

## 9E.1 CPRE Surrey (7152)

### EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC OF THE SOUTH EAST PLAN

#### 9E REST OF SURREY, NORTHERN HANTS, W BERKS AND REST OF BUCKS

**9E.1 Does the strategy take proper account of the capacity of towns/locations in the rest of Surrey, northern Hampshire, West Berkshire for sustainable development (including Policy H1)? If not, how would any additional growth here impact on the Western Corridor Blackwater Valley and London Fringe sub-regional strategies?**

OOO

- 1.1 CPRE Surrey considers that the way in which these “Rest of” segments are considered together illustrates just how unsatisfactory the Sub-Regional proposals in the South East Plan are. This is particularly true for the county of Surrey which is divided into 4 sections by the 3 Sub-regions of the London Fringe, the Gatwick Area, and the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley, plus “the rest”.
- 1.2 We cannot comment on the capacity of towns/locations outside Surrey. However, we believe that the strategy does take adequate account of the limited capacity of the rest of Surrey to take further development.
- 1.3 We support the removal of Farnham from the Western Corridor Sub-Region. However, we have major doubts still about the value of the Blackwater Valley remaining an entity, linked as an afterthought to the Western Corridor Sub-Region. It has produced little of benefit in terms of infrastructure to the communities within it. We are particularly concerned about the inclusion of Farnham within the Blackwater Valley. We and others successfully campaigned to have it taken out of the Western Corridor Sub-region as its links are with Surrey but similarly it has little in common with the Blackwater Valley. We suggest that either it be excluded from the Blackwater Valley or the Blackwater Valley boundary is omitted from the Western Corridor Sub-region plan.
- 1.4 All of Waverley District and parts of Guildford, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead, and Tandridge Districts are covered by the ‘rest of Surrey’. CPRE Surrey supports the policies on small rural towns and villages in section D8 in relation to these areas.
- 1.5 Rural proofing of the South East Plan would clearly show that the Sub-regional emphasis of this document results in rural issues being given little priority. This is an overall weakness of the Plan which is too orientated towards economic and housing priorities, and gives insufficient attention to the countryside, agriculture, and other rural activities. PPS7 provides policy government guidance for this “Rest of” sector with its commitment to

*“continued protection for our most valued landscapes and environmental resources”.*

- 1.6 We feel there should be greater emphasis given to agriculture and how it can play a greater role in the economy of the region. With the increasing impact of climate change, it is clear that not only will some of the major food producing countries’ output decline, but Britain will become a more important producer, albeit with possibly different crops. Section 7D has several policies on the landscape, which we strongly support, but nothing specifically on farming.
- 1.7 CPRE Surrey is also concerned about the lack of rural infrastructure –public transport is poor and post offices, pubs, garages and local shops are disappearing, making life difficult for the elderly and non-car owners. There is need for additional affordable housing in many of the small towns and villages, both social housing and accommodation for key workers.
- 1.8 As with the Plan as a whole, there is too little emphasis given to the protection and enhancement of the environment. Although there is a commitment to stabilisation and reduction of the ecological footprint, there are no policies or targets to show how this will be achieved. In areas such as rural Surrey, it is clear that there will be more traffic, congestion, loss of tranquillity (already very limited –as shown on the CPRE tranquillity map attached to our response on the London Fringe.) and loss of biodiversity.

## **WAVERLEY DISTRICT**

- 1.9 Waverley District is largely rural, with some 80% of the countryside designated as part of the Surrey Hills AONB/AGLV. Green Belt covers 60% and 30% is woodland. There are four market towns with distinctive character. Most villages are small and attractive. The district has many conservation areas and contains hundreds of listed buildings. It attracts millions of tourist visit a year, generating business turnover of over £200 million. This is expected to increase after the A3 tunnel is constructed at Hindhead under the Devil’s Punchbowl and Gibbet Hill beauty spots.
- 1.10 Planning for 4,600 houses over the plan period in a sustainable way is a challenge if encroachment on designated countryside is to be avoided and the distinctive character of market towns protected. The existing infrastructure is hardly able to cope with this allocation let alone any increase in housing numbers. This rural area is not well served with roads, and public transport is totally inadequate. The need to travel by car will continue to predominate. Proposals for major new developments in the countryside are never going to be sustainable.
- 1.11 As there is vacant office and employment land available, it does not appear that the demand for economic growth is great. Like everywhere else, however, affordable housing is in short supply.

## **TANDRIDGE DISTRICT**

- 1.12 Tandridge District is also largely rural, with a high percentage of its area falling within the Metropolitan Green Belt. There are no sizeable towns in this district which has a large number of small attractive villages. Its highest quality countryside falls within the nationally important Surrey Hills and High Weald AONBs and the Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) buffer zones around them, both to the North and South of the M25. Tandridge District also has classified countryside described as Areas of Local Landscape Character which include large stretches of open farmland.
- 1.13 CPRE Surrey fully support the current consultancy initiative being implemented and overviewed by the Surrey Hills Office which aims to produce a robust justification for the AGLV designation in this district and parts of Mole valley, Reigate and Banstead and Waverley. In our opinion, there is also a good case for expanding the AONB boundaries to include AGLV land.
- 1.14 In our opinion, there could be a case for excluding Tandridge from the London Fringe as it is primarily rural in character, with limited potential for development.

## **GUILDFORD, MOLE VALLEY AND REIGATE & BANSTEAD DISTRICTS**

- 1.15 The areas of Guildford and Mole Valley, (and possibly a small part of Reigate and Banstead) outside the London Fringe and Gatwick Area Sub-Regions have many common characteristics. Much of Surrey's most beautiful countryside is located in these southern segments of the county. Again large areas fall under AONB and AGLV designations. There are no large settlements and the setting and distinctive character of the isolated villages makes them unsuitable for growth, especially as infrastructure, - public transport, and road and rail communication - is extremely limited.

## **CONCLUSION**

- 1.16 Any significant housing growth in "the rest of Surrey" would be unsustainable, damaging to the countryside and inappropriate. Limited investment resources would be further stretched to improve a creaking infrastructure that is already under severe strain. Road congestion would be further increased. Travel by car to work and school would increase. Water supply and sewage treatment issues would be made more acute. Rural Surrey's environment and heritage would be damaged and undermined, contrary to national, county and district policy.
- 1.17 CPRE Surrey would like to see more emphasis given to the problems of rural deprivation and the importance of agriculture to both the economy and the landscape. We believe, also, that the balance of the Plan would be improved by placing greater emphasis on the protection and enhancement of the natural landscapes and countryside.