

# **Oaks and Vale Farm Road Residents Group**

## **Statement of Case – Part 2 of 2**

APPEAL BY:

Goldsworth Road Development LLP

APPEAL SITE:

Land to the North And South Of Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 6JT

APPEAL PROPOSAL:

Demolition of all existing buildings and redevelopment of the site for a phased mixed-use scheme, comprising 929 residential units (Class C3), communal residential and operational spaces, commercial uses (Classes A1/A2/A3/A4/B1/D1/D2) at ground floor and homeless shelter (sui generis) within 5 blocks of varying heights of between 9 and 37 storeys (including rooftop amenity) to the north and south sides of the site together with soft and hard landscaping including public realm works, highway alterations to Goldsworth Road, car parking, cycle parking, bin storage, ancillary facilities and plant.

Pins Ref: APP/A3655/W/21/3276474

LPA Ref: PLAN/2020/0568

16 August 2021

*Prepared by Chestnut Planning, commissioned by Oaks and Vale Farm Road Residents Group*

**Demolition of all existing buildings and redevelopment of the site for a phased mixed-use scheme, comprising 929 residential units (Class C3), communal residential and operational spaces, commercial uses (Classes A1/A2/A3/A4/B1/D1/D2) at ground floor and homeless shelter (sui generis) within 5 blocks of varying heights of between 9 and 37 storeys (including rooftop amenity) to the north and south sides of the site together with soft and hard landscaping including public realm works, highway alterations to Goldsworth Road, car parking, cycle parking, bin storage, ancillary facilities and plant (Environmental Statement submitted) (amended plans and reports received 13.11.2020).**

**Land To The North And South Of Goldsworth Road Woking Surrey GU21 6JT  
Planning application reference: PLAN/2020/0568**

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Chestnut Planning on behalf of Oaks Road and Vale Farm Road Residents Group/local residents.
- 1.2 The Oaks Road and Vale Farm Road Residents Group is an informal group of over 40 local residents that communicate and coordinate around locally relevant topics, including planning applications in this area. The group has been recently expanded to include residents in the wider area who want to raise concerns about the "Greening Goldsworth Road" development (planning application reference: PLAN/2020/0568). The group can be contacted on oaksandvalefarmroad@gmail.com
- 1.3 Chestnut Planning has been instructed by Oaks Road and Vale Farm Road Residents Group/local residents to review the revised planning application PLAN/2020/0568, prepare a report on the issues that are relevant to the revised scheme.
- 1.4 An assessment has been undertaken of the proposed development.
- 1.5 As part of our assessment, we have identified the following areas of concern:
  - The status of the resolution to grant scheme
  - The need for a comprehensive masterplan for Woking Town Centre – now is the time to engage with the local community and key stakeholders
  - The appropriateness of the tall buildings in this location – in light of the concerns of Guildford Borough Council, the recent refused development elsewhere and the scale of the proposed development
  - The proposed layout of the scheme – including separation distances which fall below the Council's guidance
  - The impact on residential properties adjoining the application site – including daylight and sunlight standards below the BRE standard
  - Residential density – a significantly higher density than Victoria Square is proposed due to the reliance on 1 bed and studio apartments
  - The impact on residential properties within the site
  - The under provision of affordable housing
  - Dwelling mix – due to the over reliance on 1 bed and studio apartments which do not meet the Council's Housing Need
  - Impact on Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA)

- Loss of Commercial Floorspace
- Planning obligations

1.6 This report is set out as follows:

Section 2 – sets out a description of the proposed development

Section 3 – provides a site description

Section 4 – identifies the planning history for the site and the surrounding area

Section 5 – provides the policy framework relevant to the proposed development

Section 6 – reviews the planning considerations relevant to the determination of the proposed development

Section 7 - concludes

## **2 Proposed Development**

2.1 The application site is at Land to The North and South Of Goldsworth Road Woking Surrey GU21 6JT (the "Application Site").

2.2 The proposed development is for:

*"Demolition of all existing buildings and redevelopment of the site for a phased mixed-use scheme, comprising 929 residential units (Class C3), communal residential and operational spaces, commercial uses (Classes A1/A2/A3/A4/B1/D1/D2) at ground floor and homeless shelter (sui generis) within 5 blocks of varying heights of between 9 and 37 storeys (including rooftop amenity) to the north and south sides of the site together with soft and hard landscaping including public realm works, highway alterations to Goldsworth Road, car parking, cycle parking, bin storage, ancillary facilities and plant (Environmental Statement submitted) (amended plans and reports received 13.11.2020). (the "Proposed Development").*

## **3 Site Description**

3.1 The site lies within Woking Town Centre and has an area of 1.15 ha. It lies on the north and south of Goldsworth Road. It contains a number of buildings namely:

- 15 – 29 Goldsworth Road
- 8 Church Street West
- 20 – 32 Goldsworth Road
- Woking Railway Athletic Club (WRAC)

3.2 The southern boundary of the site is the South-Western Railway line.

3.3 The existing buildings on the site range from 2 to 4 stories. The buildings are in a variety of uses including:

- Offices
- Woking Railway Athletic Club
- York Road Project – a day centre for the homeless

3.4 The site does not lie in a conservation area and none of the buildings are statutorily listed or local listed.

## 4 Planning History

- 4.1 The Planning Application Site has an extensive planning history, as identified in the Applicant's planning statement. Most relevant to the current planning application is the 2016 resolution to grant application.
- 4.2 In October 2016, the local authority resolved to grant planning permission for *Demolition and clearance of the site and erection of a phased development comprising 560 residential units, 10,582 sqm of offices, 843 sqm of retail and gym use (A1-A4 and D2) with 395 parking spaces, public realm improvements and highway works to Goldsworth Road. Surrey, GU22 7RF (New Central Development) Page 12 of 62 Block A to comprise ground plus 34 storeys, Block B comprising ground plus 25 and 20 storeys, and Block C comprising ground plus 17, 14 and 10 storeys*" (local authority reference PLAN/2016/0742).
- 4.3 It is understood that the legal agreement associated with the planning application was never signed and therefore the decision notice was never issued. We refer to this scheme henceforth as the "2016 Resolved to Grant Scheme".
- 4.4 There are a number of planning applications recently considered by the Council in the surrounding area, namely Crown Place and Commercial Way. Both of these applications (as detailed below) were refused due the proposed height proportions, bulk, scale, massing and design. Both were lower in height than the proposed development.
- 4.5 Planning permission was refused at Planning Committee in March 2020 for:

*Demolition of all existing buildings including existing footbridge to Victoria Way Car Park and redevelopment of site to provide a new building ranging from 5 to 28 storeys plus basement level comprising up to 366 residential units (Use Class C3), commercial (Use Classes A1/A2/A3) and community uses (Use Classes D1/D2) at ground floor and first floor level and associated internal and external amenity spaces, basement level car parking, cycle parking, bin storage, ancillary facilities, plant, new public realm, landscaping and highway works*" (local authority reference: PLAN/2019/1141)

at Crown Place, Chertsey Road, Woking for the following reasons

- 1. The proposed development, by reason of the height, proportions, bulk, scale, massing and design of the development, would fail to respect the prevailing character, height and scale of development in the area. The proposal would consequently result in a harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area, contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policies CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', Supplementary Planning Document 'Woking Design' (2015) and the NPPF (2019).*
- 2. The proposed development would fail to deliver sufficient affordable housing and in the absence of a Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure affordable housing, it cannot be determined that the proposed development would make sufficient contribution towards affordable housing. The proposal is therefore contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS12 'Affordable Housing', Supplementary Planning Document 'Affordable Housing Delivery' (2014) and the NPPF (2019).*
- 3. In the absence of a Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure contributions towards mitigation measures, it cannot be determined that the net additional dwellings arising from the proposed development would not have a significant impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, contrary*

to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS8 'Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas', the Thames Basin Heaths Avoidance Strategy (2010 - 2015), saved policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (2009) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (SI No. 490 - the "Habitats Regulations).

4.6 Planning permission was refused at Planning Committee in March 2020 for:

*"Demolition of existing building and erection of a building of varying heights of between 2 and 39 storeys plus ground and basement levels comprising 310 dwellings (Class C3), communal residential and operational spaces, bar (Class A4) and office accommodation (Class B1(a)), together with associated vehicular and pedestrian accesses, vehicle parking, bin and cycle storage, plant space, soft and hard landscaping including public realm works and other ancillary works (amended plans, reports and Environmental Statement received 10.01.2020)" (local authority reference PLAN/2019/0611)"*

at 81 Commercial Way, Woking, Surrey for the following reasons:

- 1. The proposed development, by reason of the height, proportions, bulk, scale, massing and design of the development, would fail to respect the prevailing character, height and scale of development in the area and would harm the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed building (Christ Church). The proposal would consequently result in a harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area and would fail to preserve the setting of the adjacent listed building, contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policies CS20 'Heritage and Conservation', CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', Woking DMP DPD (2016) policy DM20 'Heritage Assets and their Settings', Supplementary Planning Document 'Woking Design' (2015) and the NPPF (2019).*
- 2. The proposed development would fail to deliver sufficient affordable housing and in the absence of a Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure affordable housing, it cannot be determined that the proposed development would make sufficient contribution towards affordable housing. The proposal is therefore contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS12 'Affordable Housing', Supplementary Planning Document 'Affordable Housing Delivery' (2014) and the NPPF (2019).*
- 3. It has not been demonstrated that the proposed development would not cause harm to protected species or habitats or that the proposed development would not result in a net loss of biodiversity on the proposal site. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS7 'Biodiversity and Nature Conservation' and the NPPF (2019).*
- 4. In the absence of a Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure contributions towards mitigation measures, it cannot be determined that the net additional dwellings arising from the proposed development would not have a significant impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS8 'Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas', the Thames Basin Heaths Avoidance Strategy (2010 - 2015), saved policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (2009) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (SI No. 490 - the "Habitats Regulations").*

4.7 A planning application was submitted in July 2018 for:

*"Demolition of existing buildings and erection of a mixed-use development comprising two buildings; a 34 storey residential building comprising 174 self-contained flats (46 one bed, 112 two bed and 16 three bed) (C3 use) and a 5xstorey office building (2,324 sqm GEA B1 floorspace), basement car parking comprising 57 parking spaces, cycle parking, bin storage and landscaping" (local*

authority reference PLAN/2018/0660) at Concord House Concord House, 165 Church Street East And Griffin House, Christchurch Way Woking Surrey GU21 6HJ

4.8 This planning application remains undetermined at the present time.

## **5 Planning Policy and Guidance**

5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 ("NPPF") is relevant to the planning application. Paragraph 11 identifies that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 12 goes on to state that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as a starting point for decision making.

5.2 Paragraph 23 states:

*Broad locations for development should be indicated on a key diagram, and landuse designations and allocations identified on a policies map. Strategic policies should provide a clear strategy for bringing sufficient land forward, and at a sufficient rate, to address objectively assessed needs over the plan period, in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This should include planning for and allocating sufficient sites to deliver the strategic priorities of the area (except insofar as these needs can be demonstrated to be met more appropriately through other mechanisms, such as brownfield registers or nonstrategic policies)*

5.3 Paragraph 58 of the NPPF states that:

*"Where up-to-date policies have set out the contributions expected from development, planning applications that comply with them should be assumed to be viable. It is up to the applicant to demonstrate whether particular circumstances justify the need for a viability assessment at the application stage. The weight to be given to a viability assessment is a matter for the decision maker having regard to all the circumstances in the case, including whether the plan and the viability evidence underpinning it is up to date, and any change in site circumstances since the plan was brought into force"*

5.4 Paragraph 125(c) states that local planning authorities should approve applications which they consider to make best use of land and when considering applications for housing, authorities should take a flexible approach in applying policies or guidance relating to daylight and sunlight where they would otherwise inhibit making efficient use of a site (as long as the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards).

5.5 Paragraph 126 and 127 specifically refer to design. Paragraph 126 states:

*"The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process."*

5.6 Paragraph 127 goes on to state:



*" Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers."*

5.7 Paragraph 134 goes on to state::

*"Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design<sup>52</sup>, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:*  
*a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or*  
*b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings."*

#### Woking Core Strategy

5.8 The Woking Town Centre Proposals Map Inset identifies that the site falls into 3 allocated sites, namely:

UA11  
UA12  
UA13

5.9 Policy CS1 of the Local Plan identifies that Woking Town Centre will be the primary focus of sustainable growth to maintain its status as an economic hub with a flourishing, diverse and innovative economy, is designated as a centre to undergo significant change and that well designed, high density development, that could include tall buildings and which enhances its image will be encouraged, but without compromising its character and appearance and that of nearby area.

5.10 Policy CS2 provides a policy specific to Woking Town Centre. It states that new development proposals should deliver high quality, well designed public spaces and buildings which make efficient use of land, contribute to the functionality of the centre and add to its attractiveness and competitiveness.

5.11 Policy CS7 biodiversity and nature conservation states that development proposals to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and geodiversity features and also explore opportunities to create and manage new ones where it is appropriate.

5.12 Policy CS8 is concerned with the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area. It requires that new residential development beyond a 400m threshold, but within 5 kilometres of the TBH SPA boundary, should make an appropriate contribution towards the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM), to avoid impacts of such development on the SPA.

- 5.13 Policy CS10 identifies that higher densities will be permitted in principle where they can be justified in terms of the sustainability of the location and where the character of an area would not be compromised. For Woking Town Centre it identifies that densities in excess of 200 dwellings per hectare would be appropriate.
- 5.14 Policy CS11 identifies that all residential proposals will be expected to provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes to address the nature of local needs as evidenced in the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- 5.15 Policy CS12 is associated with affordable housing, it states that all new residential development on previously developed (brownfield) land will be expected to contribute towards the provision of affordable housing and that, on sites providing 15 or more dwellings, or on sites of over 0.5ha (irrespective of the number of dwellings proposed), the Council will require 40% of dwellings to be affordable.
- 5.16 Policy CS15 encourages sustainable economic growth within the borough. It seeks to ensure sustainable employment patterns, promotes smart growth and business competitiveness and allow for flexibility to cater for the changing needs of the economy.
- 5.17 Policy CS17 open space, green infrastructure, sport and recreation identifies that all proposals for new residential development (other than replacement dwellings) will be required to contribute towards the provision of open space and green infrastructure, including the following: children's play areas and outdoor recreational facilities for young people. outdoor sports facilities. Developers will be expected to contribute to provision through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or on larger sites through on-site provision and/or a S106 contribution as appropriate. Development involving the loss of open space will not be permitted unless: alternative and equivalent or better provision is made available in the vicinity or the development is directly related to the enhancement of the open space.
- 5.18 Policy CS21 provides the Council's policy in terms of design. It is an important policy consideration for this planning application.
- 5.19 Policy CS21 states that development should create new buildings that are attractive with their own distinct identity, should respect and make a positive contribution to the street scene and character of the area paying due regard to scale, height, proportions, layout and materials.
- 5.20 It goes on to state that tall buildings could be supported in Woking Town Centre, if well designed and justified in the context. The policy identifies that the impacts of any proposal will be fully assessed and an Area Action Plan will be prepared to set out details of how it will be managed.
- 5.21 Policy CS21 also advises that proposals for new development should achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjoining properties, avoiding significant harmful impact in terms of loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight, or an overbearing effect due to bulk, proximity or loss of outlook.
- 5.22 Furthermore, Policy CS21 states that proposals for new development should, inter alia, be designed in an inclusive way to be accessible to all members of the community, regardless of any disability and to encourage sustainable means of travel, ensure schemes provide appropriate levels of private and public amenity



space and ensure the building is adaptable to allow scope for changes to be made to meet the needs of the occupier (life time homes and modern business needs).

- 5.23 Policy CS22 is concerned with sustainable construction, it identifies that new residential development on previously developed land will be required to meet the energy and Carbon Dioxide (CO<sup>2</sup>) and water components of the Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 (or any future national requirement) from now until 31 March 2013, the energy and CO<sup>2</sup> and water components of at least Code level 4 from 1 April 2013 and the energy and CO<sup>2</sup> and water components of Code level 5 from 1 April 2016. New residential development is encouraged to meet the full requirements of each Code level, with particular encouragement for the material and ecology elements. Where the scale, nature and location of a development would justify a higher Code level, the Council will negotiate with developers to achieve that because of the lower cost of developing such sites.
- 5.24 Policy CS23 is concerned with renewable and low carbon energy generation. It identifies that the Council recognises significant progress needs to be made if national targets for the generation of renewable energy are to be met and encourages the development of stand-alone renewable energy installations in the Borough. All proposals will be considered on their individual merits with regard to scale, location, technology type and cumulative impact on the surrounding area.
- 5.25 It goes on to state that applicants should take appropriate steps to mitigate any adverse impacts of proposed development through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures. All reasonable steps to minimise noise impacts should be taken.
- 5.26 Policy CS24 is also relevant to the proposed development it sets out the Council's planning policy in respect of the landscape and townscape, It identifies that future development should be well-suited and sensitive to its location to protect the Borough's different character areas, whilst accommodating the change needed to contribute to environmental, social and economic objectives. Development in this location should enhance the townscape character of Woking Town Centre, taking into account views and landmarks, appropriate building styles and materials.
- 5.27 Policy CS25 sets out the Council's policy in respect of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It identifies that 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 jointly to find solutions which mean that 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 Core Strategy and/or other development plans for the area (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

#### Development Management Policies DPD (Adopted)

- 5.28 The Development Management Policies DPD was adopted in October 2016.
- 5.29 Policy DM1 states that new green infrastructure assets required to support development and the general community will be expected to be designed and located to maximize the range of green infrastructure functions and benefits.

- 5.30 Policy DM6 states that an air quality assessment will be required for schemes proposing, inter alia, development in excess of 100 dwellings or 10,000 sqm other floorspace (or equivalent combination) anywhere in the Borough.
- 5.31 Policy DM7 requires a statement detailing potential noise generation levels and any mitigation measures proposed to ensure that all noise is reduced to an acceptable level, stating that development will only be permitted where mitigation can be provided to an appropriate standard with an acceptable design, particularly in proximity to sensitive existing uses or sites.
- 5.32 Policy DM16 requires servicing facilities to be well designed, built to accommodate the demands of new development and sensitively integrated into the development and the surrounding townscape and streetscape. In particular, servicing activities should not give rise to traffic congestion, conflict with pedestrians, or other road users, or be detrimental to residential amenity.
- 5.33 Policy DM17 identifies that development should create or contribute to a safe, attractive, high quality, inclusive and legible public realm that contributes positively to local character and identity and encourages appropriate levels of activity and social interaction.

Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight Supplementary Planning Document (2008)

- 5.34 In terms of amenity space SPD Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight (2008) does not form part of the Development Plan although it provides guidance on how Policy CS21 could be applied.
- 5.35 The SPD identifies that:
- "dwellings specifically designed not to be used for family accommodation do not require any specific area to be set aside for each as private amenity space. This would apply to one and two bedroom flats and any other forms of dwelling less than 65sq.m. floorspace together with specified forms of non family tenure. It goes on to state - however, all forms of dwelling should seek to incorporate some modest private sunlit area...at higher levels, particularly in the case of flats, a simple terrace or balcony might be incorporated"*

- 5.36 It also identifies that:

*"in the most dense urban locations of Woking Town Centre...where multi storey developments including flats, duplex apartments and townhouses are intended for family accommodation (for this purpose all flats or duplex apartments with two bedrooms or more and exceeding 65 sq.m. gross floor space) alternative forms of on-site amenity provision may be permitted in lieu of a conventional private garden...use of a communal amenity space or, where it is safe to do so, a suitable area of landscaped roof garden or terrace, may be acceptable for this purpose if it provides an equivalent area of amenity value".*

- 5.37 The document identifies that:

- 5.38 *"For three storey or taller accommodation (including dwellings with second floor dormer windows), a separation distance of approximately 30m will be adequate to prevent overlooking of dwellings of a similar or lesser height."*

5.39 The SPD also states:

*"When considering development proposals it is important not to prejudice future daylight requirements by building too close to the boundary."*

#### Draft Site Allocations DPD

5.40 The Council has prepared a Site Allocations DPD, however this remains in draft. The examination took place during December 2019. The Site Allocations DPD also takes a long-term strategic view of the future and safeguards land to meet future development needs beyond the present Core Strategy period (between 2027 and 2040). It was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 21 July 2019. The references made to the Draft DPD are taken from the Draft Site Allocations DPD Regulation 19 Version with Proposed Modifications July 2019.

5.41 A number of allocations are covered by planning application site namely, UA11, UA12 and UA13.

5.42 Allocation UA11 is for 1 – 7 Victoria Way and 1 – 29 Goldsworth Road. It identifies that the site could yield at least 55 dwellings, 1200 sqm office floorspace (3000 sqm gross) and retail floorspace. The document identifies that:

*This 0.3 ha site is allocated for mixed use to comprise of retail, office and residential development including Affordable Housing.*

To achieve this, the development must address the following key requirements:

- Development to complement that of other Western Approach allocated sites and the Victoria Square development, to ensure effective integration of the development (see also Proposal Sites UA10, UA12 and UA13);
- Community Infrastructure Levy towards infrastructure provision;
- Contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring to mitigate the impacts of residential development of the site on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area;
- Contribution towards Affordable Housing provision in accordance with Policy CS12: Affordable Housing of the Core Strategy, in this case 40% to be provided on site;
- Appropriate and adequate provision of car and cycle parking in accordance with the adopted car and cycle parking standards but that takes into account the sites sustainable location and will not compromise on highway safety;
- A Travel Plan to minimise car use of prospective occupants of the development;
- The development should make improvements to the quality of the public realm;
- Servicing areas should be accommodated within the site;
- An effective access arrangement to ensure highway safety;
- Building elevations should respect adjoining properties, provide appropriate levels of
- daylight and sunlight for internal environments and be of a high design quality that enhances the local and wider Town Centre character;
- Development should directly address the street scene on the ground floor to add interest and vibrancy to the street;
- Building heights should consider the local and wider Town Centre context whilst ensuring there are no adverse environmental effects in terms of micro-climate, wind, overshadowing and glare;

- Development will be required to demonstrate how the implications of light pollution, wind and visual impacts have been addressed;
- The development should consider local and long distance views of the development;
- Development will need to carefully consider the transition in building heights from 34 storey at Victoria Square to 3 storey at 31 Goldsworth Road;
- Building footprints should be of an appropriate scale to reflect the grain and character of adjacent development;
- Buildings should be of exceptional design quality and have regard to this prominent corner position and vibrancy at ground floor level;
- Density of development should maximise the efficient use of this prominent site without compromising the general character of the area;
- The storage of waste and recyclable materials should be incorporated into the design of the building to minimise street clutter;
- Proportionate on-site measures to support the creation, protection, enhancement and management of local biodiversity and Green Infrastructure;
- The development should retain any trees of amenity value;
- Development should consider complementing the retail choice on offer within the adjacent Primary Shopping Area with opportunities for independent businesses;
- Due to the built up nature of the site and surrounding area surface water flooding should be mitigated in the design of the development;
- Development to meet relevant Sustainable Drainage Systems requirements at the time of planning application for the development of the site;
- The surface water drainage strategy submitted to support the redevelopment of the site should aim to be reduced to the pre development greenfield runoff rate, due to the existing surface water flooding incidents recorded within the area;
- Subject to technical feasibility and financial viability the development will be required to connect to the existing or proposed CHP network unless it can be demonstrated that a better alternative for reducing carbon emissions from the development can be achieved;
- Building(s) should be designed to be adaptable or capable of being adaptable to allow scope for changes to be made to meet the needs of the occupier. Lifetime homes will be encouraged for the residential element of the development;
- Development to meet relevant sustainable construction requirements at the time of planning application for the development of the site;
- Any other site specific and other requirements will be determined on a case by case basis depending on the nature of the scheme that would come forward.

5.43 Site allocation UA12 relates to Synergy House, 8 Church Street, Woking. The 0.02ha site is allocated for office development. It is anticipated that the site could yield at least 900 sqm office floorspace (1000 sqm gross). Development should complement the other Western Approach sites to ensure effective integration of the development. The allocation provides a list of requirements similar to Site Allocation UA12. In addition, it identifies the need to retain the electricity sub station.

5.44 Site allocation UA13 relates to 30 – 32 Woking Railway and Athletic Club, Systems House, and Bridge House, Goldsworth Road, Woking. This is a 0.72ha site which is allocated for mixed use to comprise of residential, office, and retail development.

It is anticipated that the site could yield at least 125 dwellings, 1500 sqm additional office floorspace (10,000 sqm gross) and retail floorspace. The allocation provides a list of key requirements similar to those set out in UA11. It requires that:

- Contribution towards Affordable Housing provision in accordance with Policy CS12: Affordable Housing of the Core Strategy, in this case 50% to be provided on site
- Building elevations should respect adjoining properties, provide appropriate levels of daylight and sunlight for internal environments and be of a high design quality that enhances the local and wider Town Centre character;
- The development should mitigate the impact of noise from the adjacent railway line to protect residential amenity;
- Historical contaminative uses may have led to soil and groundwater contamination that will need to be considered during any change of use of this site, dependent on detailed proposals and consultation with Environmental Health and the Environment Agency. Investigation would be required and remediation likely

#### The Woking Design SPD 2015

5.45 The Woking Design SPD (2015) sets out detailed design guidance for new developments. With regards to proposals involving tall buildings, Section 4.4 of the SPD sets out a number of criteria against which proposals will be considered, these include:

- *"Be of exceptional design quality and subject to a formalised design review process during the evolution of the scheme;*
- *Not adversely affect the site's surrounds in terms of micro-climate, wind, overshadowing, glare, aviation navigation and telecommunications interference;*
- *Take account of key views both across the site and long views towards the building itself. Design proposals will need to take into account the need for the building to be designed so it is seen in the round; and*
- *Pay particular attention to the environment created at ground floor. Proposals must be appropriate to the streets and spaces they address and should exploit opportunities for improvement of existing and creation of new public spaces."*

5.46 The SPD provides a tall building strategy for Woking Town Centre. Under the heading scale it states that:

*"Whilst the scale of a new tall building will be definition contrast with surrounding buildings, proposals must make a positive contribution to the townscape and skyline and help improve the legibility of the town. Proposals for tall buildings must demonstrate their effect on the historic context of the town centre and applicants should supply imagery indicating their visual impact from key locations . Proposals should have a positive relationship with topographical features and other tall buildings, with the virtue of clusters, as perceived from all directions, taken into consideration."*

## **6 Planning Considerations**

6.1 The main planning considerations associated with this application where we have identified areas of concern are as follows, this list is not exhaustive and we would

reserve the right to add to should time allow prior to the determination of the application:

- The Status of the Resolution to Grant Scheme
- The need for a comprehensive masterplan for Woking Town Centre
- The appropriateness of the tall buildings in this location
- The proposed layout of the scheme – including separation distances
- The impact on residential properties adjoining the application site – including daylight and sunlight
- Residential density
- The impact on residential properties within the site
- The under provision of affordable housing
- Dwelling mix
- Impact on Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Loss of Commercial Floorspace
- Planning obligations

#### The Status of the Resolution to Grant Scheme

6.2 The 2016 Scheme has never been determined. Therefore, consideration needs to be had to the weight that should be given to this scheme.

6.3 The Council in their Committee Report (January 2021) states that the principle of mixed-use development on the site has been established.

6.4 In the *Slough Estates Ltd. v Slough Borough Council* [1969] CA, Lord Denning M.R.'s states:

*"The permission must be construed together with the plan which was submitted and was incorporated into it, see Wilson v. West Sussex County Council (1963 2 Q.B. 764). I confine myself to the plan. I do not think it is permissible to look at the Resolution of the County Council or the correspondence, for neither of them was incorporated into the permission, see Miller-Mead v. Minister of Housing and Local Government and Anr. (1963 2 Q.B. 223-234) by Lord Justice Upjohn. The reason for excluding them is this: The grant of planning permission has to be in writing (see the General Interim Development Order 1945, Article 12) and it runs with the land. The grant is not made when the County Council resolve to give permission. It is only made when their Clerk, on their authority, issues the permission to the applicant. Seeing that it has to be in writing, you can only look to the permission itself and the documents incorporated in it. In this case there was one important document incorporated in the Permission. "*

6.5 In the *Co-operative Retail Services Ltd v Taff Ely Borough Council* [1979] the Court of Appeal decided the resolution was not the grant of planning permission. In *R v West Oxfordshire Borough Council. ex p CH Pearce Homes Ltd* [1986], Woolf J fully reviewed the case law and decided that the decision of the planning committee could not by itself be the planning permission.

6.6 As a consequence, the resolution does not itself constitute a planning permission and only a formal document authorised by the committee and issued under the signature of the head of development control constitutes a planning permission.

6.7 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that where, in making any determination under the planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.



- 6.8 Therefore, whilst some weight can be given to the 2016 scheme it does not afford the weight of a planning permission.
- 6.9 The local authority has the opportunity to consider the individual merits of the current scheme having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations.

The Need for a Comprehensive Masterplan for Woking Town Centre

- 6.10 The adopted Local Plan identifies that the Planning Application Site currently lies within town centre and falls within 3 site allocation areas.
- 6.11 As identified above, the Draft Site Allocations DPD has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination in order to assess the soundness of the document.
- 6.12 The Woking Tall Buildings Design Review Panel organised through Design South East ("The Design Review Panel") have provided design feedback on the proposed development. When reviewing the pre planning application design, the Panel stated:

*"In the absence of a tall building framework or wider public realm framework for Woking Town Centre to guide the location of tall buildings, we cannot comment on whether this is the correct location for buildings of this height or on whether these proposals are the appropriate height for this location. We can comment on the design quality of the proposed scheme and on its impact on the town and surrounding environment, but we are conscious that we are commenting on the scheme without clarity about its potential future relationship with others coming forward, despite the fact that the impact on the townscape will be collective. As tall building developments in Woking town centre progress, issues arising out of the absence of a tall building or public realm framework will become more prevalent; this is of increasing concern."*

- 6.13 Furthermore, the two planning applications at Crown Place and Commercial Way were recently refused by the Council's Planning Committee (see planning history above). Both of these applications were refused on, inter alia, their height, scale, design and massing. The Crown Place refusal has been appealed. At the time of writing the statement, an appeal has been submitted and site visit arranged. The outcome of this appeal will be an important material consideration.
- 6.14 It is clear that the character of Woking is changing. The Victoria Square development is nearing completion and it has had a dramatic impact on the skyline both within Woking and from further away. Views of this development can be seen from various locations in Surrey and beyond e.g from the Hogs Back, Chobham Common, Knaphill, Send Marsh, Bright Hill and Sutton Green.
- 6.15 It is noted that when consulted on the Crown Place and Commercial Way schemes, Guildford Borough Council's comments to the Council were as follows:
- "The cumulative impact of high-rise buildings to the east and west of Woking town centre result in a cluttering of skyline that would have a harmful impact on sensitive, long range strategic views from Guildford borough"*.
- 6.16 We agree with the comments made by the Surrey Design Panel that there is a need for a comprehensive plan for Woking Town Centre. The Draft Site Allocations

DPD does not appear to fully consider the cumulative impact of the level of development within the town centre and furthermore it is evident that a lower level of development was originally anticipated in the Draft Site Allocations DPD.

6.17 Policy CS21 identified that an Area Action Plan would be prepared to set out details of how tall buildings will be managed. We can find no reference to this document being prepared by the Council on the Council's website. It is noted that the Council has now decided to prepare a masterplan for the town centre (see below).

6.18 It is agreed that there is a need for regeneration of the town centre and it is acknowledged that there is a "resolved to grant" scheme for part of the site. However, the need for regeneration should not be at cost of good urban design.

6.19 The Government is considering speeding up the planning process. In the Government's White Paper Planning for the Future (August 2020), it states:

*"Planning decisions are discretionary rather than rules-based: nearly all decisions to grant consent are undertaken on a case-by-case basis, rather than determined by clear rules for what can and cannot be done. This makes the English planning system and those derived from it an exception internationally, and it has the important consequences of increasing planning risk, pushing up the cost of capital for development and discouraging both."*

6.20 It goes on to state that:

*"There is not enough focus on design, and little incentive for high quality new homes and places: There is insufficient incentive within the process to bring forward proposals that are beautiful and which will enhance the environment, health, and character of local areas. Local Plans do not provide enough certainty around the approved forms of development, relying on vague and verbal statements of policy rather than the popularly endorsed visual clarity that can be provided by binding design codes."*

6.21 The Government's objectives in the White Paper are clearly set out, they include, inter alia:

- *"be more ambitious for the places we create, expecting new development to be beautiful and to create a 'net gain' not just 'no net harm'";*
- *support home ownership, helping people and families own their own beautiful, affordable, green and safe homes, with ready access to better infrastructure and green spaces;*
- *create a virtuous circle of prosperity in our villages, towns and cities, supporting their ongoing renewal and regeneration without losing their human scale, inheritance and sense of place. We need to build more homes at gentle densities in and around town centres and high streets, on brownfield land and near existing infrastructure so that families can meet their aspirations. Good growth will make it easier to level up the economic and social opportunities available to communities."*

6.22 These aspirations have now been written into the new NPPF. The NPPF which places great emphasis on beautiful and well-designed schemes.

6.23 It appears that there is an opportunity in Woking to establish a good quality town centre through the provision of a set of clear and comprehensive building design codes as envisaged by the Government. Rather than development happening in a piecemeal fashion, bringing development forward through a comprehensive vision

for the town. This has been achieved in many other locations within Surrey, for example Transform Leatherhead.

6.24 The Government places great focus on placemaking and this opportunity should not be lost in Woking. Indeed, the White Paper identifies that: *each local planning authority has a chief officer for design and place-making.*

6.25 The Council's Five Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement 2019 states:

*"Woking Borough has a total five year housing land supply at 1 April 2019 to enable the delivery of 2,913 net additional dwellings. This compares with the Core Strategy requirement of 1,460 net additional dwellings for the five year period or the Core Strategy requirement, historic undersupply compensation and 5% buffer of 1,619 net additional dwellings. This represents a surplus of 1,453 net additional dwellings against the housing requirement and an overall housing land supply of 10.0 years between 2019/20 and 2023/24"*

6.26 Site allocations are included within this calculation. The Council allows for 180 dwellings on the UA11 and UA13 sites. Consequently, the Council does not have a pressing need to approve residential development in order to meet its housing land supply needs.

6.27 Essentially, now is the time to work with the community to draw up a set of design codes and aspirations for the town centre, in line with the aspirations of the Government to build a better Woking.

6.28 It is understood that the Council decided in July 2021 to prepare a masterplan for the town centre.

6.29 It is understood that the new masterplan will take a holistic view to the future development within Woking town centre. The new Town Centre Master Plan will take up to three years to prepare. This masterplan will allow full engagement with local residents and other stakeholders to bring forward a development which is both sustainable and design led approach to the regeneration of the town centre.

6.30 The preparation of this document is welcomed.

#### The appropriateness of the tall buildings in this location

6.31 The Council makes in clear in Policy CS21 that tall buildings should be of well designed. The Design Panel did not comment on the appropriateness of tall buildings in Woking due the absence of tall building framework.

6.32 Our assessment has had regard to the 2016 Resolved to Grant Scheme. The current scheme involves and additional parcel of land on the north side of Goldsworth Road.

6.33 There is an absence of a detailed guidance on tall buildings in Woking as set above. The guidance in the SPD makes it clear that the scale of tall buidings should make a positive contribution to the townscape and skyline and help improve the legibility of the town.

6.34 Whilst it acknowledged that there will be tall buildings within the town centre there is a need for them to make a positive contribution to the street scene having regard to scale, height and massing. The proposed layout results in a tall building within a development block which has a variety of building heights. It is noted

within Site Allocation UA12 that the recently built hotel next to Synergy House dwarfs the building. Introducing a series of tall buildings into the block will further impact on the imbalance of building heights in this particular block. Furthermore, it will dwarf above buildings within the area to the north. In addition, it will create an awkward juxtaposition with the building on the corner of Goldsworth Road and Victoria Way.

- 6.35 Furthermore, the relationship with the wider area needs further consideration. Beyond the site lies a large area of two storey residential buildings which will be dwarfed by the proposed development.
- 6.36 In order to achieve good design, the proposals should not compromise the character of the surrounding area. The introduction of the towers within the block to the north of Goldsworth Road will affect the character of that block itself and the land to the north and west.
- 6.37 As a consequence, it is considered that the proposals are contrary to Policy CS21 of the Local Plan due to the scale and massing of 37 Storey Tower north of Goldsworth Road. The proposals are also contrary to the tenets of Policy CS1 which promotes high density which doesn't compromise the character of the surrounding area. Furthermore, the proposals are contrary to Policy CS24 which seeks to enhance the townscape character of Woking town centre.
- 6.38 Furthermore, the increase in height of the development in the parcel of land to the south of Goldsworth Road will have a further impact on the character of the immediate and wider area. The 2016 Resolved to Grant Scheme resulted in blocks stepping down from Victoria Square. The revised planning application results in a T3 being 116.5m in height (+147.825m AOD). The Victoria Square Tower 1 is 34 stories with a height of 109m (+141.400m AOD). The Applicant's drawings clearly show that Tower T3 will dominate the Application Site and the surrounding area. The 2016 Resolved to Grant scheme was a maximum of 34 stories (drawing T(20)E02/A shows a FFL of 147.825m (upper crown). Notwithstanding the reduction in height, the proposed layout (especially given the reduced separation distances) will further change the character of this part of Woking. It is our understanding that Victoria Square was intended to be the tallest building within the town centre. Given Guildford Borough Council's concerns about the cluttering of the skyline as a result of the development coming forward in Woking it will be important to ensure that this is not further exacerbated.
- 6.39 The CGI presented at page 85 of the Applicant's Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment clearly shows that the proposed development will sit higher than the existing development at Victoria Square. The document discusses the tapering effect of the development, however the proposed development will be taller, at its highest point, than Victoria Square. We cannot see how adding a taller building can represent 'tapering'. Even with the revised scheme the Development will still sit higher than the Victoria Square scheme.
- 6.40 The Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment makes an assessment on the long range views as requested by Guildford Borough Council. These images show that the proposed development will be visible from many key viewpoints within Surrey. The applicant identifies that these views will be of a minor positive impact. It would appear however that the additional development will further add the level of development seen from the various viewpoints considered.

- 6.41 In order to ensure that the heights of the building are appropriate there is also a need to ensure that there are adequate separation distances between the proposed blocks. This is important to ensure that the proposals make a positive contribution to the street scene as well ensuring a good quality living environment for the future residents and those who live adjacent to the site. This is discussed in detail below.

#### The Overall Design Principles

- 6.42 The checklist set out in the Design SPD is useful in assessing the appropriateness of the development. We assume that the Council will consider the scheme against this checklist.

*Is the proposal's footprint appropriate to the size of the plot?*

- 6.43 The plot ratio appears extremely high in terms of development in Surrey generally. It would be more typical of intense inner city development. Whilst, nearby recent development (Victoria Square) features high plot ratios, the proposals in this case appear to represent a substantial increase over these.

*Does the layout enable pedestrian and cyclist permeability?*

- 6.44 The scheme would create a pedestrian route on Goldsworth Road. This will result in the closing off of Goldsworth Road to vehicular traffic. The development should ensure that it is accessible to all and that appropriate levels are achieved across the site.

What is each edge of the building addressing and is its treatment appropriate to that condition?

- 6.45 The Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment show that the buildings will result in a massive change in the character and appearance of this a part of Woking. The proposed increase in heights, in particular, would completely and fundamentally change this part of the town.

*Are the building's uses located correctly in relation to the external environment and is the choice of uses appropriate for this location?*

- 6.46 The principle of commercial uses at ground floor level, related to the public spaces, is sound.

*Does the proposal respect the amenities of neighbouring properties?*

- 6.47 The original application ES identified that the development would result 61.1% of windows on sensitive receptors on properties adjacent to the application site below the BRE standard for Vertical Sky Component ("VSC") and 66% are below the standard for No-Sky Line ("NSL") (see below). Following the revised scheme, the Applicant submitted an ES statement of conformity. Under the chapter Daylight, Sunlight, Overshading and Glare it states:

*"In relation to overshadowing no significant effects were considered likely to occur as a result of the June 2020 proposed development. Given the worst-case effect is represented in the 2020 June ES it is confirmed that the amendments to the proposed development will not give rise to any new, additional or different likely significant environmental effects to those that have been identified and reported*

*within the June 2020 ES. The June 2020 ES remains adequately to assess the significant effects of the development on the environment"*

- 6.48 A revised internal daylight and sunlight report was submitted but did this not consider the impact on the neighbouring properties.
- 6.49 The Applicant states that the majority of properties would retain similar levels of light to those achieved in the 2016 Resolved to Grant Scheme (c. 2% absolute variable). As stated above, the weight to be given to the 2016 is not the same of that as an approved scheme. The new planning application allows an assessment of the amenity of those surrounding the site. The NPPF places great weight on good design. Good design includes the interaction with existing properties and to achieve good design great weight must be given to the amenity of existing occupiers.
- 6.50 The Council's Committee report sets out the following:

*"BS 8233 which provides guidance on sound insulation and noise reduction for buildings recognises the difficulty of providing 'ideal' acoustic conditions in all circumstances where it states: 'it is also recognized that these guideline values are not achievable in all circumstances where development might be desirable. In higher noise areas, such as city centres or urban areas adjoining the strategic transport network, a compromise between elevated noise levels and other factors, such as the convenience of living in these locations or making efficient use of land resources to ensure development needs can be met, might be warranted'. According to BS 8233 balconies are considered less noise-sensitive than indoor spaces.*

*It is acknowledged that the private balconies of the proposed dwellings will have a noise environment that will be higher than the guideline level. The ES states that residents in these areas would have access to nearby amenity areas within the development itself that would provide a substitute for these balconies when high levels of industrial noise are present. Despite the noise balconies have still been provided throughout the development as they can offer other desirable qualities.*

*The applicant has advised that 'The ES in fact states that engineering noise control measures would not bring noise levels into compliance with guideline levels. Physical noise control measures are possible, but they have to be weighed up among other, significant design implications"*

- 6.51 It is clear therefore that there will be a noise impact on the occupiers of the proposed units which is higher than then guideline level. The cumulative effect in not meeting the various guidelines will result in a substandard level of amenity.

Are interior layouts well planned?

- 6.52 We have not reviewed the layouts in detail. We note that the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service have reviewed the layout and states:

*"The internal layout of some of the flats may not be compliant when it is submitted for Building Regulations approval, as the cooking facilities are too close to the means of escape, for example Block BA: A118 T2: A001A & A112 T1: A001A."*

- 6.53 With this in mind, it would appear that a more detailed assessment of the layouts should be undertaken by the developer to ensure that the layouts proposed meet with Building Regulations requirements. It is not unusual for schemes which receive planning permission to be substantially re-planned internally as part of an



'optimisation' stage but any such re-planning is obviously within the approved external form. Therefore, it is critical that this is of sound design before planning permission is granted.

*Is the location and design well considered?*

- 6.54 This scheme includes a very large number of new dwellings with commercial uses, accommodated in closely spaced towers, the tallest of which exceeds the height of the tallest building in the vicinity or anywhere else in the wider surrounding area. It seems to us that the question as to whether it is well located or designed should have been considered as part of a local planning policy, developed with public consultation, resulting in a council approved site brief or masterplan. We are doubtful that a sound decision can be made on this unilaterally prepared scheme, which cannot have the democratic input that should be fundamental to a planned approach. This should be part of a wider town centre masterplan as referred to previously, which the Council is now progressing.

*Have opportunities to provide new or improve existing public spaces been optimised?*

- 6.55 The scheme includes public spaces which could be attractive. However, whether they have been optimised, involves an assessment of their role in and effect in terms of the wider context. As with the location and design, we believe that this should be determined through democratic, local planning processes rather than a unilateral proposal.

*Is the height of the proposal suitable for this part of Woking town centre?*

- 6.56 See section above.

Do the facades appear well designed with good attention to detail?

- 6.57 The Surrey Design Panel has made detailed comments on the proposed development.

#### The Proposed Layout of the Scheme – Including Separation Distances

- 6.58 The Applicant's document identifies that the separation distances between the towers as follows:

*"The separation distances between Buildings T1 and T2 are 22.2m, narrowing to 20.2m where T1 footprint 'steps' towards the courtyard and between T2 and T3; 26.17m, narrowing to 23.1m where T2 steps towards T3"*

- 6.59 The 2016 Resolved to Grant Scheme resulted in 32 and 35m between residential facades and 23m between residential and office facades.
- 6.60 The Victoria Square development adjacent to the application site has separation distances of between 30 and 40m.
- 6.61 The Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight SPD makes it clear that there should be a separation distance of 30m between buildings three stories and higher.
- 6.62 Given the height of the scheme separation distances between the blocks will be important in not only creating a sense of place but also ensuring a good quality development. The increased number of units with substandard daylight/sunlight,

compared with the approved 2016 scheme (see next section), is likely to be the result of the reduced separation between buildings. A separation distance of 20 metres is traditional in two storey housing developments. Whilst the factors are very different with tall, clustered tower development, the 30 metres separation in the DPD, and 30-40 metres achieved at Victoria Square, are plainly what is required. The separations proposed in the current scheme are inadequate.

- 6.63 In allowing tall buildings within the Borough these should not be permitted if they result in poor quality living environments.
- 6.64 The Applicant suggests that the SPD is guidance and that the 30 m is an approximate distance to work towards. Whilst it is guidance, to fall significantly below the guidance results in impacts on the amenity of those within and adjacent to the site.
- 6.65 The applicant has not justified the separation distances falling below the planning policy guidance and it is therefore contrary to the Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy, the Draft Site Allocations DPD and the Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight SPD.

The Impact on Residential Properties Adjoining the Application Site – including Daylight and Sunlight

- 6.66 The Applicant's Environmental Statement identifies that when assessing the impact of daylight and sunlight on the identified sensitive receptors that 61.1% are below the BRE standard for Vertical Sky Component ("VSC") and 66% are below the standard for No-Sky Line ("NSL").
- 6.67 The 2016 Resolved to Grant Scheme resulted in 34.19% falling below the BRE standard for VSC and 7% below for NSL. As set out above, the Applicant states that the majority of properties would retain similar levels of light to those achieved in the 2016 Resolved to Grant Scheme (c. 2% absolute variable). As stated above, the weight to be given to the 2016 is not the same of that as an approved scheme. The new planning application allows an assessment of the amenity of those surrounding the site. The NPPF places great weight on good design. Good design includes the interaction with existing properties and to achieve good design great weight must be given to the amenity of existing occupiers.
- 6.68 The Applicant's planning statement states:
- "Based on the context of the site in terms of its town centre location within an area currently undergoing large scale regeneration and the previous resolution to grant for part of the Site, it is considered that the daylight and sunlight impacts of the proposed scheme on existing buildings is not unreasonable."*
- 6.69 The NPPF makes it clear that a flexible approach in applying policies or guidance relating to daylight sunlight can be applied where there is an existing and anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs. The paragraph identifies that this is acceptable as long as the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards.
- 6.70 The proposed development will result in an impact on the living standards on a number of the sensitive receptors identified by the Applicant. The Draft DPD makes it clear that proposals should provide appropriate levels of daylight and sunlight for internal environments.

- 6.71 Greater housing densities increases the height of buildings, which consequentially inhibits the access of daylight and sunlight to neighbouring dwellings and public amenity areas.
- 6.72 It is therefore considered the impact of the sunlight and daylight is such that it harmful to the adjoining properties and is therefore contrary to Policy CS21 of the Core Strategy the Draft Site Allocations DPD and the Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight SPD.
- 6.73 In addition, whilst not necessarily a planning consideration, it is noted that there are various covenants on the application site. One of which requires:

*"PROVIDED always and it is hereby declared that the Purchasers their successors and assigns shall not be entitled to any right of light or air which would in any manner diminish or interfere with the free and unrestricted user of any adjoining property now belonging to the Vendor either for building or any other purpose and the assurance hereinbefore contained shall not be deemed or construed to imply the grant of any such right."*

The Impact on Residential Properties Within the Site

- 6.74 The Applicant's Revised Internal Daylight and Sunlight and Overshadowing Report states:

*"Overall, 1745 (82.5%) out of all 2114 proposed habitable rooms meet or exceed the BRE recommendation for daylight quantum (ADF), and 1525 (72.1%) achieve the recommended level of sky visibility (NSL)"*

- 6.75 The 2016 Resolved to Grant Scheme was accompanied by a Sunlight, Daylight and Overshadowing Report. This stated:

*"The internal daylight and sunlight provision to the proposed units is generally very good, with the majority of rooms tested satisfying the BRE and British Standard ADF recommendations. Almost all of the instances where the guidelines recommendations are not met relate to living rooms or LKD's that are necessarily deeper spaces to accommodate the requirement for open-plan living arrangements. Over 86% of those LKDs tested achieve the recommended 1.5% ADF target for a living room, and will have daylight distribution to over 80% of the working plane, representing very good levels of daylight for an urban environment."*

- 6.76 The document concludes:

*"As a result, despite seeing daylight levels below recommendation, the few rooms located in these areas can still be considered acceptable overall given their optimised layouts."*

- 6.77 Satisfactory living conditions are not being provided through the site and therefore, it adds to the list of concerns associated with the proposed development.

Residential Density

- 6.78 The 2016 Resolved to Grant scheme had a density of 747 dwellings per hectare. The planning application has a density of 807 dwellings per hectare. Whilst policy CS10 anticipates densities over 200 dph in Woking Town Centre this is

considerably higher than both the Council's anticipated number of dwellings set out in the Draft Site Allocations DPD and the 2016 Resolved to Grant scheme. The Draft Site Allocation DPD makes it clear that development should maximise the efficient use of UA13 without compromising the character of the area. Furthermore, if a comparison is made of the site area associated with the 2016 Resolved to Grant Scheme and T1, T2 and T3 (i.e. Excluding building BA) the comparative density is 956 dph.

Table Showing Proposed Densities at the Application site

Scheme	No. dwellings proposed	Site area (ha)	Density
2016	560	0.75	747 dph
2020 Original	965	1.15	839 dph
2020 Revised	929	1.15	807 dph
2020 Revised T1, T2 and T3	717	0.75	956 dph

- 6.79 By way of comparison, the Officer's report associated with Victoria Square development (local authority reference 2014/0014 states:  
*"Apportioning the developed site area to the respective floor areas, the density is approximately 300 dph. Taking a site area only corresponding to the location of Towers 1 and 2 the density would reach 660 dph."*
- 6.80 Simply by suggesting that it is appropriate in an urban location to have a high-density scheme is not enough. The scheme needs to ensure good place making that does not have a detrimental effect on the character of the surrounding area. If a scheme is of a higher density it needs to create good quality living environment and ensure that there is no harm to the surrounding area. As identified elsewhere in this document there are a number of areas of concern which result in harm to the surrounding area.
- 6.81 Whilst it is acknowledged that Woking is changing, there is a need, as identified above, for a clear set of guidelines for development within the Town Centre to ensure that development comes forward in a coordinated and well planned manner.
- 6.82 The density proposed is similar to development within central London, where development of this height would need to be referred to the Mayor.
- 6.83 The density of the development is generated ultimately by the mix of dwellings within the development (see below). Consequently, the over reliance on smaller units means that the density is higher. Notwithstanding this, and given other areas of concern identified within this document it is considered that the proposed density does not meet with the requirements of Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy or the aspirations for the site set out in the Draft Site Allocations DPD.

The Under Provision of Affordable Housing

- 6.84 The Application results in 5% affordable housing which amounts to 48 new affordable units. It is understood that these will be intermediate tenure which

could comprise "intermediate rent, discounted sale and shared ownership properties.

- 6.85 The Core Strategy seeks 40% affordable housing for the borough as a whole, whereas the Draft Site Allocations DPD seeks 50%. The scheme therefore falls below the standard being sought by the local authority.
- 6.86 The Applicant has prepared a Viability Statement which accompanies the planning application.
- 6.87 It is evident that the scheme does not provide 40% affordable units. The viability report suggests that there is a negative land value of £6.2million with a developer profit of approximately £57million.
- 6.88 We have not undertaken an assessment of the viability Statement and can therefore not comment on its content. However, our concern is that there will be a cumulative impact of under providing affordable housing within the town centre. If it is Woking Borough Council's intention to further increase the heights of buildings within the town centre this is being undertaken at the detriment of the need to provide suitable affordable housing to meet the needs identified by the Council and within the SHMA.

#### Dwelling Mix

- 6.89 The application proposes the following mix of dwellings:

Studio – 148 (16%)  
1 bed – 402 (43 %)  
2 bed (3p) – 108 (12%)  
2 bed (4) – 247 (27%)  
3 bed – 24 (3%)

It will be important for the Council to ensure that all dwellings meet the National Space Standards. Also note that the percentage total adds up to 101%

- 6.90 The 2016 Resolved to Grant Scheme resulted in the following mix:

Studio – 72 (13%)  
1 bed – 212 (38 %)  
2 bed – 258 (46%)  
3 bed – 18 (3%)

- 6.91 Whilst the Policy acknowledges that lower proportions of family accommodation (2+ bedroom units which may be houses or flats) will be acceptable in locations in the Borough such as the town and district centres that are suitable for higher density developments the current proposals rely heavily on studio / 1bed units.

- 6.92 The West Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment September 2015 ("SHMA") states at paragraph 8.43 that:

*"We consider that the provision of market housing should be more explicitly focused on delivering across the HMA smaller family housing for younger households. On this basis, we would recommend the following mix of market housing be sought*

*1bed – 10%  
2bed – 30%*

3bed – 40%  
4bed – 20%

6.93 The SHMA provides two tables setting out the estimated need by number of bedrooms for both market and affordable sectors. These are reproduced below.

**Table 60: Estimated Need by Number of Bedrooms (2013 to 2033) – Market Sector**

Area	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4+ bedrooms
Guildford	9.1%	28.6%	40.4%	21.9%
Waverley	9.3%	32.1%	38.2%	20.4%
Woking	10.9%	28.1%	38.3%	22.7%
HMA	9.7%	29.7%	39.0%	21.6%

Source: Housing Market Model

**Table 61: Estimated Need by Number of Bedrooms (2013 to 2033) – Affordable Sector**

Area	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4+ bedrooms
Guildford	40.9%	31.7%	23.9%	3.5%
Waverley	47.3%	29.2%	21.9%	1.7%
Woking	50.3%	24.4%	22.3%	2.9%
HMA	45.7%	28.9%	22.8%	2.7%

Source: Housing Market Model

6.94 The over reliance on studio and 1 bed units does not meet with the needs identified in the SHMA. The 2016 Resolved to Grant scheme resulted in 51% studio and 1 bed units. The current scheme results in 60% studio and 1 bed units. This is a significant increase in smaller units over and above the 2016 scheme. As a result, it does not meet with the overall aims of Policy CS11 which seeks to create a sustainable and balanced community.

6.95 The proposals are therefore contrary to Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA)

6.96 In accordance with Policy CS8, it is important that the proposed development makes an appropriate contribution towards the provision of SANG and SAMP to avoid impacts of such development on the SPA. It is identified in the Viability Statement and within the ES that contributions will be paid. It is understood that the Applicants are willing to pay a contribution towards the provision of SANGS and SAMP.

6.97 The Council should ensure that contributions are sought from the Applicant by way of legal agreement in order to mitigate any impact on the SPA generated by the proposed development.

Loss of Commercial Floorspace

6.98 The proposed development results in a net loss of commercial floorspace.

6.99 There is currently 7824.7sqm of commercial floorspace on the planning application site (using the figures provided in Section 2 of the planning statement).

6.100 The proposal includes:

- 2,710.13 sqm GIA Flexible A1-A4, B1a and D1-D2 Use Classes (across ground and mezzanine floors of podium level Buildings T1-T3 and Building BA);
- 366.73 sqm GIA A4 Use Class for the replacement WRAC (in Building T1)



6.101 The Planning Statement identifies that:

*"Whilst the proposal would not fully accord with the draft requirements set out in the Site Allocations DPD to deliver significant office provision, it is considered that the proposals are consistent with the wider aims of the DPD in providing a mixed use development which better utilises the Site and results in a regenerative effect on this part of the town centre"*

6.102 Whilst it is acknowledged that the office market is going through a period of change, in order to provide a sustainable mixed-use development, it will be important to create a mix of uses within the application site. The site is in an accessible location and has the opportunity to provide flexible floor space in order to meet the changing needs of our society. This is important to ensure that the development meets with the tenets of Policy CS15.

6.103 Since the submission of the application, there has been a change to the Use Class Order. The planning application description should be revised to reflect this change. It will be important to consider removing permitted development rights so that, for example, the commercial uses cannot be converted to dwellings, if they meet the criteria of Class MA of the General Permitted Development Order.

#### Other Comments

6.104 The planning application proposes 5 car club spaces. This seems particularly low given the number of residential car parking spaces proposed and the number of people who would live at the development.

6.105 It will be important to ensure that the details of the car club are secured by legal agreement (see below).

6.106 There is already great parking pressure on the surrounding roads and therefore it is vitally important that a legal agreement is put in place in order to ensure that residential and visitors cannot get parking permits. The local residents, are quite rightly concerned that there will be additional parking pressure on the local roads where permits are not required and this could generate further traffic as visitors are "cruising" road in search of parking places.

6.107 The ES identifies that the proposals will result in the removal of the bat roosts confirmed on the site. As a protected species and due to the impact on the biodiversity of the Site it is vitally important that the Council ensures that all works are carried under a Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence.

6.108 It is understood that the proposals meet the requirements of Policies CS22 and CS23 of the Core Strategy in terms of sustainable design. It will be important that the Council ensures that the scheme is built in accordance with the standards identified by the Applicant.

6.109 It is noted that some of the visuals in the applicant's Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment do not show the upper limits of the proposed development.

6.110 In light of the current pandemic, now more than ever development should have good quality living space and be adaptable for the future. There are concerns that the economy of the Country is likely to change dramatically due to Covid 19. This

may affect the deliverability of the proposed development and indeed it may be necessary to review the details of the proposed dwelling mix as the numbers of people commuting and choosing to work from home may change or the mix of commercial units proposed.

#### Planning obligations

6.111 Notwithstanding the comments made above, the Council should ensure that the following are secure through legal agreement:

- Provision of a car club
- Ensuring the future residents and occupiers of the site are exempt from purchasing parking permits
- Compensation for any loss of tv signal as a result of the proposed development

## **7 Conclusions**

- 7.1 The proposed development seeks to achieve a high density development with tall buildings within Woking Town Centre. Our assessment has identified that there will be impacts on properties adjacent to the site and the wider area. Development should result in a good quality living environment for both existing and new residents. This has not been demonstrated by the Applicant.
- 7.2 Consideration should be given to the weight that should be given to the 2016 Resolved to Grant Scheme. Furthermore, the preparation of the Masterplan for the town centre will be a useful tool in guiding the ultimate development of the planning application site and the sites in the wider town centre context.
- 7.3 The proposed development will have an impact on the local and wider townscape. The tallest building is higher than Victoria Square and rather than tapering away from this building moves the focus away from it.
- 7.4 The proposals will result in a reduction in daylight and sunlight on surrounding residential properties. It will also result in noise environments higher than the guideline levels.
- 7.5 The proposal fails to provide the mix of dwellings needed by the local authority and places an over reliance on 1 bed and studio flats which are not needed to meet the Council's needs.
- 7.6 The proposal fails to provide 40% affordable housing to meet the Council's affordable housing need.
- 7.7 The Council has a 10-year supply of housing land assuming that 180 dwellings are built on the Application site. Consequently, there is no pressing need to allow development to take place on the site.
- 7.8 The proposals would result in changes to viewpoints from various locations within the borough and beyond due to its scale, height and massing. Concerns have been raised by Guildford Borough Council with regard to the changing skyline in Woking.
- 7.9 Fundamentally, there is need for a development strategy for the whole of the town centre which has been prepared following community engagement and making sure that all stakeholders can be involved in the future of Woking. There are already concerns from Guildford Borough Council associated with the impact the

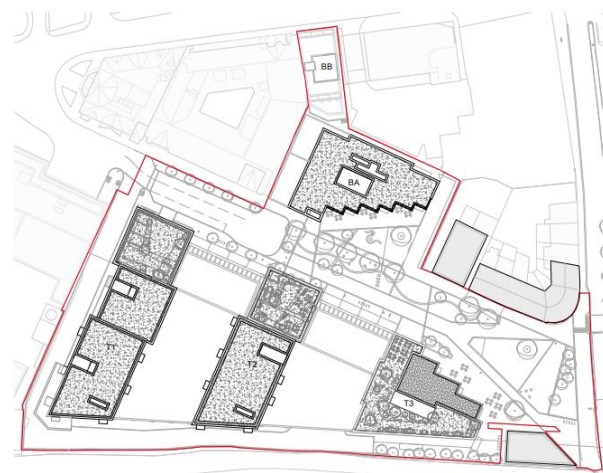
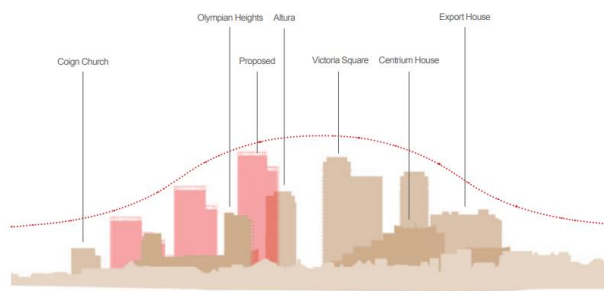
skyline of the town centre is having on the wider landscape. This wider impact should be considered as part of a comprehensive strategy for the town centre.

Chestnut Planning  
11 August 2021

Comparison Images taken from the Applicant's Planning Application Documents

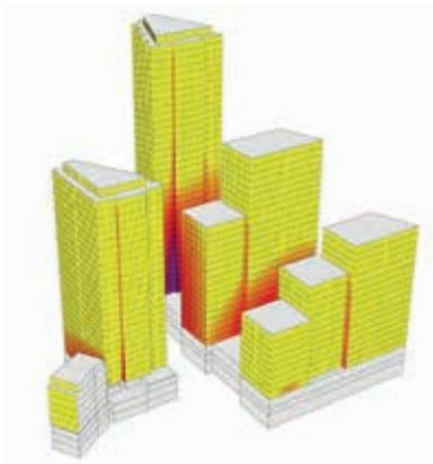


Block A - Ground plus 34  
 Block B - Ground plus 25 and 20  
 Block C - ground plus 17, 14 and 10



Block T3 - 37 Storeys  
 Block T2 - 20 and 29  
 Block T1 - 12, 16 and 21 storeys

Block BA - 29 storeys  
 Block BB - 9 storeys



Daylight modelling diagram  
 sampled from VSC Report

Note no new massing diagram. Diagram shown is from original 2020 application



2016 Scheme



Original Planning Application  
Revised application does not have revised visuals



Bernadette Fischler  
Oaks Road and Vale Farm Road Residents Group/local residents

11 August 2021

Dear Bernadette

**Goldsworth Road, Woking**

Thank you for asking to review the revised scheme for the proposals at land to the north and south of Goldsworth Road Woking (LPA ref 2020/ 0568).

We understand that you now have Rule 6 Status and will be appearing at the planning inquiry. The purpose of our review is to update the original assessment that we undertook on your behalf of the proposed development at Goldsworth Road. This will allow the Oaks Road and Vale Farm Road Residents Group to better prepare for the inquiry having regard to the planning parameters which the Inspector will need to have regard to.

The key changes have been to reduce the height of T3 so that it is the same height of the tallest building in the 2016 Resolved to Grant scheme.

Since we wrote the original report, the Government has issued a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021). This puts a great emphasis on the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places.

As you are aware, we recommended that a masterplan be prepared for the town centre to ensure that development comes forward in a coherent and well planned manner. This would allow full community engagement and also set the parameters by which future planning applications would be considered. This would provide greater certainty to both developers and the local community. This too is supported in the NPPF 2021.

Ensuring that the amenity of both the future occupiers and the existing community is not demonstrably harmed will be key to the success of a high density development in this location. It is therefore paramount that development meets and if possible, exceeds the various amenity standards e.g. noise and daylight and sunlight.

Having reviewed the revised scheme, the overall conclusions of our original report remain valid.

Thank you again for asking us to update the report.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Cloughton MRTPI