

3.0 The Planning Strategy for Guildford Borough

Introduction

3.1 This Chapter sets out the planning strategy of the Plan and explains how it has been developed and will be delivered. The overall strategy of the Plan is to seek to ensure that development is accommodated in an environmentally sustainable way within the framework set out by national, regional and strategic planning policies and guidance and the Council's own strategic priorities. National planning policy is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's). A list of PPG's is attached as an appendix.

Development of the Strategy

3.2 The Local Plan has been prepared within the framework set out in Regional Planning Guidance for the South East 2001 (RPG 9), the Surrey Structure Plan 1994, the Borough Council's Strategic Priorities and the principles of sustainable development. These are set out below:

Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG 9)

3.3 RPG 9 was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and Regions in March 2001 and sets out the main principles for future development of the region. Future reviews of both the Structure Plan and the Local Plan will need to take into account the Policy Guidance in this document.

Surrey Structure Plan 1994

3.4 This Plan sets out strategic planning policies for Surrey up to 2006 within the framework of regional planning guidance. Care of the environment is the Plan's paramount aim with the intention of bringing about a sustainable high quality natural and urban environment while ensuring that the County's economy is maintained and renewed. No changes to existing Green Belt boundaries are proposed during the lifetime of the Plan and for the foreseeable future. The following strategic objectives are set out:

- To resist strongly further urbanisation of the County;
- To slow down the rate of development provision;
- To ensure that development complies with high standards and protects and enhances not only features of recognised importance but also the quality of life generally;
- Not to meet in full the demand for travel by car;
- Within environmental and infrastructure constraints, provision will be made to meet the needs of Surrey's population for social, community and health services and specific housing needs, together with provision for retailing, leisure and recreation. All development should also be accessible to people with sensory and mobility disabilities and
- To provide for development which contributes to the maintenance and renewal of the County's economy within environmental and infrastructure constraints.

Strategic Priorities

3.5 The Borough Council has an agreed number of strategic priorities which have influenced the priorities of the Plan. These are:

Building on the strengths of Guildford's communities and working in partnership with them, to enhance the quality of life for all residents, workers and visitors, with particular emphasis on:

1. Improving the well being of our whole community:-

- Bringing improvements for the disadvantaged and vulnerable in our society.
- Protecting and enhancing the quality of Guildford's natural and built environment.

- Increasing affordable housing opportunities.
- Providing and promoting opportunities for young people in our society.
- Facilitating and promoting better health.

2. Continuing to promote key areas of Council policy by:-

- Maintaining and publicising Guildford as a safe Borough.
- Sustaining and enhancing access to high quality in arts, sports and science.
- Balancing the needs of our heritage and environment with continued economic prosperity and a flourishing business community.
- Aiming to build sustainability into all the Council's policies and activities.

3. Focusing on Transport

- Offering attractive and viable alternatives to the car.
- Providing services to increase mobility for all residents, making all parts of our Borough accessible.

Sustainable Development

3.6 Government guidance emphasises the key role of the planning system in enabling the provision of homes and buildings, investment and jobs in a way which is consistent with the principles of sustainable development. Sustainable development is most commonly defined as *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"* ⁹. More recently the

government has defined sustainable development as *"...about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come"*.¹⁰

3.7 The Borough Council has responded to the challenge of sustainable development and has produced an Agenda 21 Strategy. This Local Plan reflects sustainability principles by:

- Seeking a balance between meeting the need for commercial and industrial development, new homes and other buildings and respecting environmental objectives;
- Encouraging the use and reuse of already developed areas in an efficient way; seeking to make the urban areas more attractive places in which to live and work;
- Conserving both the cultural heritage and natural resources taking particular care to safeguard designations of national and international importance; and
- Setting down a long-term framework that encourages development patterns and a mix and type of land uses which will reduce the need to travel.

3.8 The policies and proposals set out in this Plan have been the subject of an Environmental Appraisal. This is available as a background paper.

Aims

3.9 The Plan's overall aim is to:

Promote Development that Meets the Needs of the Present Without Compromising the Ability of Future Generations to Meet Their Own Needs

This will be achieved by seeking to:

1. Maintain and Provide for a Range of Good Quality Housing, Affordable by All Residents Throughout the Borough

⁹ World Commission on Environment and Development: 1987

¹⁰ DETR - Opportunities for Change 1998

3.10 The Plan makes provision for additional housing to meet the requirements of the Surrey Structure Plan by allocating new sites for housing and making assumptions about unidentified sites coming forward for development.

3.11 Due to the limited opportunities for new development the Plan places a high priority on retaining and improving the existing housing stock.

3.12 The Plan seeks to ensure that the stock of freehold or rented housing meets the needs of the Borough's residents. This includes providing for affordable housing and encouraging a range of house sizes and types.

3.13 Residential development is expected to take place primarily within the urban area with particular encouragement given to reuse and redevelopment of existing developed sites and conversion of existing buildings.

3.14 The importance of retaining residential uses in the Town Centre is recognised and the Plan also supports opportunities for increasing the stock of dwellings in this location. The Plan also includes a policy to enable the provision of affordable housing for local needs adjoining the villages in rural areas.

2. Support the Maintenance and Renewal of the Local Economy

3.15 The Council places a high priority on supporting the local economy although this needs to be balanced against environmental objectives. Bearing in mind the low levels of unemployment and the stable nature of the Borough's population the Council considers that the approach of the previous Plan should be continued. This involves retaining the existing broad supply of employment land in the Borough by normally resisting the loss of existing employment land to other uses, promoting redevelopment of employment land and continuing to allocate sites for employment use at Slyfield Industrial Estate and at Lysons Avenue together with a new site owned by Thames Water

adjacent to Slyfield. Office development may be also acceptable on a limited number of sites within the Guildford urban area, which are identified in Chapter 9.

3.16 These policies provide significant opportunities for the Guildford economy to expand and for the creation of new jobs. Any further releases of employment land would result in loss of greenfield sites, unnecessarily exacerbate traffic congestion, and potentially increase pressure for further housing development and increase labour shortages for existing businesses.

3.17 The plan recognises the contribution of existing businesses and where practical will endeavour to meet their needs, including the needs of small firms and businesses in rural areas.

3. Protect and Enhance Guildford's Town Centre Role as a Regional Shopping Centre and as a Focal Point of Commercial, Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Facilities

3.18 Guildford Town Centre has a thriving shopping centre which the Plan wishes to support and enhance. With the granting of planning permission to extend the Friary Shopping Centre no significant additional shopping floorspace is proposed during the Plan period although proposals which enhance and support the shopping role of the centre while respecting its character will be favourably considered.

3.19 The Town Centre also contains a range of arts, cultural and entertainment uses. The Borough Council is of the view that major facilities of this type should continue to be provided primarily in the Town Centre where opportunities for use of public transport are greatest.

3.20 Office development will continue to be allowed in the Town Centre although this will be primarily on existing employment sites.

3.21 It is also important that people should live in the Town Centre and protection for existing dwellings will continue. In

addition the Plan supports opportunities for additional dwellings through conversions, redevelopment and by bringing into use neglected or unused land.

4. To Protect and Enhance the Quality of the Urban and Rural Environment

- 3.22 Guildford Borough has a rich architectural and historic heritage that includes listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens and archaeological remains. These give the Borough much of its character and development proposals that adversely affect these irreplaceable assets will be resisted.
- 3.23 The Plan gives priority to ensuring that new development is of a high quality. The Plan sets out a Design Code that all proposals will be expected to follow. Designs which fail to comply with the Code will be refused.
- 3.24 The extensive nature of the Borough's green belt means that most new development will take place in the urban areas. It is important that pressures for development do not result in town cramming and over development. New buildings will be expected to be in character with their surroundings, with important open spaces retained.
- 3.25 Development which takes place in the village settlements and the open countryside will similarly be expected to be well designed, in context and of appropriate scale, with particular attention being given to sensitive locations such as the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 3.26 Development pressures, changing agricultural practices and increasing traffic have all impacted on the quality and diversity of the Borough's natural environment. Policies in the Plan seek to protect areas of nature conservation value. Where development does proceed such areas should be protected with any lost features replaced. Policies in the Plan also seek to safeguard the habitats of protected plant and animal species and retain important trees.

- 3.27 The amenities of occupants will be given a high priority, and development which adversely affects existing occupiers will be resisted.

5. Reduce the Demand for Travel by Car

- 3.28 During the Plan period traffic levels are likely to grow as car ownership continues to rise. Although the Borough Council recognises that the car will continue to be the dominant mode of transport it considers that demand to travel by car cannot be met in full without further increasing environmental damage. The Plan therefore seeks to influence the use of the car and promote alternative modes of transport that have less environmental impact. Planning measures include allowing major travel generating development only in locations accessible by public transport and by walking and cycling.
- 3.29 The availability of parking can influence the use of the car and where appropriate the Borough Council will restrict the provision of car parking on development to encourage the use of alternative modes of transport. The provision of Park and Ride serving Guildford Town Centre is a high priority.
- 3.30 Increased opportunities for walking and cycling are promoted in the Plan. In the long term the Borough Council wishes to see the establishment of comprehensive cycle and pedestrian routes within the urban areas.
- 3.31 The Plan also contains policies that seek to minimise the environmental impact of traffic generated by new development and supports traffic management measures particularly those which support and encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

6. Make the Best Use of Scarce Land Resources Minimising the Impact of Development on Greenfield Sites

- 3.32 The countryside and other greenfield sites (including urban open space) are an essential part of the Borough's

environment and it is important that they are retained. The Plan therefore envisages the development needs of the Borough being accommodated primarily by the re-use of existing developed land. To reduce pressure on greenfield sites policies in the Plan support the efficient use of development sites by allowing increased densities in appropriate locations and supporting conversions and reuse of existing buildings.

7. Encourage and Facilitate Access for all People to all Buildings

- 3.33 It is important that buildings are designed in a way that enables those with limited mobility to gain access. In addition, opportunities should be provided in the countryside and other open areas for the disabled. Policies in the Plan therefore give priority to increasing accessibility to the built and natural environment.

8. Recognise the Importance of Local Communities Within the Borough by Promoting Local Identity and the Provision of a Wide Range of Facilities at the Local Level

- 3.34 Guildford Borough embraces a range of different communities. These include Green Belt villages (e.g. Shere and Shalford), central areas and suburbs of Guildford (e.g. Holy Trinity, Merrow, Park Barn) and Ash and Tongham which lie beyond the Green Belt. The Borough Council recognises that maintaining a range of facilities in these communities, such as schools, community and employment uses is important as they contribute much to community vitality. A decline in facilities can also encourage greater car use, as residents have to travel further and discriminates against those without cars. In view of this, policies in the Plan support the maintenance and improvement of such facilities.
- 3.35 In addition the policies seek to promote local distinctiveness by encouraging new development to reflect local styles and character.

9. To Protect the Countryside from Inappropriate Development and Maintain it's Open Rural Character

- 3.36 The current boundaries of the Green Belt were established in the 1987 Plan and were unchanged in the Guildford Borough Local Plan 1993. The Green Belt has provided significant benefits to Guildford Borough, with long-term protection of the Borough's countryside and rural villages from inappropriate development. It also stops the outward spread of London and contributes to regional policy for the South East seeking to redirect development pressures to the eastern part of the region. The University of Surrey's need to expand is supported by the Borough Council and this Plan proposes the removal of Manor Farm from the Green Belt.
- 3.37 The Plan identifies a number of village settlements within the green belt where a limited range of development is acceptable.
- 3.38 Policies in the Plan also seek to protect the Countryside beyond the Green Belt from development that would detrimentally affect the rural character of the area. Minor changes to the boundaries of the Countryside beyond the Green Belt are proposed.

10. Support the Provision of High Quality Recreational, Tourist and Community Facilities in the Borough

- 3.39 All the Borough's residents should have the opportunity to participate in leisure and recreation pursuits. While there is no obvious need for major new leisure and recreation or community facilities, the Plan seeks to resist the loss of existing facilities and encourage their more efficient use. The provision of facilities supporting local communities is a particular priority.
- 3.40 Few parts of the Borough have enough public recreational open space and the Plan seeks to address this, in particular by ensuring that new residential development makes adequate provision for open space and other recreational facilities.

3.41 Tourism is an increasingly important part of the Surrey economy and the Plan promotes further visitor attractions where these can be accommodated in an environmentally acceptable way. There is an acknowledged shortage of hotel accommodation and the Plan addresses this by allocating sites for hotel development.

policies and proposals and meet the Plan objectives. Examples include a continuing programme of environmental improvements and the rate relief scheme for village shops.

Delivering the Strategy

3.42 The broad aims of the Plan have been developed into more specific objectives that are set out at the beginning of the subject based chapters. These objectives provide a more detailed framework within which policies are formulated and against which the success of the policies can be tested.

3.43 The objectives will be carried out through implementation of the Policies and Proposals set out in the Plan but also through supporting measures. These are explained below:

Policies and Proposals

3.44 The policies in the Plan form the basis of the determination of planning applications during the Plan period. They include policies which;

- Guide particular types of development (e.g. extensions to houses),
- Control particular aspects of development (e.g. to minimise pollution or loss of amenity and parking standards), and
- Control development in particular parts of the plan area (e.g. Green Belt).

3.45 The proposals are site-specific identifying development that is expected to take place within the Plan period.

Supporting Measures

3.46 The Plan also identifies supporting measures which the Borough Council will actively pursue. The supporting measures will complement the land use