ROYAL MAIL GROUP REPRESENTATIONS:
GUILDFORD STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (“SHLAA”)

We are instructed by Royal Mail Group Ltd (Royal Mail) to respond to Guildford Borough Council’s call for sites for inclusion in their Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (“SHLAA”) (September 2013).

Background

Royal Mail, formerly Consignia plc, is the successor to the former statutory corporation, The Post Office. Although its management operates independently, Royal Mail is wholly owned by the Government through the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills. Its services are regulated by Ofcom. Its letters business, Royal Mail, is the operator of universal postal functions through the Royal Mail letterpost delivery and collections services, handling letters, postal packets and high value (registered) packets. Royal Mail Group also operates Parcelforce Worldwide, which is a parcels carrier. Post Office Limited (a “sister” company to Royal Mail) operates the national network of post offices and sub post offices.

The United Kingdom letter post business has been fully liberalised since the Postal Services Act 2000 and Royal Mail now operates in a highly competitive market place. As such, it effectively operates like any other business and is continually seeking to find ways to improve the efficiency of its business (e.g. increased automation) and respond to the changes in communications technology (e.g. email and internet). Put simply, the nature of the mail industry has, and continues to change and Royal Mail’s real estate needs to respond accordingly.

Royal Mail Property

Whilst there are no current plans for Royal Mail’s Delivery Offices in the administrative area of Guildford to be closed or relocated, we request the inclusion of the following freehold property, shown on the enclosed site plan, within the forthcoming SHLAA:

A list of directors’ names is open to inspection at the above address.
• East Horsley Delivery Office, Ockham Road South, Leatherhead, KT24 6RU (Freehold)

East Horsley Delivery Office is a freehold Royal Mail property surrounded by large low density residential dwellings, retail and employment uses.

The redevelopment of the site for residential use (potentially as part of a mixed use scheme) may therefore be appropriate in this context, in accordance with the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework for the development of sustainable communities.

It should be noted that the relocation/re-provision of Royal Mail’s operations is essential prior to redevelopment of the site. This will ensure that their operations will not be prejudiced and that they can continue to comply with their statutory duty to maintain a ‘universal service’ for the UK pursuant to the Postal Services Act 2000.

Furthermore, in order for the site to be brought forward for redevelopment, relocation will need to be viable for and commercially attractive to Royal Mail.

The proceeds from the disposal of the site will need to yield both sufficient value to fund the purchase and fit-out of a new site and the relocation of their operations thereto. There will also need to be a commercial attractiveness that would incentivise the business to relocate the operations. In addition, it would be essential that any new facilities are provided prior to the demolition of those existing, to ensure Royal Mail’s continuity of service.

This approach accords with adopted Government guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Statement (NPPF) (March 2012) which advises that local planning authorities should help achieve economic growth by planning proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century. The NPPF also advises that local planning authorities should support existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting. It also states that policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances (Paragraphs 20-21).

Next Steps

We formally request that this letter of representation and the enclosed site plan is taken into account in the preparation of the draft Guildford SHLAA (2013) document.

Royal Mail reserves the right to amend or supplement these representations at a later date if necessary.

Royal Mail will continue to closely monitor plans for growth throughout Guildford and would welcome further discussion with the Council on the delivery of new infrastructure as the plans for the administrative area evolve.

I trust that these representations and enclosed site plans are acceptable and would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt and keep me informed of future stages of the preparation of the draft SHLAA (2013) document.

Yours sincerely,

BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI
Development Consulting, DTZ
cc  Tony Haines  Royal Mail Group
     Colin Galletly  Royal Mail Group
     David Poole  Royal Mail Group

Enc.