

Highways and Transport Feasibility Study of Rookwood

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Land west of Horsham was identified as a Strategic Development Location in the adopted West Sussex Structure Plan. In June 2004 Horsham District Council published for consultation 'Planning for our Future – Issues and Options' which identified the areas of land considered appropriate for such a development and the options available. From this consultation process another development opportunity to the north of those originally identified was suggested that needed to be considered. It consisted of an area of land currently used as a golf course to the west of Horsham and bounded by the A24, known as Rookwood Golf Course.
- 1.2 The site examined was considered to be particularly sensitive to development due to the impact on Boldings Brook / Red River valley, extensive woodland and mature trees, and the Warnham Nature Reserve. Rookwood is also a popular public golf course.
- 1.3 Notwithstanding the potential impact of the development, consultants MVA were commissioned to undertake a highway and transport feasibility study of the site to inform the work on the Preferred Options stage of the Local Development Framework. In particular they were requested to provide a detailed analysis, conclusions and recommendations on the feasibility, deliverability and implications of a Strategic Development Location of up to 1000 homes in this location in highways and transport infrastructure terms.

2. Key Findings

- 2.1 The key findings of the study are set out in the Background Document 2 'Land West of Horsham: Strategic Development'. In summary eight development options were considered and then tested against the key principles of development set out through the Local Development Framework consultation process.
- 2.2 The results of the study showed that there were poor connections between the sites and the rest of Horsham. However, the consultants proposed that notwithstanding this fundamental issue, if we were to progress with a scheme, the best option was to develop the land to the south of Warnham Road with access via a new roundabout on Warnham Road at the junction with the Nature Reserve. A second access would be needed via a new bridge across the River Arun tributaries to Redford Avenue. The existing small A24 underpass would be closed to traffic. Various suggestions were also made in connection with possible improvements that could be made to bus, cycle and pedestrian networks.
- 2.3 Any significant development to the north of Warnham Road was considered inappropriate. There would be a significantly damaging impact on the nature reserve including the need for an access road to cross through it at one point. There would also be the loss of large numbers of trees and the site is detached from the town and its facilities, particularly shops and schools.

HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Background Document no. 7

3. Influence over content of submission documents – Core Strategy.

- 3.1 The results of the consultants work on development of the golf course showed that it would be difficult to access and poorly integrated with Horsham. There was some potential to develop land to the south of Warnham Road but this would result in the loss of many mature trees, the golf course, public open space and would require a visually intrusive road network effecting residential streets. It is also not felt that this land has the capacity to accommodate 1,000 homes or any additional growth required in the future. There are few existing facilities and services that would be available to residents and this smaller level of development would not be able to support or fund many of the additional facilities required. There would also be a requirement to find further land for development and it would not enable the proper comprehensive planning for the future that this area requires.
- 3.2 This development option has been compared with others within the area in Background Document 2 'Land West of Horsham: Strategic Development'. It is felt that that the development will have a significant impact on a sensitive location and will be poorly integrated. As a result it is not allocated for development within the Local Development Framework Core Strategy: Submission Documents.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Council maintains that due to the significant impact development will have on the sensitive environment in the location and the poor integration with Horsham this is not a suitable location for development. It is felt that there are other less damaging and more sustainable locations available. In addition due to the capacity of the site there would still be a requirement to find additional land for development.

Further information on the study can be obtained from the Strategic & Community Planning Department on 01403 215398. The full study is available to view on the Councils website alongside Background Document 2 'Land West of Horsham: Strategic Development'.