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Topic Paper 10 The Countryside

Crawley Borough Council adopted its Core Strategy back in November 2007, providing the spatial vision, objectives and development strategy for Crawley up to 2016. The Council has now begun preparing the successor to the Core Strategy – the Core Strategy Review – which will cover a much longer period up to 2026. Although there are aspects of the original Core Strategy that can be retained there are other areas where significant change has occurred in the intervening years and this will need to be reflected in the new document.

This consultation period is the first of the Review and further consultation stages are planned before the document is adopted in early 2012. This is your opportunity to shape the way the town develops over the next 20 years and the Council would appreciate and value any comments you have on this Topic Paper or any of the others that form part of this consultation.

Summary of Current Context

National policy requires local authorities to:

- protect and enhance the quality and character of the countryside;
- support traditional land based activities whilst making the most of new leisure and recreation opportunities that require a countryside location;
- provide access to the countryside, and;
- be aware of the specific circumstances, needs and priorities in the countryside,

The Crawley Borough Core Strategy designates strategic gaps to prevent settlements merging together. However, national and regional policy now discourages local landscape designations and advocates the use of criteria based policies to protect and enhance the diversity and distinctiveness of the local landscape. This should be informed by a landscape character assessment.

Indication of the Key Issues Relating to the Countryside

Crawley is a predominately urban borough, though the town is surrounded by a small area of countryside (within the Borough boundary), which has been protected for its own sake to help enhance the setting of the urban area.

- The scale of growth proposed in the South East Plan Proposed Modifications could have an impact on the extent and character of Crawley's countryside.
- To what extent and in what circumstances is new development harmful to valued countryside and the setting of the town?
- Should certain types of development be encouraged in a countryside location, or alternatively resisted to protect and conserve valued countryside?



- Are there unique areas of Crawley's countryside which require locally specific policies, either because of their intrinsic value, or because of the role they play in defining the setting of the town?
- The Built-up Area Boundary (BUAB) is used to maintain the sense of separation between the urban area and the countryside. The boundary has recently been reviewed to reflect recent development and to ensure that the boundary is clear and consistent.

Indication of the Options for Addressing the Key Issues Outlined Above

- Protect and where possible enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of Crawley's countryside, to be informed by a landscape character assessment. This would enable the formulation of area/location specific policies, setting out where certain types of development would be appropriate and to develop policies that are appropriate to the varying character of Crawley's landscape.
- Rely on national guidance to protect and where possible enhance Crawley's countryside.
- Promote countryside as accessible green space through encouraging access to the countryside/countryside parks and links to the green space network/corridors.

Indication of the Potential Direction at this Stage

- Undertake a landscape character assessment of the area outside the Built-up Area Boundary by drawing together all existing information and evidence base, prior to an extensive site survey.

- Develop a criteria based policy for proposals in the countryside and areas that will no longer be covered by the strategic gap designation.
- To ensure a clear and consistent Built-up Area Boundary (BUAB), a set of guiding principles has been used to identify and resolve any inconsistencies with the current boundary.

The following principles have been created by focussing on the separate characteristics and land use functions of the built-up area and the countryside.

1. The BUAB should include existing commitments and new development adjacent to the boundary. This includes sites allocated for development in the Crawley Borough Core Strategy.
2. The BUAB should generally follow defined physical features such as roads, hedges, field boundaries and existing property lines.
3. The Built-up Area can include greenfield sites which are predominantly encompassed and part of the built form, and also well defined by strong boundary features.
4. The BUAB should follow the whole curtilage of properties except where such properties include large open areas that extend up to existing countryside and are not encompassed by built form. This is to prevent inappropriate development in what is considered part of the open countryside.
5. Edge of settlement activities that relate well to the Built-up Area such as community facilities and employment activities should be included. Activities that relate more to the countryside such as agriculture, forestry and activities that

require significant open area should be left outside the BUAB.

6. Development that is close to but physically separate from the Built-up Area should not be included within the BUAB (including ribbon and fragmented development). This is to maintain a strongly defined boundary and to avoid areas of countryside from being unnecessarily included within the BUAB.
7. The review should have regard to any relevant Characterisation Assessment or Landscape Assessment.

Current Context

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

- States that local authorities should be aware of the specific circumstances, needs and priorities in the countryside and produce policies accordingly. This includes appreciating the interdependence of urban rural areas, ensuring the quality and character of the wider countryside is protected and where possible enhanced, supporting traditional land based activities, making the most of new leisure and recreation opportunities that require a countryside location, and providing access to the countryside.

South East Plan Proposed Modifications

- States that tourism and recreation based diversification should be encouraged in rural areas. The diversity and local distinctiveness of local landscapes should be protected and enhanced. Criteria based policies should be developed to ensure that all development respects and enhances local landscape character and secures appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. This approach replaces the strategic gap policy which has been deleted.



Main Issues for Consultation

The main issues that representations are being sought on are:

- The types of development that should be encouraged in the countryside.
- The specific needs and priorities of Crawley's countryside that require further detailed policy development and expression.
- Whether you agree with the proposed policy approach and Built Up Area Boundary principles.
- Any other issues/options that should be explored and whether further evidence is required.

South East Economic Development Strategy (2006-2016)

- One of the priorities is to invest in and promote the South East region's cultural, heritage, and landscape assets, and develop the visitor economy linked to the conservation of a high quality environment. This is to secure the benefits of increased visitor spend for rural communities while supporting the sustainable management of rural landscapes.

Sustainable Community Strategy

- A strategic aim of this strategy is to protect and enhance the natural environment for the enjoyment of everyone. The associated objective is for residents and visitors to have easy access to parks and gardens.

Crawley Borough Core Strategy

- The Crawley Borough Core Strategy brought forward the designation of strategic gaps from the Local Plan pending their review as part of the Development Control Policies

Development Plan Document. At that time, it was inappropriate for changes to be made to the strategic gaps as draft South East Plan guidance relating to this designation had not been clarified. The Crawley Borough Core Strategy policy is to prevent development within the strategic gaps in order to protect the separate identity of the named settlements and prevent their coalescence. These are: Charlwood, Crawley and Gatwick Airport/Horley; Crawley and Horsham; Crawley and Pease Pottage.

- The setting of the town is also protected through the countryside status of the area outside the Built-up Area and the status of the small area forming part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- The Crawley Borough Core Strategy recognises that there is a limited amount of countryside within the Borough, but emphasises that it is an extremely valuable asset for the community which should be protected and enhanced

wherever possible. The countryside, particularly urban fringe, will be protected from development that does not need a countryside location, and where necessary the quality of the countryside should be enhanced, possibly through encouraging informal recreation.

- The Crawley Borough Core Strategy Proposals Map sets out the Built-up Area Boundary, which shows the distinction between the urban area, where certain forms of development are likely to be appropriate, and the countryside, where protection and enhancement are of most importance. This is seen as a logical way of applying Government advice and strategic policy at the local level. Planning permission for development beyond the Built-up Area Boundary will only be granted if it would be consistent with national policy, particularly PPS7.

Evidence Base

Crawley Borough Council Built-up Area



Boundary Review (Feb 2009 ongoing)
Recommends changes to the boundary to include:

- Areas adjacent to but outside the current Built-up Area Boundary that relate more to the urban environment than to the surrounding area.
- Sites adjacent to, but outside the Built-up Area Boundary that have been developed.
- Strategic Development Opportunity sites identified through the Core Strategy Review.