

5. SPATIAL STRATEGY

Introduction

- 5.1 To deliver the Borough's vision and objectives, a clear Spatial Strategy is needed. There will continue to be pressures to build in Waverley and a positive approach is proposed to accommodate the new homes, shops and services, businesses and infrastructure required. A balance is needed between responding to the social and economic needs for development and protecting the environment and other assets that make Waverley the place that it is. Key challenges for Waverley include the need to deliver sustainable development, to address the issue of climate change, to support the local economy, to deliver the new homes that are needed in Waverley (including increasing the supply of affordable homes) and to protect the environment.
- 5.2 The aspirations, preferences and priorities of the local community have been considered alongside ensuring the Spatial Strategy is consistent with national planning policy. The Government places an emphasis on local people determining the shape of their area and has abolished the South East Plan along with its 'top-down' targets for new housing. The Local Plan has been prepared reflecting local people's aspirations and decisions on issues like climate change, economic development and housing, whilst meeting objectively assessed needs where it is reasonable to do so and maintaining consistency with achieving sustainable development.
- 5.3 The Spatial Strategy provides the overall framework for the quantity of development that should be planned for, and where this development is directed, linked to the roles of the towns and villages in Waverley.
- 5.4 The consequences of growth in and around Waverley are driving the need for new homes. The number of homes planned for and their location are dealt with in Chapter 6 (The Amount and Location of Housing). The Spatial Strategy is about more than just new housing. Other key chapters in this Local Plan deal with matters such as the delivery of affordable housing; new employment development and the approach to development in town centres.
- 5.5 A considerable amount of evidence has been gathered in preparing this Local Plan and much of this has been relevant to the development of the overall spatial Strategy. Key supporting evidence includes the Green Belt Review, the Settlement Hierarchy, the assessments of housing, employment and retail needs, the Land Availability Assessment and the various transport assessments.

South East Plan 2009

- 5.6 The South East Plan has been formally revoked except for Policy NRM6 which relates to new residential development close to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). This policy seeks to ensure that new residential development which is likely to have a significant effect on the ecological integrity of this SPA has adequate measures put in place to avoid

or mitigate any potential adverse effects. It states that priority should be given to directing development to those areas where potential adverse effects can be avoided without the need for mitigation measures and sets out a number of principles where mitigation is required. More details on the Council's approach to protecting the Thames Basin Heaths SPA is set out in Chapter 16 of this Plan, Natural Environment.

National Policy Context

- 5.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the national planning policy context for decisions about where new development should go. It is underpinned by the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.8 The Government expects that a 'model policy' be included within local plans, which reiterates national guidance. This policy is set out below. The policy will be applied taking account of policies contained within this Plan, the saved policies from the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 and policies that will be contained within the proposed Local Plan Part 2 and any other relevant development plan documents, supplementary planning documents or other material considerations. This will involve assessing development proposals in the context of the three strands of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Proposals that are consistent with the policies in this Plan will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.9 The Council will take a positive approach when determining planning applications and will work closely and proactively with developers at a pre-application stage to ensure that applications for sustainable development have the best prospect of being approved.

Policy SP1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

When considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants to find solutions so proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

The Waverley Settlement Hierarchy

5.10 The various settlements in Waverley have differing levels of services and public transport access. This is reflected in the Waverley Settlement Hierarchy, which assists in identifying the most sustainable locations for development in Waverley. In the settlement hierarchy, there are five categories of settlement. The highest order settlements are known as 'Communities with Key Services'. These include Farnham (including Badshot Lea), Godalming, Haslemere and Cranleigh. Below these are 'Communities with local services'. This includes Hindhead and Beacon Hill, Bramley, Milford, Elstead, Witley and Chiddingfold. The remaining villages are split between 'Rural Communities with limited services' (including villages like Alfold and Ewhurst), 'Rural Communities with very limited services' (including villages like Hambledon and Wonersh) and 'Other Rural Communities' (including the smallest rural communities like Dockenfield and Blackheath). In determining the amount of housing proposed at each settlement, account has been taken of the Settlement Hierarchy.

Cross Boundary Issues

- 5.11 An important part of the Borough's cross-boundary working has been to consider the potential impact of development proposed in surrounding districts and how this might affect Waverley as well as considering the potential cross-boundary issues arising from growth planned in Waverley itself. Also, joint work has been undertaken to address the impact of development on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. This has resulted in a consistent approach between the affected authorities to avoidance and mitigation measures and an agreement to secure developer contributions towards the strategic access management and monitoring of the SPA itself.
- 5.12 In relation to infrastructure, the Council has sought to put the planned growth in Waverley in the context of other developments planned outside Waverley, to understand their cumulative impact. The Council has worked closely with Surrey County Council to consider potential traffic impacts that would arise from different levels and distributions of development, taking account of developments outside of Waverley. The results of this work have informed the spatial strategy. More details can be found in Chapter 7, Sustainable Transport.
- 5.13 The Council will continue to liaise with neighbouring authorities on cross-boundary issues, including further consultation on planned levels of growth within Waverley, to ensure that there are no significant adverse effects or to ensure that arrangements will be in place to provide mitigation if needed.

The Spatial Strategy for Waverley

- 5.14 National policy on the location of development is driven by the principles of sustainable development. In an area like Waverley it is simply not possible to achieve the levels of sustainable living that can be achieved in more urban locations, where facilities are located more closely together and where the public transport network is more comprehensive. In determining the most sustainable location for development a number of factors have been considered and it has been necessary to strike a balance between economic, social and environmental considerations. For example, by seeking to make the best use of previously developed (brownfield) land whilst as far as possible seeking to locate development where there is good access to services and facilities. In developing the Spatial Strategy, account has been taken of the Green Belt Review. Further details are set out in Chapter 13: Rural Environment.
- 5.15 The first focus for new housing and other development will be within the four main settlements of Farnham, Godalming, Haslemere and Cranleigh. This best meets the objectives of securing sustainable development and meeting national planning objectives. These settlements have the best range of jobs, services and other facilities, although each has a distinctive individual character. However, it is recognised that there is a limit to which sites within existing settlements can meet the Borough's needs for development, particularly new homes. Therefore, it will be necessary to allow some expansion of settlements through the development of suitable sites on the edges of settlements. Again, the primary focus for this expansion of settlements will be at the main settlements. The Council's strategy also seeks to protect the Green Belt within Waverley and to safeguard the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). As a result, the scope for expansion in Godalming and Haslemere is more limited than in Farnham and Cranleigh, because Godalming and Haslemere are much more tightly constrained by these important designations.
- 5.16 The approach to development within the villages is derived from a combination of factors, namely:
- The Settlement Hierarchy;
 - The landscape and other constraints that apply; and
 - The potential availability of sites.
- 5.17 As a result, the strategy allows for moderate levels of development in and around large villages (Bramley, Chiddingfold, Elstead, Milford and Witley) subject to the Council's approach to the Green Belt, which currently washes over all of these villages. Some limited planned growth is proposed in/around the medium sized villages of Alfold, Churt, Dunsfold, Ewhurst, Frensham, Tilford, Shamley Green, Wonersh). Again the level of development in these villages varies according to the three factors identified above. There is no planned growth in the smallest villages. It is expected, however, that small villages¹ will continue to accommodate extremely limited small scale 'windfall' development to meet local needs only.

- 5.18 Settlement boundaries are currently identified in the 2002 Local Plan, with an associated Policy RD1. It is intended that these village boundaries will be reviewed as part of Local Plan Part 2.
- 5.19 Other factors influencing the location of development include local landscape designations, such as the Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). These are also addressed in Chapter 13. Similarly, the impacts of ecological designations, such as the Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are addressed in Chapter 16: Natural Environment.
- 5.20 The countryside outside the Green Belt plays an important role in defining the character of Waverley, in some cases, providing a rural buffer between settlements. The 2002 Local Plan Policy C2 seeks to protect these countryside areas that are not within the Green Belt. Subject to the release of land required to meet the needs identified in this Plan, the Council will continue to protect the countryside in accordance with paragraph 17 of the NPPF, which recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. More details on the Council's policy for development in the countryside are set out in Chapter 13, Rural Environment.
- 5.21 There are a number of brownfield sites located in the countryside. By far, the most significant of these is Dunsfold Aerodrome. In 2009, the Secretary of State rejected an appeal relating to a proposed new settlement at the site, comprising about 2,600 homes along with shops, business premises, community and leisure facilities and schools. The appeal was dismissed on the grounds of transport impacts and prematurity. However, much has changed since 2009:
- The NPPF requires the Council to positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the borough and to meet objectively assessed needs unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole². The objectively assessed need for housing has been assessed in the SHMA as 519 homes per annum, far above the South East Plan target for Waverley that applied at the time of the appeal.
 - The Government has set out as a core principle in the NPPF that brownfield land should be reused, provided that it is not of high environmental value. Although Dunsfold Aerodrome is in a relatively isolated location, there are no other large brownfield sites in Waverley that could make such a large contribution to meeting the assessed needs.
 - The NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

¹ Defined in the Settlement Hierarchy as Rural Communities with Very Limited Services.

² NPPF, para 14.

- 5.22 The Council has commissioned evidence on the likely traffic impacts of different scenarios for development, including different levels of development at Dunsfold Aerodrome. The evidence to date indicates that there is potential to provide appropriate mitigation on the highway network, although more work needs to be done on this. Development of the site is subject to these matters being resolved satisfactorily through the relevant planning applications.
- 5.23 It is considered that the benefits of redeveloping Dunsfold Aerodrome for housing and other uses outweigh any concerns regarding the location of the site. It is therefore allocated in this plan as a strategic site for a new settlement of up to 2,600 homes, employment and associated supporting uses. Policy guidance on this site is set out in Policy ALH1 'The Amount and Location of Housing' in Chapter 6 and in Policy SS7 in Chapter 18, which relate specifically to future development at this site and other strategic sites.
- 5.24 There are several other rural brownfield sites within and beyond the Green Belt that may be suitable for redevelopment. Some of these are or have been in employment use and are designated as such. These sites may potentially continue to meet development needs for employment, housing or both. However, not all such sites will be suitable for redevelopment for housing as the Council needs to retain a stock of good quality, fit for purpose employment land to meet employment needs. More information on this issue is given in Chapter 10. Detailed consideration of these sites, including a review of existing designations, will be undertaken as part of Local Plan Part 2.

Policy SP2: Spatial Strategy

To maintain Waverley's character whilst ensuring that development needs are met in a sustainable manner, the Spatial Strategy to 2032 is to:

- 1. Avoid major development on land of the highest amenity value, such as the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and to safeguard the Green Belt.**
- 2. Focus development at the four main settlements³ (Farnham, Godalming, Haslemere and Cranleigh).**
- 3. Allow moderate levels of development in larger villages (Bramley, Chiddingfold, Elstead, Milford and Witley), whilst recognising that due to Green Belt constraints, Bramley has more limited scope for development.**
- 4. Allow limited levels of development in/around other villages (Alfold, Churt, Dunsfold, Ewhurst, Frensham, Tilford, Shamley Green, Wonersh), whilst recognising that those villages not within Surrey Hills AONB or Green Belt offer more scope for growth.**

³ For the purposes of this policy, the built up area of Farnham includes Badshot Lea and the built up area of Haslemere includes Beacon Hill and Hindhead.

5. In all other villages only modest growth to meet local needs will be allowed.
6. Maximise opportunities for the redevelopment of suitable brownfield sites for housing, business or mixed use, including at Dunsfold Aerodrome which is identified as a new settlement. More details are given in Policy SS7.
7. Allocate other strategic sites (Policies SS1, SS2, SS3, SS4, SS5, SS6, SS8 and SS9). Non strategic sites will be identified and allocated through Local Plan Part 2 and Neighbourhood Development Plans.
8. Ensure that where new infrastructure is needed, it is provided alongside new development. This includes funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Delivery

This policy will be delivered by:

- Local Plan Part 2.
- Neighbourhood Plans.
- The decisions made on planning applications and any subsequent policies and guidance that amplify the broad strategy.

Evidence

- Settlement Hierarchy 2014
- Land Availability Assessment 2016
- Employment Land Review 2016
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015
- Green Belt Review 2014
- Landscape Study 2014
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2016
- Strategic Transport Assessment 2016
- Local Transport Assessments 2016
- Town Centres and Retail Study Update 2013.