



# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A Meeting of an **INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION** will be held in 2nd Floor Landing Meeting Room - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **WEDNESDAY 10 JANUARY 2018 AT 9.00 AM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manjeet Gill', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Manjeet Gill  
Interim Chief Executive  
Published on 2 January 2018

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# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Our Vision**

A great place to live, an even better place to do business

## **Our Priorities**

Improve educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential

Invest in regenerating towns and villages, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging business growth

Ensure strong sustainable communities that are vibrant and supported by well designed development

Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough

Improve the customer experience when accessing Council services

## **The Underpinning Principles**

Offer excellent value for your Council Tax

Provide affordable homes

Look after the vulnerable

Improve health, wellbeing and quality of life

Maintain and improve the waste collection, recycling and fuel efficiency

Deliver quality in all that we do

**For consideration by**

**David Lee, Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Highways**

**Officers Present**

**Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist**

**Vanessa Rowell, Senior Planning Policy Officer**

<b>IMD NO.</b>	<b>WARD</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	
1. IMD 2018/01	None Specific	<b>WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE READING BOROUGH COUNCIL PRE-SUBMISSION DRAFT LOCAL PLAN</b>	<b>5 - 12</b>

**CONTACT OFFICER**

**Luciane Bowker**

**Tel**

**Email**

**Postal Address**

Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

0118 974 6091

luciane.bowker@wokingham.gov.uk

Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN

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# Agenda Item IMD1

## INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REFERENCE IMD: 2017/01

<b>TITLE</b>	Wokingham Borough Council response to the Reading Borough Council Pre-submission Draft Local Plan
<b>DECISION TO BE MADE BY</b>	Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Highways
<b>DATE AND TIME</b>	Wednesday 10 January 2018 – 9.00am
<b>WARD</b>	None specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Interim Director of Environment, Josie Wragg

### **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

To ensure that Reading Borough Council's Local Plan has minimal negative impacts upon Wokingham Borough and that any positive benefits are maximised.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Highways agrees that Wokingham Borough Council:

- a) Raises a holding objection until such time as:
  - i. the lack of policy and accommodation provision for the Gypsy and Traveller community is addressed within Reading Borough Council.
- b) Supports further discussion and engagement across all authorities in the West Berkshire Housing Market Area regarding Gypsy and Traveller provision

### **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

Reading Borough Council has published their Pre-submission Draft Local Plan. The Pre-submission Draft Local Plan details the draft policies and spatial vision for Reading Borough. This follows from the Issues and Options consultation which ran from 22 January to 7 March 2016 and the Draft Local Plan consultation which ran from 1 May to 14 June 2017.

The report outlines Wokingham Borough Council's response to the unmet housing need in Reading Borough. Reading Borough is within the same Housing Market Area as Wokingham Borough, along with Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire.

The report also considers employment land provision, retail provision, Gypsy and Traveller provision, a policy regarding the Royal Berkshire Hospital, a policy regarding the University of Reading Whiteknights Campus and transport infrastructure which are issues considered in the Pre-submission Draft Local Plan.

Four proposed housing site allocations in the Reading Borough Pre-submission Draft Local Plan are within close proximity to the Wokingham Borough boundary. Wokingham

Borough Council therefore welcome the opportunity to discuss further any cross-boundary strategic issues such as any potential traffic and transport impacts associated with development at these locations.

### **Background:**

Reading Borough Council has published its Pre-submission Draft Local Plan (the Plan) with a consultation running between 30 November 2017 and 26 January 2018. This is a Regulation 19 consultation under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The Plan sets out the long term vision for Reading Borough, up until 2036 and includes proposed development management policies and proposed site allocations.

Reading Borough Council forms part of the West Berkshire Housing Market Area (HMA) with Wokingham Borough Council, West Berkshire Council and Bracknell Forest Council. Reading Borough Council also form part of the Central Berkshire Functional Economic Market Area with Wokingham Borough, Bracknell Forest and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

### **Analysis of Issues**

#### **Provision of Housing**

The Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 (SHMA) identified the Objectively Assessed Need for the Western Berkshire HMA to be 16,077 dwellings in the period 2013-2036, within Reading Borough contribution equating to 699 dwellings per annum.

Since the last draft Plan consultation, Reading Borough Council has taken further analysis, which demonstrates that they are able to accommodate more of its own housing need than previously suggested. There remains however a modest shortfall against the overall need.

Policy H1 states that:

*“Provision will be made for at least an additional 15,433 homes (averaging 671 per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2013 to 2036.*

*The Council will continue to work with neighbouring authorities within the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area to ensure that the shortfall of 644 dwellings that cannot be provided within Reading will be met over the plan period.”*

Comparing the assessed need and land supply, the shortfall equates to 644 dwellings over the plan period, or 28 dwellings per year.

In October 2017, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the four local authorities in the Western Berkshire HMA was signed noting the modest shortfall from Reading and agreeing that the authorities will work together to address this.

No agreement has been reached as to where the shortfall should be addressed and ongoing dialogue is required between Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council. Wokingham Borough Council already has the highest assessed housing need within the Western Berkshire HMA (assessed as 856 dwellings per annum and increased to 894 dwellings per annum through planning appeals). This will need to be reflected within the ongoing discussions.

With Policy H1 being in line with the agreed MoU it is recommended that no objection is raised on this matter.

### **Provision of Employment**

The Central Berkshire Economic Development Needs Assessment suggests that 52,775 sq m of additional office floor space and 148,440 sq m of additional industrial and warehouse floor space are required in Reading Borough (between 2013-2036).

Policy EM1: Provision of Employment Development, states that provision will be made for a net increase of 53,000 – 112,000 sqm of office floorspace and 148,000sqm of industrial/warehouse space. Reading is therefore meeting all of its identified employment need. The Plan also states that Reading can provide up to an additional 60,000 sqm of office floorspace which can be seen as a contribution to the wider needs of the functional economic market area, e.g. should reduce the need for provision elsewhere such as in Wokingham Borough.

Locationally, the Plan guides major office developments (over 2,500 sq m) along the A33 corridor which is considered high-accessibility corridor with a planned new train station at Green Park and mass rapid transit links. Development in this area will have potential for major traffic impact upon Wokingham Borough. Whilst the accessibility of the area is noted, Wokingham Borough Council will require ongoing discussions with Reading Borough to ensure impacts are adequately addressed. Wokingham Borough Council Should also be consulted on any planning applications regarding development in this location.

### **Provision of Retail**

The Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Assessment demonstrated that there is a need for comparison goods floorspace of 54,400 sq m by 2036 and in terms of convenience goods floorspace, there is an overprovision of 19,500sqm by 2036.

Within policy RL2, Reading Borough Council intends to consider both the comparison goods and convenience goods floorspace need as a whole and to provide for an overall retail need for up to 34,900sqm of retail and related facilities up until 2036. Reading Borough Council has decided to take this approach because no planning permission is generally required to change the use of a building between convenience and comparison goods with the sale of both types of goods being within

the Class A1 use class for retail). Reading Borough Council are therefore accommodating their overall retail need.

The Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Assessment demonstrated that there is a need for 12,900sqm of convenience floorspace in the Winnersh/ Woodley / Lower Earley area of Wokingham Borough. This area adjoins the Reading Borough boundary, and the evidence demonstrates that residents living in the East Reading area do shop in convenience goods stores that lie within the Wokingham Borough boundary. It is therefore recommended that Wokingham Borough Council and Reading Borough Council collaborate on this matter to ensure that the identified convenience goods is suitably met.

### **Site allocations**

The Plan proposes the allocation of four residential sites that either border or are in proximity to Wokingham Borough. The four proposed site allocations are:

1. ER1f – Hamilton Centre, Bulmershe Road (13-19 dwellings)
2. ER1e – St Patrick’s Hall, Northcourt Avenue (450-500 bed spaces, student accommodation)
3. SR2 – Land North of Manor Road (680-1,020 dwellings)
4. SR4f – Land South West of Junction 11 of the M4

Policy SR4f concerns land southwest of junction 11 of the M4 and sets out that this land, which comprises 3.84ha within Reading Borough, may be required in association with any major development around Grazeley. Though there is no commitment at this stage to take the proposal for development at Grazeley forward, the identification of this land for potential use in association with any development at Grazeley, is considered to be a pragmatic and sound approach. Wokingham Borough Council will need to continue to work with its partner authorities to explore options to make any development that may be planned at Grazeley as sustainable as possible.

In regard to site allocations ER1f, ER1e and SR2, Wokingham Borough Council requests that it is consulted when a planning application is submitted regarding any cross boundary impacts that development at these locations may have.

### **Gypsy and Traveller Provision**

Reading Borough Council published a ‘Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showperson and Houseboat Dweller Accommodation Assessment 2017’ (GTAA). It identified a cultural need for 11 pitches in the period 2017/18 – 2021/22, of which 10 pitches are for households that meet the definition of Gypsies and Travellers within the government policy document Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS). The Longer term cultural need from 2022/23 – 2036/37 was assessed as 6 pitches, of which 0 are for those that meet the PPTS definition.

Policy H13 – Provision for Gypsies and Travellers is a criteria based policy which sets out a series of requirements against which applications for new pitches will be assessed. The PPTS sets out that local plans should include criteria-based policies to provide the basis for decisions in the event that applications for pitches come forward. WBC consider that policy H13 complies with this requirement and is sound.

However, the PPTS also makes clear that local planning authorities should identify a supply of deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of sites against their locally set targets, and also identify developable sites or broad locations of growth for years 6-10 and, where possible, 11-15 years. Reading Borough Council set out in a separate Gypsy and Traveller provision consultation in September/October 2017 that it would be unable to meet any of its identified need within its administrative area. WBC commented on this consultation and re-emphasised the comments made on the Draft Local plan consultation that Reading Borough Council should seek to meet its own need in full. WBC's consultation response also encouraged Reading Borough Council to undertake additional work to identify whether any of its own land assets, some of which were identified as being unavailable at the time of the consultation but potentially suitable for Gypsy and Traveller use, could be further investigated. Wokingham Borough Council also commented that it was open to Reading Borough Council to consider the purchase of additional land to be allocated to meet its identified need.

The current plan does not address Wokingham Borough Council's previous objections. In addition, no further explanation of justification has been received. There has been no agreement with the other local authorities as to how this unmet need might be accommodated. In the absence of any agreed strategy for meeting this need, it is recommended that this aspect of the Plan is unsound as it has not been positively prepared as regard meet identified needs or adequate justification provided as to why this cannot be achieved.

Policy WR4 identifies the potential for a site at Cows Lane to be delivered to accommodate 5 transit pitches. Wokingham Borough Council responded to the September/October consultation on Gypsy and Traveller provision stating that it had no objection to the suitability of this site for transit pitches. However, Wokingham Borough Council also stated that consideration should be given to use in part of the site for permanent pitches therefore being a mixed use transit and permanent scheme. This would likely require formal delineation of the transit and permanent elements. No such mixed use is proposed through policy WR4. Wokingham Borough Council does not consider this policy in itself to be unsound, given that it proposes to meet the full identified need for transit pitches, but notes that the opportunity to investigate mixed use has not been taken forward to help address meeting permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitch need.

### **Royal Berkshire Hospital**

Policy ER3: Royal Berkshire Hospital is a flexible policy, which supports the future development of the site for healthcare provision.

Wokingham Borough Council notes that within policy ER3: Royal Berkshire Hospital, there is reference to a potential long-term proposal for moving the hospital to a new

site within the Reading area. The Royal Berkshire Hospital serves residents across Berkshire and beyond, and therefore Wokingham Borough Council requests that it is engaged with should any plans come forward to relocate the hospital.

If the hospital does relocate in the future, there could be an opportunity for the site to be redeveloped to provide residential development, which could contribute towards meeting the wider needs of the Western Berkshire HMA. The site is not currently within Reading Borough Council's assessed housing capacity.

### **Whiteknights Campus**

Policy ER2: Whiteknights Campus, supports the continued evolution and development of the University of Reading campus, and includes a set of criteria which future development will accord with. These are:

- *Areas of wildlife significance and current or potential green links will be retained or enhanced, and not detrimentally affected by development, including through light effects;*
- *The safety of those using the campus will be maintained or enhanced;*
- *There will be no significant detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties; and*
- *The loss of undeveloped areas on the site will be weighed against the benefits of development to the wider community.*

The proposed policy in the Plan is similar to the Whiteknights Campus policy within Wokingham Borough Council's Managing Development Delivery Local Plan. Wokingham Borough Council and Reading Borough Council should continue to work together to ensure a consistent approach to development within the Whiteknights Campus.

### **Transport infrastructure**

Policy TR2: 'Major Transport Projects' sets out a number of schemes whose implementation will be prioritised through the Local Transport plan and successor documents and sets out that land required will be safeguarded through the Plan for relevant schemes. Wokingham Borough Council welcomes the commitment to all of the schemes set out in policy TR2. The identified schemes which would directly affect Wokingham Borough, and which are shown on Figure 4.8, are: Mass Rapid Transit; Park and Ride; Crossing of River Thames; and National Cycle Network Route 422. Wokingham Borough Council supports these schemes.

At the last plan stage, the MRT route was only shown along the A3290 towards Winnersh and Wokingham. Following our comments, the Plan now shows an additional MRT route using the A4 towards Woodley. This is welcomed however we would wish for the Plan to recognise the potential extension of this route further eastwards and Wokingham Borough Council would continue to welcome additional engagement on this matter.

The development of a Park and Ride corridor at Thames Valley Park within Wokingham Borough is supported. This will require on-going co-operation between the two authorities.

Wokingham Borough Council also welcomes reference within TR2 to Crossing of the River Thames and the potential crossing route for this is shown in figure 4.8. Wokingham Borough Council is leading the in on-going dialogue with Reading Borough Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxford District Council and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership regarding cross-border transport capacity improvements such as the bridge. Additional highways capacity to the east of Reading will alleviate traffic congestion and have economic benefits for the wider region. WBC anticipates continuing to work with Reading Borough Council and wider authorities on this and other relevant strategic infrastructure planning matters in the future. WBC notes that a route would likely not include land within Reading Borough, but is likely to involve land in South Oxfordshire and Wokingham Borough. (as is outlined in Strategic Outline Business Case found on the Wokingham Borough Council website here: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/parking-road-works-and-transport/transport-and-roads-guidance-and-plans/?categoryesct191f252ff-550d-4cfa-a838-92ef2cb5f83c=10642>). Therefore no land within Reading Borough has been safeguarded on the policies map for this purpose. The lack of any safeguarded land is not considered to render the policy unsound, but additional close working with Reading Borough Council will be needed moving forward.

Section 6 of the Plan concerns the South Reading Area. This section refers to the potential development at Grazeley that has been presented in the West of Berkshire Spatial Planning Framework as a possible area for a new settlement of around 15,000 houses. There is no commitment at this stage to take the proposal for development at Grazeley forward. The land lies within Wokingham Borough and West Berkshire District areas but would have strong links to Reading. One of the key principles for the south Reading area, set out at paragraph 6.2.1d of the plan, recognises the importance of enhanced transport connections to any development at Grazeley, should this occur. WBC welcomes this inclusion within the plan. Figure 6.1 includes an indicative MRT route across the M4 from the Grazeley area towards the existing Park and Ride at Mere oak, which is also welcomed.

Wokingham Borough Council considers the strategic transport elements of the Plan to be sound. Wokingham Borough Council would welcome on-going co-operation on transport schemes, including improved bus services, which will enhance connections between Reading Borough and Wokingham Borough.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

*The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.*

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None anticipated

### Cross-Council Implications

Decisions in Reading Borough on the location of sites for residential and other types of development could affect how the authority needs to resolve impacts on services such as transport, education, etc. within the borough.

### SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

<b>Director of Corporate Services</b>	No comments
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	No comments
<b>Leader of the Council</b>	No comments

### List of Background Papers

Information published by Reading Borough Council relating to the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan– see <http://www.reading.gov.uk/newlocalplan>

<b>Contact</b> Vanessa Rowell	<b>Service</b> Development Policy and Planning
<b>Telephone No</b> 0118 974 6458	<b>Email</b> Vanessa.Rowell@wokingham.gov.uk
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