

Green Belt boundary review – Consultants Brief

Introduction

The main purpose of the study is to:

- carry out a comprehensive review of the Green Belt boundary of Woking Borough with the view to identify suitable, deliverable and sustainable site(s) to deliver about 550 new homes. This should be based on an approximate average density of about 30dph. The outcome of the study will be key evidence base to inform the Development Delivery Development Plan Document (DPD);
- identify potential additional site(s) to be safeguarded for residential development between 2027 and 2040. This should be based on an annual average of 292 new homes per year at an average density of 30dph. Based on a number of assumptions, it is estimated that about 70 hectares of land will have to be identified for this purpose;
- identify sufficient deliverable site(s) for 19 pitches to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and a further site to be safeguarded to deliver 19 pitches between 2027 and 2040.
- Identify one transit site to meet the needs of travelling showpeople; and
- Provide advice about where a defensible Green Belt boundary should be drawn, taken into account the sites that will be recommended for release for development. This should endure until 2040.

A Map of Woking showing the geographical extent of the Green Belt is attached as Appendix 1a.

Policy Background

- 1 Woking Borough Council has an adopted Core Strategy (October 2013), which seeks to make provision for at least 4,964 net additional dwellings in the Borough between 2010 and 2027. This is equivalent to an annual average of 292 dwellings. As part of the evidence base to support the Core Strategy the Council has carried out a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to identify sufficient specific deliverable sites in the urban area to meet about 10 years of housing supply, which is up to 2022. Most of the identified sources of the land supply in the SHLAA are through redevelopment of previously developed land, infilling within the urban area and intensification of existing use/sites.
- 2 National planning policy requires the Council to identify sufficient sites to deliver 15 years housing supply from the date of adoption of the Core Strategy. Furthermore, the Core Strategy has a 15 year timeframe. Insufficient land has therefore been identified to meet housing need for the entire period of the Core Strategy and the requirements of national policy. Because there is insufficient land within the urban area to meet the entire housing requirement, the Green Belt has been identified as a broad location from which specific sites will be identified to meet housing supply between 2022 and 2027.
- 3 Policy CS10 – Housing Provision and Distribution of the Core Strategy sets out the Council's policy on housing provision and distribution. It identifies the Green Belt to make a contribution of 550 new homes towards an overall housing requirement of 4,964 dwellings. Policy CS6 – Green Belt identifies the Green Belt as a potential future direction of growth to meet housing need between 2022 and 2027. The Council is committed to carry out a Green Belt

boundary review before 2016 and as an integral part of the Development Delivery Development Plan Document (DPD) process with the view to release land to deliver at least 550 new homes. Policy CS6 is also clear to emphasise that the release of any site(s) from the Green Belt should not undermine its purpose and integrity. A key purpose of the review is also to ensure that the requirements of Policy CS6 are met.

- 4 The Council also has a responsibility to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. It is expected that the review will identify sufficient land to deliver about 38 pitches to meet need up to 2040. One site should also be identified for Travelling Showpeople.
- 5 If appropriate sites should be identified for educational uses, including a secondary school, the County Council should be consulted to agree on locational and size requirements for this infrastructure.
- 6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines the five purposes of the Green Belt as:
 - to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 7 These five purposes amongst other things should form the context within which the review should be carried out. However, for the purposes of Woking, an important additional context for the study should be the 'preservation of the character and quality of the setting of the Borough'. The Character Study and the Heritage of Woking Study will be useful information in this regard. Both documents are on the Council's website – www.woking.gov.uk
- 8 The Council expects the Green Belt boundary review to be carried out as an integral part of the Development Delivery DPD. It has an agreed Project Plan for preparing the Development Delivery DPD. It is expected that the timing of the Green Belt boundary will be managed to inform this process. The Project Plan for the preparation of the Development Delivery DPD is attached as Appendix 1b. Subject to further discussions with the successful consultant, it is expected that a draft report of the Study should be completed and submitted to the Council for comments before the end of August 2013. A presentation should be made to the LDF Working Group in September before the Study is signed off by the Council in early October.
- 9 Policy SP5 of the South East Plan supports the selective review of the Green Belt boundary possibly to the south of Woking. The Council however believes that the review should not be restricted to only the south of Woking but should be comprehensive to consider all potential areas in the Green Belt. To have a defensible boundary that is able to endure until 2040, the Council should be able to demonstrate that it has considered all potential options as part of the review. The comprehensive approach to the study is therefore necessary to ensure the permanency of the Green Belt boundary.
- 10 The Core Strategy directs development away from environmentally sensitive areas such as areas at risk of flooding, the Thames Basin Heaths Special

Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation etc. It is expected that these areas will be mapped and taken into account in the study, in particular, at the initial appraisal of potential sites.

- 11 Because of the specialist nature of the study, the Council has decided to commission a consultant to carry out this study to ensure that the approach adopted is logical, consistent, brings forward a sustainable pattern of development and defensible at an Examination. This brief will form the basis of the study and the means by which its quality will be measured. The brief is a draft at this stage. It is expected that the Council will finalise it with the appointed consultant to ensure that all aspects of the study are covered. It will also allow scope for the consultant's input in finalising the brief. Officers of the Council will assist in providing relevant information that might be needed for the Study.

Requirements of the Study

- 12 The consultants will be required to:
- define and clearly state the methodology for carrying out the study. This should be tailored to the unique circumstances of Woking. Because there is no prescribed methodology for carrying out a Green Belt boundary review, it is expected that the consultant would have reviewed best practice of Green Belt boundary reviews and other landscape and countryside studies to inform the preferred methodology. An understanding of the general character of the area will be helpful in designing the preferred methodology. The Character Study and the Heritage of Woking Study are useful sources of information. They are both on the Council's website;
 - define and map out absolute constraints to development such as environmentally designated sites to identify areas where development will not be allowed in any case;
 - use a logical, consistent and defensible criteria to appraise all potential sites at a strategic level with the view to identify areas/sites which may have realistic potential to accommodate residential development. It is expected that the entire Green Belt will be appraised at a broad level with the purpose of the Green Belt and the policy requirements of the Core Strategy in mind. Factors such as topography of the land, views of the Borough and the relationship of the Green Belt and the urban area may also be influential. The Council believes that the capacity of any site to accommodate development and change could be influenced by these factors. It is expected that the criteria for this assessment will be clearly stated;
 - grade the potential sites for their suitability for residential development. The criteria for the grading should be clearly set out.
 - recommend to the Council the most sustainable site(s) that should be allocated to deliver the identified 550 new homes. Furthermore, the consultants should recommend to the Council those sites that should be safeguarded to meet future housing land supply between 2027 and 2040;
 - provide detailed site specific assessment/analysis of each of the sites that are recommended for development with respect to their landscape and setting, broad biodiversity/ecological integrity, topography, and their accessibility to key services and facilities by sustainable forms of transport modes.
 - identify any site specific constraints and appropriate mitigation measures that might be necessary to facilitate the development of the sites;
 - provide the Council with a recommendation about where a defensible boundary of the Green Belt should be drawn, taking into account the sites that

are recommended for development. This should be capable of enduring until 2040.

- provide a reasoned justification for the recommendations.
- agree with the Council a Project Plan with specific timescales for carrying out the study;
- liaise with relevant officers of the Council and the County Council at key stages of the study.

- 13 Guildford Borough Council is in the process of preparing its Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPD. The selective review of their Green Belt boundary north of Guildford is a possible part of their evidence base to support their development needs. The study should take this into account, in particular, in the context of the purpose of the Green Belt stated above. A discussion with Guildford Borough Council about their intentions for meeting their future housing land supply will be helpful in this regard.

Methodology of Study

- 14 The Council will expect that the consultant will set out clearly how they propose to carry out the study. The methodology should consider amongst other things the following:
- an evaluation of good practice and a justification of why the preferred methodology has been chosen for Woking;
 - a brief description of the national and local planning policy background to the study and how the methodology will enable their requirements to be met;
 - a clear, consistent and logical analysis of how sites/areas have been selected, scored and graded with a clear audit trail of all the relevant stages and any consultation undertaken;
 - a comprehensive sites database system that would allow a consistent and systematic evaluation of possible development sites according to the set criteria to assist with the prioritisation of sites. The contribution that each site makes to the purpose of the Green Belt should be highlighted; and
 - a comprehensive assessment of all potential sites and not only sites to the south of Woking. This should provide a basis for a filtering process to enable a focus on potential developable sites;

Report Format

- 15 The Council will expect a written report of the outcome of the Study. The report should be concise and written in a style that is accessible and easy to understand. It should include a non technical Executive Summary of the key findings. It will be published as evidence base to support the Development Delivery DPD. In this regard, care should be taken to ensure that it does not compromise commercial sensitivity and/or confidentiality.
- 16 The report should be produced in an A4 format for ease of production, distribution and use as a reference document. The report and supporting illustrations should be capable of being printed and/or folded in an A3 or A4 size format.
- 17 Five hard copies of the report should be provided. An electronic copy of the report and all related data including maps should also be provided in both Word and pdf formats on CD-Rom.

- 18 The consultants will be required to do a presentation of the findings of the study to the LDF Working Group and other Members of the Council.
- 19 Any spatial data should be provided in an electronic format capable of being imported into the Council's GIS system (Arc GIS). Ordnance Survey (OS) base mapping for the purposes of the study can be provided, if required, by the Council as part of its Mapping Services Agreement with the OS. A contractor's licence agreement must be signed in order to receive and use OS mapping. Any such OS mapping must be used only for the purposes of the study and be destroyed or returned to the Council on completion of the work.

Timetable

- 20 The Project Plan for the Development Delivery DPD has already been approved by the Council and is set out in the Local Development Scheme. Public consultation of the Development Delivery DPD is scheduled for **October – November 2013**. It is expected that a draft of the Study will be completed and submitted to the Council for comments by 30 **August 2013**, in time to feed into the Development Delivery DPD process. This is on the basis that the successful consultant is appointed by 1 March 2013.
- 21 The consultants will be invited to do a presentation to Members of the LDF Working Group and other Members in September 2013. The Study should be completed and signed off by early October 2013.
- 22 A detailed project plan for the study will need to be agreed between the Council and the consultants following the appointment of the successful consultant. In any case, a preliminary project plan should be submitted by the consultant as part of the quotation for the Council to agree.
- 23 The final report shall not be produced without the Council being given the opportunity to comment on it. In this regard, the consultants must provide the Council with a draft report for discussion and comment by the end of August 2013..

Contract management

- 24 The project manager for the contract will be the Council's Planning Policy Manager – Ernest Amoako who will be the first point of contact for the study. His e-mail address is ernest.amoako@woking.gov.uk. His contact number is 01483 743427. The Project Sponsor will be Business Manager for Planning Services, who will have overall responsibility for the Study.
- 25 A draft report for discussion and comment should be submitted to the Council by end of August 2013. A meeting to discuss the findings of the study should be accounted for in the Project Plan and any cost estimates.
- 26 The Planning Policy Team will provide reasonable assistance to the selected consultants to access background documents, plans, contacts and any other facilities as appropriate.
- 27 The fee for the study will be fixed in advance and be inclusive of all expenses but excluding VAT.

Quotations

Quotation Submission

- 28 The Council would like to invite you to submit a quotation for carrying out the study. The contract will be based on a fix fee to deliver the requirements that are set out above (the requirements may be refined subject to the advice of the successful consultant). Based on the above, the Council would appreciate an indicative quotation as soon as possible and no later than **22 February 2013**, preferably by e-mail to the Council's Planning Policy Manager (electronic communication in all instances will be the preferred method of written communication).

Quotation Content

- 29 The content of the final quotations should include the following:
- i. The Project Team that will carry out the study;
 - ii. A breakdown of the key stages of the study;
 - iii. A preliminary project plan setting out the time frame for producing the study. This should be aligned to the key stages of the study;
 - iv. A detailed statement of approach and methodology demonstrating compliance with relevant guidance and/or best practice;
 - v. Proposed fee for carrying out the study and producing a report of its outcomes, plus the daily rate for the preparation and delivery of evidence at an Examination; and
 - vi. an indication of the stages at which payment will be required.

30 Evaluation of quotation

The Council will select the quotation which has a clear approach and methodology for meeting all its requirements and demonstrates best value as well as a consultant who demonstrates technical experience in order to carry out the Study. The successful consultant will be notified by the end of February 2013.