasis on housing development fit with concentrating on one or two main shopping areas – will people have to travel?

New provision

- Is there a need when there are so many empty shops now?
- Need to provide shopping experience that encourages our population to shop here – e.g. commuters
- Need to ensure we have the shops that attract and meet the needs of future (more sophisticated!) population
- High rise flats should include shops on the ground floor
- Need for low cost retail units
- Woking can claim to be the most accessible town in Surrey - no cobbles!

Transport and shopping

- Where will shoppers in centres park? – is the planning of transport considered – e.g. more parking places or better public transport that can be sustained long-term.
- It should be a planning condition that new central shops provide free transport to their premises
- Consider park and ride in places like Brookwood and Worpolesden to allow people to catch a train to Woking.

Types of shops

- Retail development needs to take into consideration the unique selling points of smaller shops not just concentrate on large chains.
- How can the options support small local businesses not just large chains?
- Is the quality mixing more important than the quantity regarding shops?
- Quality Vs quantity – but you need the shoppers.
- Don't need two shopping centres so close and duplication of shops

ECONOMY

The options include a range of different ways of delivering future economic growth, These include:

- A. New offices in Woking Town Centre
- B. New offices and industrial premises in existing industrial and business parks
- C. New offices in West Byfleet centre.

Employment

New Offices

- Enough vacant office buildings - Need to fill existing offices before building new ones
- Need to focus employment growth near public transport
- How to attract businesses in? – don't just need offices – variety of premises needed, e.g. variety of specialist units (with shops), manufacturing units, large and small offices - at the right rental costs and business rates = total cost.
- Need to consider whether to build up, or out, or both? - No thought if building up is right. Need a mix of the 3 elements and mix of locations
- What types of job growth? In service industry, manufacturing?
- What is the 'local economy'?
- Small business units (for 3 or 4 people) – need more. There are none empty. Start up units at reasonable costs.
- What % of offices is currently vacant in Woking and West Byfleet?
- One of the lowest unemployment rates in the country therefore do we need more employment land?
- Increase home-working so future need for more 'live-work' type units, e.g. craft workers, artists etc.
- Nice to have sites with a mix of housing and employment uses - reduce the need to travel
- Economy will dictate need
- Some existing offices are outdated. Obsolete (but cheaper to rent).
- Need flexibility to change use of employment premises later to other uses
- Options 3 and 4 imply more employment growth and 1 and 2 less so.
- Question perception of need
- Need co-operation in area (for all 5 elements, not just economy) to consider provision of different employment uses between Woking and other surrounding – lose towns
- Difficult to forecast for 10 years time

New Offices in Woking Town Centre

- Traffic and parking, especially near the station

- Extra jobs from Surrey County Council move to Woking? (in addition to those mentioned in Options?) Sufficient room for later growth? Loss of existing car park at the site to bring in economic activity
- Some shops closing are simply relocating in the town centre
- Night time economy – bars etc. crammed in one road need more diversity in the town centre
- Cap Gemini
- Woking must remain an attractive place, e.g. traffic, environment etc to attract businesses

New offices in West Byfleet centre

- Fall in no. of businesses in West Byfleet therefore why then look to expand employment there? (Clarification – options don't propose more in West Byfleet)
- No unmet demand in West Byfleet at present. Mouchel going, Broadoaks development essential
- Convert existing obsolete offices in West Byfleet to flats? Could replace with residential and employment uses.
- No need for C –new offices in West Byfleet

Existing industrial parks

- Sheerwater is less accessible therefore need to choose appropriate location
- Are existing business parks in the right places – before extending them?
- Importance of strategic location/ good access e.g. Brooklands

Transport issues

- Network rail need to increase capacity, carriages full. What other types of transport - buses? And what government funding?
- Role as transport hub - links to London

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Public Open space

- Severe shortage of public open space for football – pitches and changing facilities
- Also very little public space for children at present – ensure that new developments have sufficient provision
- Provision is patchy – some good facilities and some poor ones – improve the quality of current provision
- Current urban open space should be used more efficiently

Protecting and enhancing the natural environment

- More knowledge needed about the impact of options on biodiversity – what are the environmental policies?
- Not enough information about the numbers underpinning the options and what their environmental effect might be.
- Climate change should be the highest priority
- Mixed developments are more environmentally desirable/ sustainable
- Be aware of the consequences of 'infilling' on the local wildlife and flooding
- Use of water efficiency
- Waste disposal should be a part of LDF as it has effect on environment

- Greater encouragement of energy efficiency and renewable energy in private developments

Protecting and enhancing the built environment

- Maintain and improve visual amenity/ 'look and feel of the place' – maintain the character of villages (West Byfleet)
- Care about landscaping new developments – suitable planting/ trees and maintenance thereof.
- Must build in consideration of noise pollution
- Sufficient 'buffer zone' around developments to protect the amenity of the area

Climate change

- Are the sustainable initiatives e.g. CHP and recycling performing? More info needed to help public to understand and make decisions on options

Other comments

- Concern that insufficient car parking will be provided with dense development - Challenge government quotas
- Ensure that entertainment facilities are considered
- Visual impact of mobile phone masts is detrimental

SESSION 2

Discussions on each option as a whole:

	GROUP 1	GROUP 2
OPTION 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the 'full potential' of the economy? Not valid, suggests a great opportunity may be missed • Vacancies in the town centre • Substitute 'target', not full potential • Support Option 1 but WBC will not support it • If continue with current policies will exceed Option 1 so stay with this • Government will not accept this level - unsustainable • Jobs issues should be separated from the population issue • No substantial retail growth in Option 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we already exceeding Option 1 and would be able to stop at this if we wanted to?
OPTION 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall SUPPORT • Support for Option 2 as Option 1 is too limited • Provides good amount of element of affordable housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need further than Option 2 – • Hold here while we re-assess transport network, environment and open space, leisure, recreation
OPTION 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORT • Why do we have to have more retail development in West Byfleet? No support for this as empty shops in Woking Borough, but do support a vibrant Woking town centre. • Housing more important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot support that level of development in West Byfleet (and Option 4) • (And 4) these can't work without major infrastructure which would have to be funded by government • May be better in terms of affordable housing
OPTION 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO NOT SUPPORT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is 2016 a realistic timescale bearing in mind the infrastructure requirements?

GENERAL POINTS

GROUP 1	GROUP 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Options will cause out-migration. Those on fixed incomes will move out, to the south-west• Need to maintain varied society (will change demographics of population)• No-one here tonight representing young professional couples - Their needs are being catered for by Woking now?• Hard to comment on any options in absence of information on need for key worker and affordable housing• Which option provides for key worker dwellings? How much key worker dwellings in each option?• Can't buck supply and demand or will distort house prices etc.• % affordable housing should be increased 35-40%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clearer understanding needed of 'full potential'• What do we lose if we don't reach 'full potential'?• Need better understanding of supporting data and information• Are these really options within regional guidance and government guidelines?• Questionnaire was not delivered to every household• How do we know that the investment will result in the perceived benefits?• What's the implication for the Council Tax payer?• Concern about lack of joint responsibility for the road infrastructure• We need to protect the character of local communities

SESSION 3

OPTION 1 – 2 votes

OPTION 2 – 11 votes (includes two half votes for the retail element)

OPTION 3 – 3 votes (includes two half votes for the housing element)

OPTION 4 – 0 votes