



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** will be held in David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN, on **THURSDAY 27 JUNE 2019 AT 7.30 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage', written in a cursive style.

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 19 June 2019

This meeting will be filmed for inclusion on the Council's website.

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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

MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

John Halsall	Leader of the Council
John Kaiser	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Housing
Parry Bath	Environment and Leisure
UllaKarin Clark	Children's Services
Charlotte Haitham Taylor	Regeneration
Pauline Jorgensen	Highways and Transport
Charles Margetts	Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services
Stuart Munro	Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning
Gregor Murray	Climate Emergency
Wayne Smith	Planning and Enforcement

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
10.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence	
11.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the Executive Meeting held on 30 May 2019.	9 - 16
12.		DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest	
13.		PUBLIC QUESTION TIME To answer any public questions A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice. The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of the Executive Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Council or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions	
13.1	Shinfield North; Shinfield South	Andrew Grimes has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question: Question Shinfield Parish Council's Planning Committee of 6 th June 2019 received an update on Planning Enforcement in the parish. The list consisted of 19 breaches. Of these two had reached the stage of a	

Planning Enforcement Notice being issued and one had between closed due to submission of a planning application. A review of the list demonstrated that all 19 breaches had been in existence for considerable periods of time, for example 84951 Derrydene, or had not been inspected for a long period after a complaint had been made. In the case of enforcement item 1402 Mallards (Spencer's Wood Post Office) Enforcement was granted due to the applicants failed appeal and yet officers continue to negotiate with the owner who is delaying conforming with the actual permission granted, with no relief for the neighbours in sight. These processes do not seem to result in any progress to rectify breaches of planning permissions.

Can the Executive confirm the Key Performance Indicators for managing Planning Enforcement issues and the criteria for screening out complaints?

14.

MEMBER QUESTION TIME

To answer any member questions

A period of 20 minutes will be allowed for Members to ask questions submitted under Notice

Any questions not dealt with within the allotted time will be dealt with in a written reply

14.1 Finchampstead South

Charles Margetts has asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

Please can I ask the Executive Member for the Environment to update us on progress with the work on California Country Park?

14.2 None Specific

UllaKarin Clark has asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

Forty councils across Britain, including Reading, have recently declared a Climate Emergency. Does your newly created role mean that Wokingham is joining with the other councils and their climate change initiatives? And if so, what can we expect in the coming months that will help stem the tide of climate change, and improve the environment of all our residents?

14.3 Winnersh

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey has asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

Could you please give me the reason for the delay of more than 2 years in the design of the Zebra crossing on Bearwood Rd and New Rd Winnersh (which has outside funding to pay for it) and the lowering of the speed limit to 30 MPH on Bearwood Rd required outside Bearwood Primary School?

14.4 None Specific

Jim Frewin has asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

As a new member reading some of the excellent questions and answers from previous meetings has provided me with a valued source of information to help me understand what WBC are doing across a range of issues. However as soon as it becomes a happy to talk after, happy to give further details, happy to look into this, happy to share later, happy to have a conversation, it becomes a one to one conversation and the visibility of answers, ideas, options, actions and follow ups are lost to the wider audience. This is mainly supplementary questions but not always. There have also been (rare) occasions where answers are subsequently proven to be factually incorrect and any challenge is difficult to see.

I believe there would be benefit to residents and members in a cross party review of how we manage questions, subsequent actions and any resultant challenges. Will the Executive support the setting up such a cross party working group to review this issue?

14.5 None Specific

Caroline Smith has asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency the following question:

Question

Do we have a planning policy concerning building a specific percentage of carbon neutral homes in any new development and if not when will we have such a policy and what percentage will it be?

(the Zero Carbon Hub website defines the three core requirements as:

1. The fabric performance must, at a minimum, comply with the defined standard known as the [Fabric Energy Efficiency Standard \(FEES\)](#) and
2. Any CO2 emissions that remain after consideration of heating, cooling, fixed lighting and ventilation, must be less than or equal to

the [Carbon Compliance](#) limit established for zero carbon homes, and

3. Any remaining CO2 emissions, from regulated energy sources (after requirements 1 and 2 have been met), must be reduced to zero)

14.6 Emmbrook

Rachel Bishop-Firth has asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:

Question

I was concerned to see the plans for the conversion of another office block on the Toutley Road industrial estate into residential housing. I've walked round the existing office conversion on the same estate. The problems with this form of housing are immediately obvious from a quick visit. These are not purpose built apartments constructed as housing - it's an office block divided into living spaces. Residents' privacy is compromised, there is no garden space and the block is isolated on an industrial estate. This is going to magnify the effects of any anti-social behaviour which starts in the flats on the rest of those living there.

I understand that we have a housing crisis nationally, and that this development is a roof over people's heads, but this is not the kind of suitable permanent housing which will help build strong communities. It's not somewhere that people will choose to settle down and raise a family. In fact, similar developments elsewhere have been linked to increases in anti-social behaviour and crime.

What steps is the Council talking to ensure that Wokingham is building housing which is suitable for the long term?

14.7 Winnersh

Paul Fishwick has asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

At the Executive meeting on 28th March 2019, I asked about the issue of the frequent flooding of the B3030 King Street Lane Winnersh between Sainsbury's and Allnatt Avenue that impacts on the travelling public and adjacent residents by flooding their gardens and has now occurred 36 times since March 2018.

In his response, the Executive Member agreed to an onsite meeting with myself and local residents. In an e-mail exchange on the 1st April 2019, it was agreed to meet soon after the CCTV survey results were available which were envisaged within a couple of

weeks. However, following being elected to this Council I now find that no CCTV survey has been carried out and there are still flooding events taking place impacting on residents. Another three months has been lost due to in the inefficiency of this Council.

What urgent action is the Executive Member going to take to expedite resolving this long-standing issue?

Matters for Consideration

15.	None Specific	DECISION REPORT RE ADULT SOCIAL CARE STATUTORY SERVICES	17 - 22
16.	None Specific	PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION	23 - 60
17.	Arborfield; Barkham	ARBORFIELD AND BARKHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN	61 - 126
18.	None Specific	BERKSHIRE LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION	127 - 180

A decision sheet will be available for inspection at the Council's offices (in Democratic Services and the General Office) and on the web site no later than two working days after the meeting.

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 30 MAY 2019 FROM 7.30 PM TO 7.55 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Kaiser (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Parry Batth, UllaKarin Clark, Pauline Jorgensen, Charles Margetts, Stuart Munro, Gregor Murray and Wayne Smith

Other Councillors Present

Rachel Bishop-Firth
Prue Bray
Gary Cowan
Dianne King
Ian Pittock
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
Bill Soane

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Charlotte Haitham Taylor and John Halsall.

Councillor Dianne King, Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration, attended the meeting on behalf of Councillor Haitham Taylor. In accordance with legislation Councillor King could take part in any discussions but was not entitled to vote.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 28 March 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Leader of Council.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions were received.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members

5.1 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

What comments has Wokingham Borough Council made to the Windsor and Maidenhead and Reading New Local Plan Public Inquiries?

Answer

Comments on the pre-submission version of the local plans for both the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Reading Borough Council were considered through

Individual Executive Member Decisions in the usual way. Full information is available on the website.

By the way of an overview an IEMD report on the Reading Borough Local Plan was considered and agreed on 10 January 2018. Our comments raised an objection until the lack of policy and accommodation provision for Gypsies and Travellers was addressed within the Reading Borough.

Our consideration carefully considered the planned housing provision in the Reading Borough. Whilst there would be a modest shortfall against the level of housing need as defined by the Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment, this was being addressed through a separate Memorandum of Understanding between Western Berkshire Housing Market Area authorities - Reading Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council, West Berkshire Council and ourselves.

This agreement stated that the modest shortfall would be addressed within the HMA authorities, as agreed by Government planning policy. It is important to note that no agreement was made to commit Wokingham Borough Council to provide any additional homes, indeed we have expressed to our partners that we would not do this. It is important to note that under the Government's new standard method for calculating housing need, Reading Borough actually have a surplus now of housing supply, so actually no shortfall exists going forward.

With regards to the Royal Borough, an IEMD report was considered and agreed on 16 August 2017. Four representations were submitted to their draft local plan. In broad terms, our comments were raised to ensure that the authorities in the Eastern Berkshire Housing Market Area planned separately and appropriately to meet the full housing needs.

For the avoidance of doubt no approach has been made to Wokingham Borough Council to provide development on behalf of the Royal Borough. If such an approach was made then we would strongly resist it as being inappropriate.

Supplementary Question

Looking at the request from Reading and the reply from Mark Ashwell, which I thought was quite appropriate, they do make the point about the Western HMA will help to deliver the housing needs in the other areas and I am pleased that you are not dealing with it as I was saying.

But one of the other areas that did concern me was that Tony Page said in his letter that "in Reading's unmet need we would wish to see the delivery of affordable homes" which we have seen is important for Reading. But they want to have nomination rights over the affordable housing delivered to meet their needs if we deliver any and it would also be essential to engage in discussions that developer contributions and community infrastructure levy issues.

So not only are they saying that if you can build some properties for us we would want the CIL, the infrastructure levies, and all the bits and bobs that go with it. So I would really like an assurance that we would not do this?

Supplementary Answer

I am more than happy to give you the assurance that that will not happen.

5.2 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Regeneration the following question which was answered by the Deputy Executive Member in her absence:

Question

Why was there an increase of £4,027,164 for Elms Field in the capital spend last year? (Capital Programme Outturn Report p53 of the agenda)

Answer

The increase in budget was provided to offset the CIL contribution required under the Elms Field Scheme. The CIL contribution was not included in the Medium Term Financial Plan since this is a “payment” by the Local Authority to the Local Authority and not a cash transfer. The CIL contribution has been identified within our wider communications over the years and is not an additional cost to the scheme

Supplementary Question to the Executive Member for Finance and Housing

There are two actual figures for Elms Field on there – both of around £4m. There is also a comment in the figure below which says “approx. £500,000 – I can check this one” which seems a rather casual approach to putting a report together. But the bit I would like to ask you about is the first line of that page “The Council are asked to retrospectively approve and note the budget adjustments...” There is over £13m worth of spend there. Do you think it is acceptable to retrospectively approve £13m worth of spending?

Supplementary Answer

No.

5.3 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

Regarding Agenda Item 8, the consultation on Future Housing in Wokingham Borough, I would like to ask if it has been considered how the costs of carrying out this consultation could be better managed. It could be combined with other literature that WBC distributes or if it could include responses via a web site survey, which would reduce postage costs and make the process more convenient?

Answer

All households in the Borough will be sent a postcard or letter explaining the purpose of the consultation, following on from the ‘Homes for the Future’. This will include a web address with a link for an online survey. A freepost option which will also allow paper responses to be sent back to the Council for those not able to go online.

Together, both these methods ensure residents are able to respond to the consultation. However, combining this consultation with other Council communications would dilute its prominence, as we found out through the ‘Homes for the Future’, and likely result in a much smaller number of responses. The cost of the consultation is therefore considered appropriate to its purpose and importance.

The consultation will be advertised in multiple ways, including via the Borough News, Council website, news releases, e-newsletters and social media and hopefully every Member in their own ward will have their own communication that will go out and that will be finalised in the coming weeks.

Supplementary Question

I would like to know what independent advice you have taken on the structure of the questions?

Supplementary Answer

If you consider we did the 'Homes for the Future' and both myself and Councillor Munro spent quite some time going out to nine areas. We did resident groups, we sent a booklet to every household in the Borough and we got nearly 1,500 responses. I hear that is a record but we need more than 1,500. For the purposes of what we want here I think we need a much larger percentage because if we are going to take on Government we need to make sure that the residents of Wokingham are behind us. So I think we are trying every angle possible and as I said earlier I am relying on all of you as ward Members to make sure your residents do respond because we have got one chance and we need to make sure that we get it right this time.

5.4 Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

Can we ask more questions on this proposed survey other than do the residents want us to build more houses instead include questions such as but not limited to:

- the types of housing the residents want, bungalows, flats, smaller homes, or;
- the proposed locations for the new housing;
- whether we should build new SDL's or not;
- whether we should build the infrastructure first for the housing estate before the first house is built as they do in Cambridge;

And do this with an online web service or a WBC website.

Answer

Let me go back to the 'Homes for the Future' consultation then I will come back to that as it is an important part.

As you know from November 2018, we started in Winnersh which was the first event that we did, until February 2019 the Council publicly consulted on the Local Plan Update (the LPU), under the banner of 'Homes for the Future.' This was extensive and, as I previously said, was advertised throughout a number of areas through ward Members and it asked various questions, as you all know, on future development in the Borough:

- Whether new housing should be built in new communities, with supporting infrastructure, and if so, where are the most suitable locations? You know I think we had at the time, and they did increase as we went through, we had up to 303 sites;
- What types of housing or jobs would be most suitable in parts of the Borough, for example, apartments, smaller houses, offices etc.
- With reference to all these areas of land promoted for the future development in the Borough, there are also areas where we would promote or would be supported?

Responses could be submitted, as I have said earlier, via the online survey, and again we had nearly 1,500 responses from our residents, by filling out a response form, or writing to

the Council. The consultation included eight public drop-in events across the Borough, as I said in Winnersh, one in Twyford, one in Wokingham Town etc with the opportunity to talk to Officers. On some occasions we had over 20 staff there and as I said on most of them, apart from one I was at, to go through the Local Plan process.

The submitted comments, and detailed technical work will inform the next stage of the plan, which will be a public consultation on the Draft Local Plan that we hope to come out this autumn. This will allow all interested parties to submit their comments on the proposed development strategy for the sites for housing, employment, open space and other land uses.

Supplementary Question

What exactly are you planning to ask – the questions actually?

Supplementary Answer

We have already asked those questions. If you have been on-line for the 'Homes for the Future' consultation we asked most of those questions around: what type of housing; where do you want it; how high do you want to go up; do you want to go more than three storeys? So we have covered a vast amount of ground within that consultation that has already happened.

For this consultation it is going to be a simple question: "Do you agree with the Government's imposed housing numbers".

6. REVENUE MONITORING 2018/19 - OUTTURN

The Executive considered a report setting out the revenue outturn position for the Council for the 2018/19 financial year.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing informed the meeting that at the outturn position for the General Fund (revenue) was reporting a total spend of £129.03m against a planned budget spend of £128.25m resulting in an adverse variance of £0.78m which was only 0.61% of the total budget. In relation to the Housing Revenue Account this was showing an adverse balance of £30k; which in comparison with the total budget was relatively small.

Councillor Kaiser advised that the Schools' Block had a variance of £1.05m which was less than 1% of the total budget of £130m. This figure included the cost of special needs which increased by over 15% last year.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the outturn position of the revenue budget and the level of balances in respect of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Schools Block and the Authority's investment portfolio be noted;
- 2) the General Fund carry forward requests of £2,043,820, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be agreed;
- 3) the significant reduction in the overspend on the general fund revenue account achieved since the last report be noted; substantially this is a result of the continuous improvement work in the Adults' Social Care and Customer and Localities directorates.

7. CAPITAL OUTTURN 2018-19

The Executive considered a report setting out the capital programme outturn for 2018/19.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing went through the report and advised that its purpose was to set out the capital programme outturn position for 2018/2019, seek approval for relevant budget carry forwards and demonstrate effective and safe use of the Council's resources to deliver services.

Councillor Kaiser highlighted that in 2018/19 the Council, against a working budget of £146.5m, had made a total capital investment in services of £132.2m. It was noted that the underspend of £14.3m was mainly due to a re-appraisal of two schemes and once they had been reviewed a new bid/scheme would be raised, evaluated and if agreed added to the programme.

In addition Members' attention was drawn to the fact that for the second year running the Council had delivered more capital investment than in any other year of the Council's history; a large percentage of which related forward funded infrastructure eg roads to improve congestion around the Borough.

Councillor Jorgensen asked for further information on the £73.8m of prudential borrowing that had been used to fund capital expenditure in 2017/18 and particularly that £30m of this funding had come from internal borrowing. Councillor Kaiser explained that the £73.8m figure was mainly predicated on expected S106 and CIL money which enabled forward funding as much as possible of projects eg roads, even though the Council had not yet received the money from the relevant developer. Councillor Kaiser provided the example of the Winnersh Relief Road which was being forward funded as it was deemed an important part of the infrastructure for that area.

With regard to an earlier question from Councillor Bray about retrospective approvals Councillor Kaiser advised that he would look into this matter and find out why it had happened.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the Quarter 4 adjustments to the capital programme, as set out in Appendix C to the report, be approved;
- 2) the 2018/2019 Capital Outturn, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- 3) the re-profiling of budgets into future financial years, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved.

8. FUTURE HOUSING CONSULTATION

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposed public consultation which would seek residents' opinion on the Government's housing requirement for Wokingham Borough.

The Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement outlined the proposed consultation and the reason for it and advised that it had been widely publicised following mention of it at full Council in March. Councillor Smith proposed a change to the recommendation to state that the Executive was recommending the consultation to the Special Council

Executive Committee which would be meeting after the Executive. This amendment was agreed by the Executive.

Councillor Jorgensen noted that it was proposed to have a mixture of on-line surveys and postcards and queried what protection there would be to stop people voting twice and how the electronic voting would be validated? In addition because of the importance of the consultation and wanting to ensure that the views of residents would be taken forward, and there would be no legal issues that could prohibit this, Councillor Jorgensen asked whether any advice had been taken about whether the electronic voting was valid? Councillor Smith confirmed that this particular question had been raised and considered and as a result every household would be provided with a unique reference number and validation checks would be carried out on both the on-line and freepost options.

RESOLVED that the Special Council Executive Committee be recommended to:

- 1) approve the future housing consultation, in the form set out in paragraph 3.1;
- 2) authorise a supplementary estimate of £45,000-£80,000, to fund the consultation;
- 3) authorise the Director of Corporate Services and Director Locality and Customer Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree minor amendments, if necessary, prior to consultation.

9. PROCUREMENT BUSINESS CASE - DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM

The Executive considered a report relating to a procurement business case for the proposed acquisition of a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for the recommissioning and awarding of all the Council's passenger transport contracts.

The Executive Member for Highways and Transport informed the meeting that the proposal was simply to switch on some functionality that the Council already owned therefore there was no cost associated with the proposal. The DPS would enable dynamic purchasing which would be in line with OJEU requirements and would allow the Council to purchase services from a subset of already verified suppliers, which should speed the process up and be more cost effective.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) agreement be given to the commencement of the implementation of a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for the recommissioning and award of all the Council's passenger transport contracts;
- 2) the implementation of the Proactis (Procontract) Dynamic Purchasing System be approved;
- 3) for future transport contract award decisions over £500k the DPS would be delegated to the Director for Localities and Customer Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Transport;
- 4) any real savings derived from the implementation of a DPS be referred to Overview and Scrutiny Committee once ascertained.

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TITLE	Decision Report: Adult Social Care Statutory Services
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 June 2019
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Adult Services - Matt Pope
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services - Charles Margetts

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

This report seeks to establish a clear Adult Social Care Pathway within Wokingham, creating a consistent standard of response to safeguarding vulnerable adults.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive agrees to the transfer of all statutory functions (Brokerage and Support Services) and staff from Optalis Ltd to Wokingham Borough Council.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WBC's ASC has a statutory duty to ensure a clear pathway for responding to concerns of abuse or neglect and create a consistent standard of response to any abuse in all settings.

A Peer Review was carried out in September 2018 by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), identified a number of service areas for development. These relate to the fragmentation of the Pathway and the safeguarding of vulnerable adults. The future model for ASC needs to ensure all statutory services are delivered through one organisation in order to be as effective and efficient as possible.

To improve our pathway, WBC established a working group to review the Pathway and develop a proposal on the future relationship between the Council and Optalis Ltd. However, because of the nature of this risk and the length of time elapsed since the report, immediate action is now required to rectify this.

This report recommends the immediate transfer of all Statutory Services and staff from Optalis Ltd to WBC. This will affect circa 48 FTE employees and result in an Optalis contract variation.

There is a cost of uplifting the staff from Optalis to WBC terms and conditions of circa £238K, this will be offset and funded by the efficiency gain through the development of the Three Conversations Model and by consolidating the Pathway within the Council.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2011, Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) created Optalis Ltd as a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) to manage its Adult Social Care (ASC) provider services, along with some commissioning and brokerage services.
- 1.2 The current model for WBC's ASC Statutory Pathway (i.e. split services across Optalis and WBC) is inefficient. This has been verified by consultation with staff members and driven by internal and external audits of the service dating back to 2015.
- 1.3 There are complexities faced by WBC customers due to the current organisational structures and processes. Under the current model, the care pathway stretches across multiple organisations, and as well as being unclear at times, creates too many handoffs, which in turn causes delays for customers. Staff have fed back through various workshops the following:
 - Diluted & fragmented leadership and management;
 - Lack of clarity around overall ownership and control;
 - Multiple handoffs;
 - Waiting lists & delays;
 - Rework and potential cost duplication;
 - Tensions between staff;
 - Fragmented customer journey;
 - Lack of clarity about criteria between multiple teams;
 - Inter-team communication negatively impacted by not being co-located;
 - Inconsistent links between decision making & financial impact;
 - Reactive crisis management leading to inefficient commissioning, and;
 - Inconsistent approach to commissioning and placement leading to inefficiency.
- 1.4 Customers can get caught up in the middle of disputes about which service is responsible for dealing with their needs, with no one agency taking responsibility or being held accountable for resolving matters.
- 1.5 In September 2018 a Peer Review was completed by the ADASS. The review, led by Keith Hinkley (Director of Adult Social Care and Health at East Sussex County Council), highlighted service improvements required. This included:

“An early resolution about future working arrangements between WBC and Optalis is essential.”

“There is a lack of clarity on the responsibility for adult social care with two bodies managing the system. Other decisions about the care pathway, assessments, safeguarding, governance arrangements and further integration with the NHS cannot be fully addressed until this issue is resolved.”

“There is a lack of strategic leadership and direction in relation to safeguarding. There is also little clarity about roles and responsibilities.”

- 1.6 Safeguarding work continues to prove to be particularly challenging due to a lack of clarity about where the accountability for this work lies; this is currently within WBC when it should lie with the relevant organisation's management. In the absence of a legally binding agreement, safeguarding continues to lack accountability and ownership, and each of the many handovers that currently exist represent an ongoing risk to both organisations, the staff and most importantly, service users.
- 1.7 The findings of the Peer Review need to be addressed, in particular the disjointed Pathway.

2. OPTIONS APPRAISAL AND NEXT STEPS

- 2.1 In response to the Peer Review, WBC commissioned a high level business case to look at a number of options to bring the Pathway together. This included the transfer of all remaining statutory services within WBC to Optalis Ltd.
- 2.2 The transfer of services to Optalis would, however, be a protracted process that may not address our immediate concerns within a satisfactory timescale. Given the importance of this issue and need for an urgent response, any delays in consolidating the Pathway would place WBC at an unacceptable level of risk. Furthermore, creating a single Pathway under the direct control of the Statutory Officer (DASS) is considered essential at this stage.
- 2.3 WBC's relationship with Optalis Ltd has gone from strength to strength in recent years. The LATC is, however, a relatively untested delivery model within ASC. The transfer of functions would require further due diligence, creating additional delays.
- 2.4 Transferring statutory services to WBC would see the operation of the ASC Statutory Pathway move under the direct control of WBC. This would mean that the relevant functions, staff and budget would transfer from Optalis to WBC. In effect this would leave Optalis as a direct provider of services for WBC with all of the Council's statutory safeguarding, assessment, support planning and reviewing function under direct Council control.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The future model for ASC needs to ensure all statutory services are delivered through one organisation in order to be as effective and efficient as possible. This will improve the service by reducing handoffs and facilitating continuous improvement through the implementation of a strengths-based approach to service delivery through the Three Conversation Model.
- 3.2 The opportunity to bring all of the statutory ASC functions under WBC would allow for a cohesive strategic vision for ASC to be enacted with strong, clear leadership and a single management structure which would offer clear lines of management accountability.
- 3.3 A consolidated ASC offer within WBC has the potential to generate efficiencies across the system, providing resilience to be able to manage the increasing

demand to services. WBC has a track record of innovation and making savings with a strong service performance in key areas, this will include the development of the Three Conversation Model.

- 3.4 It is highly recommended that, without further delay, all statutory services (Brokerage and Support Services) currently in Optalis are transferred into the direct control of WBC.
- 3.5 This will mean the transfer of circa 48 FTE staff from Optalis to WBC and a variation to the current Optalis contract. It is anticipated that there will be an additional cost relating to this decision, which is £238K relating to an uplift in harmonisation of terms and conditions when the staff transfer to WBC. This will be funded by the efficiency gain that will be achieved by having the ASC Pathway in one organisation and managed within existing budgets. This should also lead to further efficiencies once the pathway is in one organisation and new working practices are implemented.
- 3.6 The impact on Optalis will be minimal as the statutory services are separate from the directly provided services. This will enable Optalis to focus on continued improvement and efficiency in the direct provision of care and support service.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £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)	£119,000 part year effect	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£238,000	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£238,000	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information

Increase in cost will be funded by the efficiency gain of implementing the recommendation. Year 1 costs are a part year effect based on an October 2019 transfer assumption.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Optalis Holding Board will need to be informed. A full HR consultation with the affected staff will be undertaken.

List of Background Papers

None

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TITLE	Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan consultation
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 30 May 2019
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Locality and Customer Services - Sarah Hollamby
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Environment and Leisure – Parry Batth

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

To seek Executive approval to publish the Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020 - 2030 (ROWIP) and undertake a full public consultation.

The key benefit to residents of the Borough of this decision is an opportunity to contribute to the development of the improvement plan and the actions the Council intends to take to meet the future public needs of the rights of way network.

The ROWIP links with the Core Strategy, Managing Development Delivery 2014-2026, Local Transport Plan 2011-2026, Active Travel Plan 2011-2026, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health and Well Being Strategy 2018-2021, the Sustainable Environment Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive approve the undertaking of full public consultation on the Draft Revised Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020/2030.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What the report is about

This report seeks approval to publish the Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020-2030 and undertake a full public consultation.

ROWIP Process

Wokingham Borough Council has a duty under Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and update a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) every 10 years. The previous ROWIP was published in 2010 and expires next year. The Council must publish a draft plan and undertake a full public consultation on the draft plan for a minimum of 12 weeks.

The new draft plan includes a revised suite of 76 actions based on 6 broad headings:

- 1) Improving information
- 2) Creating new links
- 3) Encouraging use of the network
- 4) Access for all
- 5) Look after the network

6) Planning for the future

Key Issues

Decision is to undertake the statutory 12-week consultation. This does not bind the Council to adopting any of the proposals. Any actions within the final plan will only be undertaken when the opportunity, funds and resources become available.

The draft plan contains details about potential proposed routes across private land, which have not yet been discussed with the land owners. These routes are proposed routes only and are subject to discussion and negotiation with landowners in the future.

The main costs for this decision are minimal and relate to newspaper advertisements and printing costs.

Timescales for next steps

The next steps will be to undertake a 12-week consultation from 4th July 2019 to 26th September 2019 as detailed below. Following this consultation the feedback will be fed into a revised draft which will be submitted for approval as the final Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020-2030 in January 2020.

Planned consultation

The draft plan will be published and advertised in 2 local newspapers covering the area, as well as on the Councils website. In addition to this it will be announced via a press release and through social media.

Electronic mail will be sent to all known consultees including all Ward Members, Parish & Town Councils, Mid and West Berks Local Access Forum, known user groups and neighbouring local authorities

Engagement with the wider public will be encouraged through an online consultation, emails and social media, attendance at community forums, drop in sessions at the Council offices at Shute End and in other community locations. The draft plan will also be deposited in the Shute End offices and local libraries for inspection by the public.

BACKGROUND

Legislative Background

Wokingham Borough Council has a duty under Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and update a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) every 10 years. As part of the process for reviewing a ROWIP, the Council must publish a draft plan and undertake a full public consultation on the draft plan for a minimum of 12 weeks.

Background and content of the draft ROWIP 2020 - 2030

The previous ROWIP was published in 2010 and expires next year. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for 2020-2030 builds on this work and takes it further, verifying and clarifying the needs of the public and proposing a revised suite of 76 actions to meet these needs, based on 6 broad headings:

1) Improving information

Deliver and maintain an up to date legal record of PROW, expand and improve the information available to the public online and assist others to do the same and promote more routes

2) Creating new links

Create more routes between towns and villages, fill gaps in the network for walking, cycling and horse riding & create more circular routes

3) Encouraging use of the network

Encourage use of the network for sustainable transport and fitness, increase confidence for people using PROWs and reduce conflict between users

4) Access for all

Develop more accessible paths and improve structures to cater for users with restricted mobility

5) Look after the network

Improve the surfacing of paths and reduce river side damage, manage vegetation and enforcement issues, seek improvements such as street lighting in certain areas and work in partnership with other organisations.

6) Planning for the future

Make sure that the network is considered as part of the planning process, funds for improvement and enhancing the network are secured where required and ensure future developments do not cause problems for the network.

The plan assesses the extent to which the public rights of way network meets the needs of the public now, and in the future in providing opportunities for exercise, leisure and open air recreation, delivers safe and active travel options and contributes to sustainable development and to a healthier, inclusive community

These actions are informed by research, spatial analysis of the network and consultation with stakeholders to define where we should be heading. It identifies the gaps in the network for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, providing a framework for assessing priorities and directing efforts to achieve the maximum benefit for the public.

It addresses the current deficiencies in the network and ways to encourage increased use of the network for sustainable travel, leisure and health. It links and feeds into existing Council strategies and policies, and identifies where there is synergy and common goals.

As well as being strategic in nature, specific details have been captured as part of the process of creating the plan. These have been recorded and mapped so that they can form part of the overall solutions to be implemented over the course of the plan and be shared across the Council to maximise opportunities for improvement.

The process of reviewing and creating this revised plan is as follows:

Stage 1 – Review and undertake a new assessment of need

A review of the existing assessment of need was conducted in March – May 2019, with a consultation with all WBC Councillors, Parish Councils, user groups, local residents, tourist organisations, neighbouring local authorities and other stakeholders in April 2019.

A review of all current strategic plans was also conducted to ensure that the revised plan feeds into the wider Council objectives.

Stage 2 – Review and update the statement of action

The results of the review and assessment of need fed into the review and update of the existing statement of action, forming the Wokingham Borough Council Draft Revised Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020/2030

Stage 3 – Publish a draft revised Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The draft plan must now be published and open for consultation for a minimum of 12-weeks. The results of this consultation will be analysed and fed into the final Wokingham Borough Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020/2030

Stage 4 – Adopt and publish a new Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020-2030

It is intended that the final plan will be adopted and published in 2020

Planned consultation

The draft plan will be published and advertised in 2 local newspapers covering the area, as well as on the Councils website, through a press release and through social media.

Electronic mails will be sent to all known consultees including all Ward Members, Parish & Town Councils, the Mid and West Berks Local Access Forum and neighbouring local authorities. The following user groups will be approached directly for their comments:

- Loddon Valley Ramblers
- Disabled Ramblers
- Local disability groups
- Local visually impaired user groups
- British Horse Society
- Cyclists Touring Club
- Cycling GB
- Open Spaces Society
- Byways and Bridleways Trust
- Chiltern Society
- British Driving Society

- Auto Cycle Union
- Trail Riders Fellowship
- Land Access and Recreation Association
- Green Lane Association (GLASS)
- Hants and Berks 4x4 Club
- All wheel drive club
- National Farmers Union
- Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)

Engagement with the wider public will be encouraged through an online consultation, emails and social media, attendance at community forums, drop in sessions at the Council offices at Shute End and in other community locations. The draft plan will also be deposited in the Shute End offices and local libraries for inspection by the public.

BUSINESS CASE

Wokingham Borough Council has a duty under Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and update a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) every 10 years.

The next steps will be to undertake a 12-week consultation from July to September 2019, including newspaper advertisements, a press release, online surveys, direct email contact, social media and through public drop in sessions in various locations.

Following this consultation the feedback will be fed into a revised draft which will be submitted for approval as the final Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020-2030 in January 2020.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £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)	£3000	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	N/A	N/A

Other Financial Information

Implementation of the ROWIP proposals (which are not binding) will be accommodated within existing funding sources/budgets, or will only be undertaken when additional funds and resources become available.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

If approved the public consultation will commence on 4th July 2019 and run until 26th September 2019.

List of Background Papers

Draft ROWIP 2020 Equality Impact Assessment
Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020-2030
Draft ROWIP 2020 Appendix 1: WBC overarching policy and strategy context
Draft ROWIP 2020 Appendix 2: Assessment of Need Consultation Report
Draft ROWIP 2020 Appendix 3: Network Fragmentation analysis
Draft ROWIP 2020 Appendix 4: ROWIP 2020 Proposed New Routes
Draft ROWIP 2020 Appendix 5: Greenways Strategy

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Wokingham Borough Council

Rights of Way
Improvement Plan
2020- 2030

Consultation Draft

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- Appendix 2: Assessment of Need Consultation Report
- Appendix 3: Network Fragmentation analysis
- Appendix 4: ROWIP 2020 Proposed New Routes
- Appendix 5: Greenways Strategy Plan

Introduction and Executive Summary

The Public Rights of Way (PROW) network makes up 18% of the total highway network within Wokingham Borough Council, and is used by thousands of people, to get to school, to get to work, and to relax and enjoy the countryside. At its core it consists of the public footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways, but it forms a crucial part of a wider network which includes public parks, SANGs, permitted routes, cycle routes and the wider highway network. The public rights of way network is free to all users regardless of age, race or gender and provides physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits to all.

Wokingham Borough Council has a duty under Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and update a Rights of Way Improvement Plan every 10 years. The review of the plan provides an opportunity to re-assess and re-align our strategy and priorities for the management and improvement of the network.

The 2010-2020 ROWIP delivered a number of improvements to the PROW network, during a challenging financial climate. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for 2020-2030 builds on this work and takes it further, verifying and clarifying the needs of the public 10 years on and developing a revised suite of 76 actions to meet these needs, based on 6 broad headings:

Improving information	Creating new links	Encouraging use of the network	Access for all	Look after the network	Planning for the future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver and maintain an up to date legal record of PROW, expand and improve the information available to the public online and assist others to do the same and promote more routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more routes between towns and villages, fill gaps in the network for walking, cycling and horse riding & create more circular routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage use of the network for sustainable transport and fitness, increase confidence for people using PROWs and reduce conflict between users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop more accessible paths and improve structures to cater for users with restricted mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the surfacing of paths and reduce river side damage, manage vegetation and enforcement issues, seek improvements such as street lighting in certain areas and work in partnership with other organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure that the network is considered as part of the planning process, secure funds for improvement and enhancing the network and ensure future developments do not cause problems for the network.

The plan assesses the extent to which the public rights of way network meets the needs of the public now, and in the future in providing opportunities for exercise, leisure and open air recreation, delivers safe and active travel options and contributes to sustainable development and to a healthier, inclusive community

These actions are informed by research, spatial analysis of the network and - crucially - consultation with stakeholders to define where we should be heading. It identifies the gaps in the network for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, providing a

framework for assessing priorities and directing efforts to achieve the maximum benefit for the public.

It addresses the current deficiencies in the network and ways to encourage increased use of the network for sustainable travel, leisure and health. It links and feeds into existing Council strategies and policies, and identifies where there is synergy and common goals.

As well as being strategic in nature, specific details have been captured as part of the process of creating the plan. These have been recorded and mapped so that they can form part of the overall solutions to be implemented over the course of the plan and be shared across the Council to maximise opportunities for improvement.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan process

The process of reviewing and creating this revised plan is as follows:

Stage 1 – Review and undertake a new assessment of need

A review of the existing assessment of need was conducted in March – May 2019, with a consultation with all WBC Councillors, Parish Councils, user groups, local residents, tourist organisations, neighbouring local authorities and other stakeholders in April 2019.

A review of all current strategic plans was also conducted to ensure that the revised plan feeds into the wider Council objectives.

Stage 2 – Review and update the statement of action

The results of the review and assessment of need fed into the review and update of the existing statement of action, forming the Wokingham Borough Council Draft Revised Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020/2030

Stage 3 – Publish a draft revised Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Following approval of the draft plan it has now been published for a statutory 12-week consultation. The results of this consultation will be analysed and fed into the final Wokingham Borough Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020/2030

Stage 4 – Adopt and publish a new Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020-2030

The final plan will be published in 2020

Review of the ROWIP 2010

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan published in 2010 was based upon an assessment of the current and future needs of the public. This was gathered primarily by a public consultation, questionnaire, and parish council and user group focus groups. A summary of the assessment is below:

Use of the network: Public rights of way are used more frequently than other countryside attractions. The top 4 majority uses was identified as walking, then cycling, dog walking and running. The network is also used by horse riding, motorcycling, 4x4 driving and carriage driving.

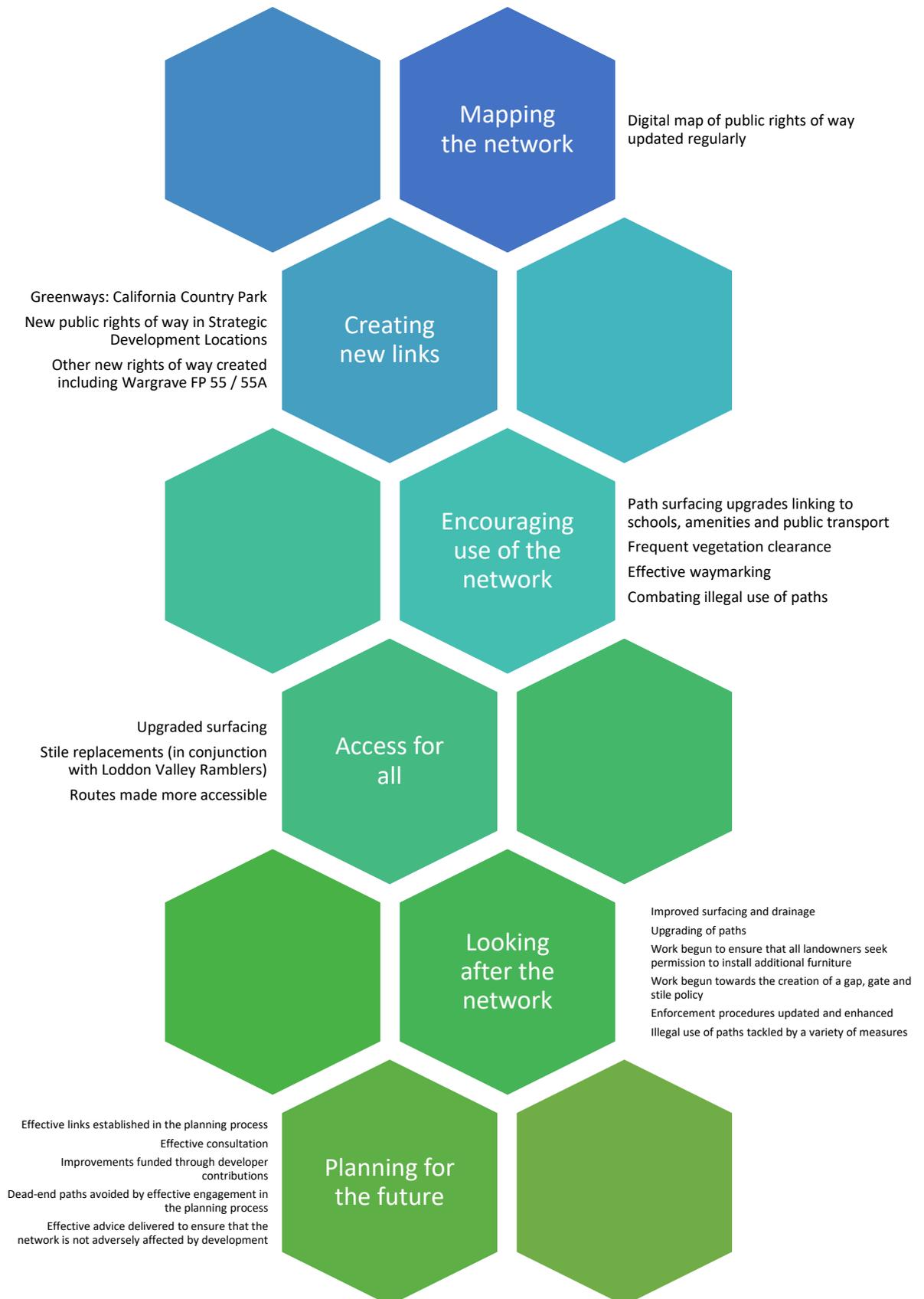
Key themes identified in 2010 plan:

- Improved information
- Improved accessibility for wheelchairs and pushchairs (gap, gate stile policy)
- Seasonal restrictions on some byways
- Continuing maintenance of PROWs
- Linking up paths/creating circular routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders
- Reducing personal safety concerns

Main improvements sought:

- Guided walks
- Improved accessibility for wheelchairs, including specific information, toilets and parking
- Better signage, surfacing and information about existing routes
- Restriction of motor vehicles on vulnerable byways
- More off-road paths to link the network, particularly where network is fragmented
- More routes and links for pedestrians, horses and cyclists including circular routes
- More byway routes for motor vehicle users
- Better communication and engagement with landowners
- Improved information provision about routes with poor surface conditions
- Links to PROW network from public transport, links from urban areas to the countryside
- Specific route suggestions

Achievements from the 2010 ROWIP



Strategic policy context

The importance of the PROW network, the countryside, riverside and publicly accessible green space is recognised in many national and local strategies and is afforded strong protection in law. An estimated 4000 individual statutes, regulations and judgements have a direct relevance to its protection, use and development.

Due to the wide variety of uses of the PROW network by the public, the ROWIP directly contributes to the delivery of many Wokingham Borough Council policies and strategies. The diagram below shows the policies and strategies that share common objectives with the ROWIP. A more detailed analysis of the policy context is included in 'Appendix 1: WBC overarching policy and strategy context'.



Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

In addition to the strategies outlined above the Council is also in the process of developing the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. This plan will identify cycling and walking improvements required for the Borough over a 10-year period to increase the number of trips made on foot or by cycle. There are a number of common goals between the ROWIP and the LCWIP and the actions details in this plan will link into the LCWIP.

Wokingham Greenways Strategy Plan

The Wokingham Borough Council's aspiration is to have Greenways (which are continuous generally traffic-free multi user routes) linking the major Strategic development Locations (SDL's) in the borough (Arborfield Garrison, Shinfield, North Wokingham and South Wokingham) to each other and also to the existing communities and places of interest/employment. Linked to the Core Strategy (CP10 policy CP10 items 20 and 21 and SDL policies CP18-21), Greenways has also been highlighted in ROWIP 2020-30, Local Transport Plan and LCWIP (in progress). (Appendix 5: Wokingham Greenways Strategy Plan)

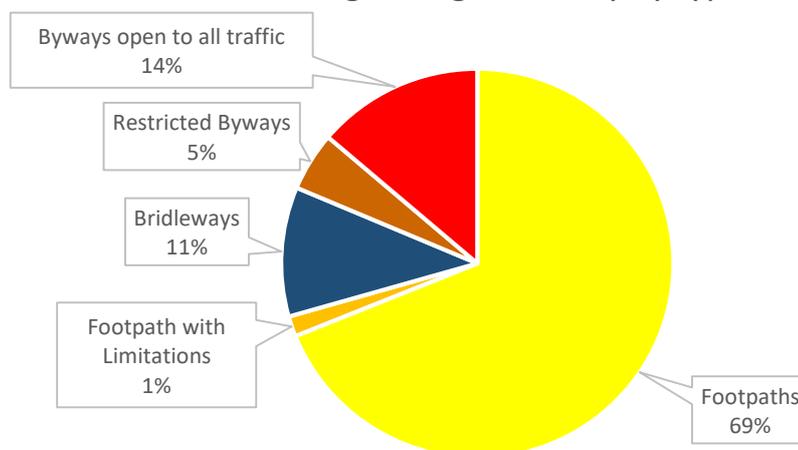
Analysis of current provision, spatial data and future demand

The existing PROW network

The Wokingham Borough Council Public Rights of Way network consists of some 164km of paths, which represents 18% of the total highway network within the Borough. The network is split between 17 parishes/administrative areas:



Percentage of rights of way by type



Full details for each parish can be seen in the table below:

Parish	Footpath (m)	Footpath with limitations (m)	Bridleway (m)	Restricted Byway (m)	Byway (m)	Total (m)
Arborfield and Newland	2949.76	0.00	275.10	0.00	4258.20	7483.06
Barkham	2447.27	0.00	2990.14	0.00	1827.76	7265.17
Charvil	3081.94	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3081.94
Earley	6487.93	0.00	39.06	0.00	0.00	6526.99
Finchampstead	13483.57	0.00	4330.90	797.24	2708.18	21319.89
Remenham	8176.14	2761.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	10937.34
Ruscombe	1767.17	0.00	3080.42	0.00	0.00	4847.59
Shinfield	11869.20	0.00	1855.48	543.29	3969.28	18237.25
Sonning	3713.94	0.00	0.00	0.00	927.04	4640.98
St Nicholas Hurst	11965.56	0.00	1478.67	0.00	1343.44	14787.67
Swallowfield	7192.91	0.00	818.59	0.00	3915.52	11927.02
Twyford	979.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	979.48
Wargrave	15454.84	0.00	761.24	5330.93	0.00	21547.01
Winnersh	3291.90	0.00	427.85	297.15	769.49	4786.39
Wokingham	8871.00	0.00	0.00	1022.96	923.03	10816.99
Wokingham Without	8303.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	1880.15	10183.95
Woodley	2737.56	0.00	1557.86	0.00	0.00	4295.42
Totals	112773.97	2761.20	17615.31	7991.57	22522.09	163664.15

The majority of the network (69%) consists of public footpaths, however there exists a significant percentage of byways (14%) compared to the other “higher rights” paths, which pose particular challenges and opportunities for the management and improvement of the network.

Significant ongoing projects

Since the development of the 2010 Rights of Way Improvement Plan there have been a number of significant projects that have started and will continue through in the revised Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020/2030.

Greenways and Loddon Long Distance Path

The Greenways Project includes the strategic network of multi-user paths that connects the Strategic Development Locations to the existing settlements as well as linking sites of historic interest and recreational value and provide a continuous traffic free routes in the Borough. The Greenways Project may include existing Public Footpaths, Byways, restricted byways, Bridleways as well as identification of new greenways which when connected will deliver a comprehensive and connected series of traffic free routes for pedestrians, cyclists and potentially equestrian users away from the main roads.

The Greenways Project also includes River Loddon Long Distance Path (LDP) that links the Thames Valley Path in the north of the borough in Wargrave to the Blackwater Valley Path in the South of the borough in Swallowfield.

This internal network of Greenways to extend beyond the Public footpaths to public green space, and point of interest in Wokingham borough. WBC will continue discussions with private land owners with regards to the acceptability of providing a route through land not owned by WBC. Should these discussions prove successful, further route assessments can be completed and details of the preferred route can be finalised.

Strategic Context:

Greenways are referred to in Appendix 7 of the Core Strategy and are captured in policy CP10 items 20 and 21 and SDL policies CP18-21, and the council will include reference to Greenways in the Local Transport Plan update due for adoption in 2019. It is intended that the Greenways also be included in the Local Plan as well as within the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020/2030.

The Greenways Strategy and implementation plan is detailed out in ‘Appendix 5: Greenways Project’

Scope of Greenways Project:

The project will:

- Stage 1 Greenways network is an SDL-focused network to satisfy the requirements of the current Core Strategy to deliver the traffic free commuting and leisure routes connecting the existing and new settlements and point of interest.
- The Project will link with and align to additional greenways and paths proposed to improve the connectivity within the Borough and to adjoining boroughs, For example: River Loddon Path project, ‘Wokingham Wheel’ project, An Urban Network, My Journey Project.

Greenways Project Objectives:

The key objectives of the project are detailed in the table below.

Objective Number	Project Objectives
GW1	To deliver sustainable transport network in accordance with the Council’s vision that aim to provide traffic free commuting and leisure routes connecting new Strategic Development locations with the existing settlements.
GW2	To deliver the Project to High Quality, Cost and Time.
GW3	To help achieve WBC policies such as Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development framework, Core Strategy (CP10), Local Transport Plan, Active Travel Strategy

The Greenways Network:		
Route Name	Description	Length (km)
Route A	South of M4 SDL - Arborfield - Barkham	5.5
Route B	Arborfield SDL - Barkham - Wokingham	7.6
Route D	Arborfield SDL – Barkham – South Wokingham SDL - Wokingham	7.0
Route E	River Loddon – Arborfield	2.1
Route F	Arborfield – Arborfield SDL	4.0
Route I	Arborfield SDL - Finchamstead	1.9
Route J	Arborfield SDL – Blackwater Valley	2.9
Route K	Arborfield Cross	2.5

River Loddon LDP		
Route Name	Description	Length (km)
LDP Section A	Blackwater Valley Path, Swallowfield to A327 Reading Road	6.8
LDP Section B	A327 Reading Road to Showcase Cinema, Winnersh	8.42
LDP Section C	Showcase Cinema, Winnersh to Waggon & Horses Pub, Twyford	6.55
LDP Section D	Waggon & Horses Pub, Twyford to River Thames	8.84

Byway resurfacing programme

As detailed above, the Wokingham Borough rights of way network has a significant number of byways compared to other similar authorities. A lot of these byways serve as the main entrances to residential properties. This can change the maintenance needs for these byways where the main use is by motor vehicles.

In light of this the Council has an ongoing project to upgrade the surface of these byways to cater of this use, providing a sealed surface. This project is separate to the normal 'day-to-day' maintenance of unsealed byways. It is based on a priority list developed taking into account a range of criteria including surface condition, level of use by vehicles vs other users, strategic location and historic level of complaints.

Market research & stakeholder engagement

The consultation on the existing assessment of need showed that the existing assessment remains on the whole a valid assessment of the public need. The feedback identified the following themes, categorised into three broad headings:

Improved Information

- Improved signage and information
- Development of guided routes

Maintenance and management of existing routes

- Increased accessibility for more vulnerable users
- Improved maintenance
- Improved surfacing
- Improved enforcement procedures
- Managing vehicle use on byways
- Improved partnership working

New and improved routes

- Filling gaps in the network
- Development of long distance routes
- Increased circular routes
- Increased off-road cycle routes / Greenways
- Improved integration with wider highway network
- Cross-boundary improvements

These themes above match closely with those identified in 2010, and accordingly many of the associated actions remain current and valid. These actions have been updated and retained for the revised 2020/2030 ROWIP action plan.

A complete analysis of the consultation responses is included in 'Appendix 2: Assessment of Need Consultation Report'.

As part of the consultation a number of specific routes have been suggested, along with a revision of the routes previously identified in light of developments and changes in demand since the 2010 ROWIP. These have been incorporated into the revised ROWIP suggested route map included in Appendix 4: ROWIP 2020 Proposed New Routes'

Fragmentation of the network

The feedback from the assessment of need consultation has highlighted that the fragmentation of the network remains one of the main barriers for use, and a key area to focus on for the improvement of the network over the life of the plan.

Spatial analysis of the network has identified various key areas to focus on where there large gaps in the network for access for different user groups as follows and allows us to prioritise efforts to improve access in these areas where it will be the most beneficial to the public as a whole.

The maps of these areas are included in 'Appendix 3: Network Fragmentation analysis'. They identify focus areas on gaps in the network in general, and from the viewpoint of different user groups based on current and future needs.

Impact of new technology on ROWIP

Since the publication of the last ROWIP in 2010 there have been considerable improvements in technology which has changed the way that members of the public prefer to access information. In particular the demand for more traditional publications such as paper leaflets and maps has declined in favour of on-demand information such as GPS enabled maps.

This increase in the uptake of technology services has also opened up more many more opportunities to be able to provide information tailored to individual need, for example enabling a person to know what where they can walk based on their own ability or in their own vicinity, or knowing in advance what type of structures they may encounter, or even the type of footwear they may need. It also presents opportunities to provide improved facilities for other users who may have difficulty accessing the network, for example visually impaired users.

Delivery Plan and Statement of Actions

This section details the actions that WBC aims to achieve as a result of the 2020/2030 ROWIP. The Statement of Action consists of a revision of the 2010 actions, with alterations and additions made in light of the 2019 assessment of need. For ease of reference new or updated actions have been highlighted in **bold**. For continuity the actions are labelled as Statements of Action (SOA) numbered from 1 through to 6 corresponding to the 2010 plan. Each item has been analysed as follows.

Action

This details the specific action(s) proposed to address the identified objective

Monitoring – how will progress be monitored?

The progress on the implementation of the plan will be reported on an annual basis via a Rights of Way Improvement Plan Progress Report. This will detail progress against all targets and will also include the site specific suggestions included in Appendix 4. Where appropriate additional monitoring plans are included for specific ROWIP actions, these are detailed in the table below.

Timescale

The actions are classified as follows:

- Short term (1 to 3 years)
- Medium term (3 to 7 years)
- Long term (7 to 10 years)

Resources – what resources are needed in order to achieve the aim?

The resources needed for each item are classified as follows:

- Deliverable within existing resources
- Low – up to £5,000
- Medium - £5,000 - £50,000
- High – over £50,000

Actions will only be undertaken when the opportunity, funds and resources become available.

Partnerships – what partnerships are required in order to achieve the aim?

The Council aims to work in partnership as much as possible in order to achieve the aims of the plan. Where specific groups and teams are known these have been listed in the table for that particular objective.

Strategic Links

This section details where actions link to the other policies identified in the strategic policy context analysis.

- Core Strategy (CS)
- Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014-2026 (MDD)
- Local Plan
- Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 (LTP)
- Active Travel Plan 2011-2026 (ATP)
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)
- Sustainable Environment Strategy (SES)
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
- Greenways Strategy Plan (Greenways)

Statement of Action 1: Improving information

One of the main barriers for people identified in the assessment of need was the provision of information, both as part of the formal legal record, and also by providing additional information to enable people to use the network. The actions take into account the changing demand for information in different formats to the traditional leaflet, seeking to provide information in the most appropriate form for the target audience.

WBC has a legal duty to maintain an up to date definitive map and statement (DMS) for the borough. WBC's DMS was last updated in 2000 and there have since been several modifications which need to be added to both documents. It is also important that applications for path creations, diversions or extinguishments (known as Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) and Public Path Order (PPO) applications) are prioritised and efficiently processed and subsequent changes then added to the DMS.

Objective	Action	Monitoring	Timescale	Resources	Partnerships	Strategic links
1.1 Deliver an up to date Definitive Map and Statement (DMS)	(a) Consolidate and republish the DMS at least every 5 years		Short term	Existing		
	(b) Update and maintain the web-based interactive map of public rights of way		Ongoing	Low		ATP / Obj 4
	(c) Process DMMO and PPO applications efficiently	Monitor time taken to determine DMMOs and PPOs	Ongoing	Existing		
1.2 Enable the PROW network to be included in modern navigation apps	Include public rights of way data in the National Street Gazetteer (NSG)		Short – Medium term	Existing	WBC Highways Geoplace	ATP / Obj 4
1.3 Improve public rights of way	(a) Produce a mobile accessible web based map of the WBC public rights of way network including		Short term	Existing		ATP / Obj 4

network information		permitted paths and off-road urban paths					
	(b)	Develop and promote circular routes utilising the existing network and new routes as required <i>[links with SOA 2.3]</i>		Ongoing	Low-Medium	WBC Communcations Parish & Town Councils MWBLAF LVR BHS	JSNA JHWS / Aim 1
	(c)	Provide information in formats that allow easy printing at home for people to take with them			Existing		
1.4 Improve information available for users with restricted mobility	(a)	Survey and record all existing path furniture / structures/surfaces on the network		Short – Medium term	Low	LVR Disabled Ramblers Disabled user groups	
	(b)	Produce mobile accessible interactive web based maps including information about furniture and surfaces.		Short— Medium term	Low		LTP / AT3 JHWS / Aim 1
1.5 Encourage use of the network by the elderly by providing tailored information		Produce a tailored app to encourage elderly people to access the public rights of way and wider path network via Smart Cities challenge		Medium term	Medium	WBC Adult Services	JSNA JHWS / Aim 1 LTP / AT3
1.6 Encourage use of the network by minority groups and groups	(a)	Provide basic level information about the rights of way network, including information about what to expect, suitable clothing, maps etc.		Short – Medium term	Existing		JSNA JHWS / Aim 1 LTP / AT3

unfamiliar with the network	(b)	Produce information in different languages		Short term	Low	WBC Communications	JSNA JHWS / Aim 1
1.7 Improve signage along the network		Produce destination signage in strategic areas to facilitate use of the network for travelling to work / school / shops etc.		Short – medium term	Low - Medium	WBC Adult Services Parish & Town Councils	ATP / Obj 1 & 4 JSNA JHWS / Aim 1 SES / Priority 2
1.8 Assist other groups in promoting the network and developing PROW information		Seek to assist Parish Councils and other groups in developing public rights of way maps and other information		Short-Medium term	Low	Parish & Town Councils	

Statement of Action 2: Creating New Links

From the consultation it can be seen that there is a priority to create circular routes, long distance routes and utility routes linking strategic locations. The fragmentation analysis included in Appendix 3 highlights the particular areas to focus on for filling gaps in the network; WBC aims to identify these gaps and then conduct feasibility studies for creating new paths. Paths will be prioritised for creation by their contribution to fulfilling the objectives of the ROWIP and the wider strategic objectives. Creating new paths can be a long and expensive process; therefore opportunities to extend the network through the planning process will be investigated, as well as through liaison with landowners.

Objective	Action	Monitoring	Timescale	Resources	Partnerships	Strategic links
2.1 To develop off road routes to link major development areas and to link towns and villages	(a) Develop and implement the Greenways network (Appendix 5)		Medium term	High		CS / A7.7 CS / A7.35 CS / A7.47 LTP / AT1 ATP / Obj 1-4 JSNA / Priority 1 JHWS / Aim 1 SES Priority 2 Greenways LCWIP
	(b) Develop and implement the Loddon Valley Long Distance Walk (Appendix 5)		Long term	High		JSNA / Priority 1 JHWS / Aim 1 MDD / CC03 Greenways LCWIP
	(c) Develop more cycle paths to link towns and villages, utilising the existing network and new routes as required		Med-Long term	Medium-High		LTP / AT1 ATP / Obj 1-4 JSNA / Priority 1 JHWS / Aim 1 SES Priority 2 LCWIP
2.2 To develop a better joined-	(a) Conduct feasibility studies on proposed new paths,		Short – Medium term		Parish & Town Councils LVR	

up PROW network		based on identified priorities (Appendix 4)				MWBLAF	
	(b)	Seek to create new routes to join up the gaps in the network for walkers, cyclists and horse riders		Med-Long term			LTP / AT1 & 2 ATP / Obj 2 LCWIP
	(b)	Seek to create new routes to join up the gaps in the network near to schools, amenities, green spaces and public transport		Short term			LTP / AT1 LTP / AT2 ATP / Obj 3 LCWIP
	(d)	Assess fragmentation of network between local authority areas and liaise with neighbouring authorities to create new paths to increase cross-border connectivity		Short-medium term		MWBLAF	
	(e)	Identify and utilise opportunities to create new paths as part of new developments and also through liaising with landowners		Ongoing	Existing		Core Strategy MDD / CC03
2.3 To develop additional circular routes	(a)	Identify opportunities for the creation of circular routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders		Short-term	Existing	Parish & Town Councils MWBLAF LVR BHS	
	(b)	Prioritise and develop new circular routes based on opportunities		Med-Long term	Medium		LTP / AT1 - 3 LCWIP

Statement of Action 3: Encourage use of the PROW network

Objective	Action	Monitoring	Timescale	Resources	Partnerships	Strategic links	
3.1 Encourage use of sustainable transport to work / school	(a)	Develop improved information and publications aimed at encouraging transport to work/schools using the rights of way network	Annual report	Short-medium term		WBC MyJourney WBC Communications	ATP – Obj 4 JSNA JHWS / Aim 1
	(b)	Identify and utilise opportunities in the planning process to create new paths or upgrade surfacing of existing paths that are near to schools, amenities and public transport	Annual report	Short-medium term			Core Strategy MDD CC03
	(c)	Carry out more frequent vegetation clearance on PROWs that are near to schools, train stations and bus stops	Monitor level of complaints of these paths being overgrown	Ongoing			ATP / Obj 2
	(d)	Produce destination signage in strategic areas to facilitate utilitarian use of the network (for example travelling to work / school / shops)		Short – medium term	Low - Medium	WBC Adult Services Parish & Town Councils	ATP / Obj 4 JSNA JHWS / Aim 1 SES / Priority 2
3.2 Increase confidence using	(a)	Improve way marking on popular routes		Short term			

the rights of way network	(b)	Review existing signage and look to install more detailed signage information, for example destination signage where appropriate.		Short-medium term			JSNA JHWS / Aim 1 LCWIP
	(c)	Develop guided walks		Medium term		Parish & Town Councils WBC Countryside Service	JSNA JHWS / Aim 1
	(d)	Identify key locations and where possible seek to improve road crossings where paths cross busy roads		Med-Long term	Medium-High	WBC Highways Parish & Town Councils Disabled groups LVR MWBLAF	LTP / AT1 ATP / Obj 2 & 4 SES / Priority 2 LCWIP
	(e)	Where possible seek to improve the interaction between the rights of way network and the wider highways network by making adjustments (for example improved road signage or implementing speed limitations)		Med-Long term	Low – Medium	WBC Highways	LTP / AT1 ATP / Obj 2 & 4 SES / Priority 2 LCWIP
3.3 Reduce conflict between users	(a)	Ensure signage is clear and that new paths are wide enough to accommodate all users		Ongoing			LTP / AT2 & 3
	(b)	Identify problem areas and work with police, local communities and parish councils to reduce illegal use of paths	Monitor level of complaints regarding conflict and illegal use	Ongoing		Police, local communities, Parish & Town Councils	

3.4 Encourage more people to use the PROW network to improve fitness	(a)	Increase promotion of Wokingham Borough Health Walks Scheme in health centres		Medium term		PCT, Wokingham Borough Health Walks Scheme, Sports Development Unit, Grant bodies	JSNA JHWS / Aim 1 LTP / AT2
	(b)	Create new Health Walks routes and information		Short-medium term			JSNA JHWS / Aim 1 LTP / AT2
	(c)	Provide PROW information tailored for sports centres and for fitness		Short-medium term			JSNA

Statement of Action 4: Access for all

One of the key aims of the ROWIP is to identify ways to improve access on public rights of way for those with visual or mobility impairments. The Equalities Act 2010 requires “reasonable adjustments” to be made by public bodies to enable disabled people to make use of the PROW network. WBC will aim to improve the accessibility of green areas and public rights of way where possible.

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Objective	Action	Monitoring	Timescale	Resources	Partnerships	Strategic links
4.1 To develop a network of paths for utilitarian and leisure use suitable for people of restricted mobility, visually impaired and other vulnerable groups	(a) Engage with local user groups and assess the fragmentation of network for mobility restricted users, visually impaired users and other vulnerable groups and identify potential improvements and priority areas		Short term	Existing	Parish & Town Councils Disability groups LVR	
	(b) Develop and promote network of routes based on identified priorities and improvements, utilising existing network and new paths as required.		Med-Long term	Medium		CS / CP2 CS / CP3 CS / CP6 MDD / CC03 LTP / AT3 JSNA / Priority 1 JHWS / Aim 1 SES / Priority 2
	(c) Ensure, as far as possible, that all new routes are constructed to be suitable for use by mobility restricted and visually impaired users		Ongoing	Existing		CS / CP2 MDD / CC03 LTP – AT3 JSNA JHWS / Aim 1 LCWIP
4.2 Improve surfacing on high-use paths	(a) Identify and prioritise high use paths and possible funding sources		Short-Medium term	Existing		

	(b)	Develop a programme to resurface high use paths		Short-Medium term	High	WBC Highways	LTP / AT2 & 3 ATP / Obj 2 SES / Priority 2 LCWIP
4.3 Upgrade or improve bridges to cater for users with restricted mobility	(a)	Identify high-use bridges, works needed and possible funding sources	Every 2 years monitor the percentage of the network that is fully accessible	Short-term			
	(b)	Develop a programme to replace bridges to enable greater accessibility		Short-medium term			JSNA LTP / AT3 ATP / Obj 4
	(c)	Seek to improve bridges to accommodate users with restricted mobility as part of the planning process		Ongoing		WBC Development Control	CS / CP2 MDD / CC03 JSNA SES / Priority 2
4.4 Replace non-accessible structures on the network with more accessible options	(a)	Develop a Stiles and Gates policy for all new structures on public rights of way, in line with BS5709:2018		Short-term			
	(b)	Continue and develop existing programme in partnership with user groups and volunteer groups to replace stiles and inaccessible gates with more accessible structures		Short-medium term		LVR BHS	JSNA LTP / AT2 ATP / Obj 2 & 4
	(c)	Develop new procedures to ensure landowners apply to WBC for		Short-term			

		permission to install additional furniture					
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Statement of Action 5: Looking after the Network

WBC has a duty to maintain the PROW network across the borough for the usual traffic, i.e. for pedestrians on a footpath; for pedestrians and horse riders on a bridleway. Maintenance issues that arise when managing rights of way include: surfacing, vegetation clearance and installing/repairing stiles, gates and bridges. Enforcement issues are mainly concerned with ploughed paths, obstructed paths and encroachment. Fly tipping and the Illegal use of footpaths and bridleways by motorcyclists (mostly children) are ever-present problems which require co-operation between the local authority, the police, parish/town councils and local people.

Objective	Action	Monitoring	Timescale	Resources	Partnerships	Strategic links
5.1 Improve surfacing	(a) Identify rights of way with recurring surface and drainage problems; investigate cause of the problem and most effective solution, e.g. Traffic Regulation Order or drainage works	Monitor level of complaints regarding surfaces	Ongoing			
	(b) Seek to improve and upgrade path surfaces where appropriate in response to changes in demand		Med-Long term	High	Parish & Town Councils	ATP / Obj 2 & 4
	(c) Seek to improve and upgrade path surfaces where appropriate in urban areas		Short-Medium term	High		ATP / Obj 2 & 4 LCWIP
	(d) Seek to improve and upgrade surfaces of paths that provide links to schools, amenities and public transport		Ongoing			
	(e) Seek partnership working with volunteer groups to improve paths		Ongoing		LVR, GLASS	
5.2	(a) Continue annual vegetation clearance programme	Monitor level of complaints	Ongoing			

Manage vegetation issues effectively			regarding paths being overgrown				
	(b)	Review policy and procedures for reactive maintenance, in particular for fallen trees		Short term	Existing		
	(c)	Review service standards, policy and procedures for vegetation and debris clearance from path surfaces		Short term	Existing		
	(d)	Work in partnership with user groups and volunteer groups to undertake vegetation clearance along rights of way		Ongoing	Low		
5.3 Manage enforcement issues effectively	Review policy and procedures for enforcement action, in particular for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ploughed/cropped paths (complete) • Obstructions • Encroachment 	Monitor time taken to carry out enforcement action and results	Short term				
5.4 Reduce illegal use of paths	Identify problem areas and work with police, local communities and parish councils to reduce illegal use of paths	Monitor level of complaints regarding illegal use	Ongoing				
5.5 Seek to install street lighting or illumination on urban paths where appropriate	Investigate options for street lighting or illumination to be installed along high-use urban paths, and identify possible sources of funding		Med-Long term	High			LTP / AT1 ATP / Obj 2 & 4 SES / Priority 2 LCWIP
5.6 Manage network of byways effectively	(a) Upgrade and provide sealed surfaces along byways where predominate use is by motor vehicles						

	(b)	Work with user groups to improve the surfaces of rural byways		Short-Medium term	Low	GLASS	
	(c)	Investigate feasibility of implementing seasonal restrictions on sensitive byways		Short term	Existing	Parish & Town Councils GLASS LVR BHS	
5.7 Build and develop partnership working with external organisations	(a)	Maintain membership of the National Trail Thames Path Partnership (TPP) and the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT)		Ongoing	Existing	ADEPT TPP	
	(b)	Foster closer links with user groups and work in partnership to improve the network for all users		Ongoing	Existing	LVR BHS GLASS TRF	
	(c)	Foster closer links with parish councils and neighbouring local authorities and work in partnership to improve the network for all users		Ongoing	Existing	Neighbouring Local Authorities	
5.8 Protect riverside paths from loss due to bank erosion	(a)	Identify priority areas where river bank erosion has occurred or is a particular risk of occurring		Short – medium term	Existing	TPP LVR	
	(b)	Develop a programme to repair eroded riverbanks and protect against further erosion		Medium – Long term	High	TPP Environment Agency	

Statement of Action 6: Planning for the Future

Wokingham Borough Council is a proactive local planning authority, seeking to shape future development through a carefully managed approach. Our approach is enabling the delivery of sustainable, infrastructure rich new communities which includes investment in new schools, strategic roads, neighbourhood centres, sports hubs and improved public transport. Through the planning process, WBC aims to maintain and improve the current PROW network and create new access where possible.

Objective	Action	Monitoring	Timescale	Resources	Partnerships	Strategic links	
6.1 Obtain funding from developers & grant bodies to improve countryside access	(a)	Ensure proposed routes and ROWIP objectives are incorporated in the Local Plan		Short term	Existing	WBC Planning	Local Plan
	(b)	Secure a committed amount of funds per new household from developers towards countryside access improvements (Planning Advice Note 2)	Every 2 years monitor the level of proposed routes and improvements that have been implemented	Short term	Existing	WBC Planning	Core Strategy MDD / CC03
	(c)	Secure access improvements through appropriate development proposals		Ongoing	Existing	WBC Planning	Local Plan Core Strategy MDD / CC03
	(d)	Establish sound evidence and justification for access requirements for developers		Short term	Existing	WBC Planning	Local Plan Core Strategy MDD / CC03
	(e)	Develop guidance notes for planners and developers		Short term	Existing	WBC Planning	
6.2 Ensure development does not result in dead-end or extinguished paths	Monitor DMMO and PPO applications to ensure no paths become dead-ends or are extinguished with no new route		Ongoing	Existing	WBC Planning	Core Strategy MDD / CC03	

6.3 Ensure development does not adversely affect existing PROWs <i>Links with SOA5.4</i>	(a)	Respond to all planning applications that materially affect rights of way and ensure case specific informatives and/or conditions are included as part of planning consents where appropriate		Ongoing	Existing	WBC Planning	Local Plan Core Strategy MDD / CC03
	(b)	Monitor developments closely to ensure that paths do not suffer encroachment and developers pay for any damage done during a development	Monitor cases of encroachment and damage as a result of development	Ongoing	Existing	WBC Planning	

TITLE	Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 June 2019
WARD	Arborfield; Barkham;
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers, Director of Locality and Customer Services - Sarah Hollamby
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement - Wayne Smith

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

This report seeks to continue to support Arborfield and Barkham Parish Councils in their efforts to help shape how development is managed in their area. The approval of Executive is sought to consult on a draft Neighbourhood Plan in order to seek views on its content. Authority is also sought to procure an independent examiner, as required by legislation, who will subsequently examine the Plan, which includes considering all the representations submitted during the consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) approve a 6 week consultation on the draft Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan; and
- 2) agrees to appoint an examiner to independently examine the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan, delegating the appointment and submission of the examination documentation to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Lead Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arborfield & Newland and Barkham Parishes have produced a draft Neighbourhood Plan to help shape how development is managed in their area. The draft Plan contains a number of policies on housing; the natural and historic environment; community facilities; business and commercial development; open space; transport; and flooding. The Plan does not include any site allocations.

In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), the Council must carry out a minimum six-week consultation on the draft Plan to invite comments from the public, statutory consultees, and interested parties and must arrange for an independent examination to take place. This report seeks approval to carry out the required consultation and to appoint an examiner to undertake the necessary examination.

At the current stage, the Council is not required to reach a formal view on whether the draft Plan meets the basic conditions¹, but must be satisfied that the proper legal process has been carried out. Officers have been actively engaged with the Parish Councils throughout the preparation of the draft Plan. Matters raised by Officers have largely been addressed, with any remaining issues for the examiner to determine through the examination process. To raise these matters the Council will need to submit formal representations to the proposed consultation. The Council's comments do not fall within the scope of this Executive decision but will be agreed via the Individual Executive Member Decision process. The types of comments that the Council will wish to make are as follows:

- Identifying areas where neighbourhood plan policy diverges from the Council's adopted Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans and supplementary guidance;
- Identifying areas where greater clarity would aid decision takers;
- General phraseology amendments of policy and supporting text.

The costs of undertaking the consultation and examination can be met from the existing revenue budget.

For clarity, any post examination processes and programmes will be subject to a further decision of the Council's Executive and Full Council.

Once adopted, the Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for the borough and thereby carry significant weight in the determination of planning applications and appeals in or affecting Arborfield & Newland and Barkham Parishes. At this time, the parish councils will benefit from receipt of 25% of the revenues from the Community Infrastructure Levy arising from the development that takes place in their area. This reflects a 10% increase on the 15% available to parish councils where there is no neighbourhood plan in place.

¹ As can be seen at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#basic-conditions-for-neighbourhood-plan-to-referendum>

BACKGROUND

Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011 and is a means for local communities to take the lead on shaping how their area is developed. Communities can prepare Neighbourhood Development Plans (often referred to as Neighbourhood Plans) which set out specific planning policies to help shape and guide development in their area.

The broad stages in producing a neighbourhood plan are as follows:

- 1) Designating a neighbourhood area
- 2) Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan
- 3) Pre-submission publicity & consultation
- 4) Submission of a neighbourhood plan to the local planning authority
- 5) Submission draft plan consultation
- 6) Independent examination
- 7) Referendum
- 8) Bringing the neighbourhood plan into force

This report seeks approval to undertake stages 5 and 6 for a neighbourhood plan produced by Arborfield & Newland, and Barkham Parish Councils.

Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan progress to date

Arborfield & Newland and Barkham Parishes began work on producing a neighbourhood plan (hereafter referred to as the Plan) shortly after being designated a neighbourhood area by the Council in August 2014. The Parish Councils undertook a consultation on their pre-submission draft Plan in June to August 2018.

Working with the Council, the Parish Councils considered the consultation responses and made a number of amendments, and have now formally submitted the draft Plan to the Council. The submission draft Plan contains policies on housing; the natural and historic environment; community facilities; business and commercial development; open space; transport; and flooding. The draft Plan does not allocate land for development.

Analysis of Issues

Now that the draft Plan has been submitted, the Council must publicise it for a minimum regulatory six-week consultation and invite representations (known as the Regulation 16² consultation).

Concurrent with the consultation, the Council will need to appoint an examiner to undertake the following stage of independent examination of the draft Plan. The examiner's role will be to independently test whether or not the draft Plan meets the basic conditions³, and other matters set out in the regulations⁴.

² Of the [Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012 \(as amended\)](#)

³ As can be seen at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#basic-conditions-for-neighbourhood-plan-to-referendum>

⁴ [paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(as amended\)](#)

The examination will take place following the consultation, at which point the Council will send the draft Plan, supporting documents, and all representations received to the consultation, to the examiner. Examinations typically take place via written representations without the need for a public hearing. Where additional points of clarity are required, these can be sent to the examiner in writing and made publicly available by the Council. Where necessary however, examiners may hold hearing sessions to assist their consideration of specific issues.

Executive approval is required to commence consultation, and begin the process of appointing an examiner. An examiner will be appointed using the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (NPIERS). This service allows for a shortlist of highly experienced examiners to be provided to the Council and Parish Councils who will then jointly decide who to appoint based on an assessment of their application and CV. All NPIERS examiners carry a standard daily fee.

At the current stage, the Council is not required to come to a formal view on whether or not the draft Plan meets the basic conditions, but must be satisfied that the proper legal process has been carried out. Officers have been actively engaged with the Parish Councils throughout the preparation of the draft Plan. Matters raised by Officers have largely been addressed, with any remaining issues for the examiner to determine through the examination process. To raise these matters the Council will need to submit formal representations to the proposed consultation. The Council's comments do not fall within the scope of this Executive decision but will be agreed via the Individual Executive Member Decision process. The types of comments that the Council will wish to make are as follows:

- Identifying areas where neighbourhood plan policy diverges from the Councils adopted Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans and supplementary guidance;
- Identifying areas where greater clarity would aid decision takers;
- General phraseology amendments of policy and supporting text.

This report recommends that Executive approve the draft Plan for consultation and the process of appointing an examiner.

Consultation

It is recommended consultation indicatively be undertaken from Monday 8 July until Monday 19 August 2019, a period of 6 weeks in accordance with the Regulations. The consultation will be publicised and documents made available in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement⁵.

Future steps

Following the end of the consultation, there is no prescribed timeframe in which an independent examination should take place. It will be at the examiner's discretion whether or not any hearings are required to consider aspects of the Draft Plan. If hearings are required, this is likely to increase the time and cost of the examination process.

⁵ Which can be viewed on the Council's website: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/planning-policy-information/local-plan-and-planning-policies/>

Following the examination process, the examiner will make recommendations on any changes that are required in order for the draft Plan to satisfy the basic conditions and whether it should proceed to the next stage of a referendum. Following receipt of the report, the Council will need to consider the recommendations made by the examiner and decide what action to take. At this stage, the Council will need to come to a formal view on whether the plan meets the basic conditions and, if it does, will be responsible for arranging and carrying out the referendum.

A referendum could take place in December 2019 following on from the annual canvas in November 2019. This would ensure as many people as possible are accurately registered to vote.

Should more than half of those voting do so in favour of the Plan, the Council must adopt it through a resolution of Council. At this point it would become part of the statutory development plan, and so carry significant weight when deciding planning applications and appeals.

For clarity, any post examination processes and programmes will be subject to a further decision of the Council's Executive and Full Council. As set out in this report, the current recommendations relate solely to carrying out consultation under Regulation 16 and process to appoint an examiner to then carry out the examination.

BUSINESS CASE

Need for the decision

In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), the Council must carry out a minimum six-week consultation on the draft Plan to invite comments from the public, statutory consultees, and interested parties. It must also arrange for an independent examination to take place. The current recommendation facilitates the Council carrying out its legal duties.

Alternative options

There is no alternative option that could be considered for taking the draft Plan forward to adoption.

Risks

No risks are apparent to progressing the draft Plan to consultation and examination.

With regard to future stages beyond the scope of this report, the main risk is whether the draft Plan will be found through the examination process to meet the basic conditions. This risk is considered to be low with Officers having been actively engaged with the Parish Councils throughout the draft Plan's preparation. Issues raised by Officers have largely been addressed through the drafting process. Outstanding issues can be addressed by the examiner through the examination process. To do this, the Council will need to submit formal representations on the Draft Plan in response to the proposed consultation. The Council's comments will be agreed via the Individual Executive Member Decision process.

Expected outcome

The outcome of recommendation to Executive is that a successful consultation is carried out in accordance with legal requirements and that the draft Plan proceeds to examination.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £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)	Cost of examination is dependent on the amount of hours the Examiner requires and whether formal hearing sessions are required. Estimate of £6,000 based on previous Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan examination.	Yes covered within the existing Growth and Delivery Budget.	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	No additional cost	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	No additional cost	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information

Whilst actions relating to the recommendation of this report can be met by existing revenue budget, in due course Council will be required to hold a referendum on whether the Plan should be adopted. The Council will be required to fund the referendum up front. However, once a referendum is successfully arranged the Council can obtain grant funding from government of £20,000 to assist in covering the costs.

Once a neighbourhood plan is made (adopted), the parish councils will benefit from receipt of 25% of the revenues from the Community Infrastructure Levy arising from the development that takes place in their area. This reflects a 10% increase on the 15% available to parish councils where there is no neighbourhood plan in place.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Consultation to be carried out for minimum 6 weeks as set out in main body of text.

List of Background Papers
Appendix A: Arborfield and Barkham Draft Neighbourhood Plan

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Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036



May 2019

Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

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Annexes

The following annexes are part of the Neighbourhood Plan but are published separately at:

<https://www.arbarplan.com/html/documents.html>

- I. Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement
- II. Barkham Village Design Statement
- III. Residents' Survey (2016) Summary of Results
- IV. Sustainability
- V. Landscape and Important Views
- VI. Natural Environment
- VII. Heritage
- VIII. Community Facilities
- IX. Recreation & Open Spaces
- X. Briefing Note Neighbourhood Area Housing Need April 2017
- XI. Housing Needs Analysis
- XII. Flood Risk Management Statement
- XIII. Arborfield and Barkham Greenways Report
- XIV. Arborfield and Barkham Greenway Maps

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Maps

The following maps form part of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan. They can be found on the Neighbourhood Plan website: <https://www.arbarplan.com/html/documents.html>

- A. Parish Boundaries
- B. Where People Live
- C. Landscape
- D. Important Views and Vistas
- E. Thames Basin Heaths- Special Protection Areas
- F. Natural Environment - Designated Areas
- G. Natural Environment - Tree Preservation Orders
- H. Natural Environment – Local Geological Areas
- I. Historic Heritage - Designated Sites
- J. Historic Heritage - Listed Buildings
- K. Locally Valued Natural or Heritage Assets
- L. Public Open Spaces
- M. Hydrology
- N. Public Rights of Way

Statutory Documents

The following items can be found at <https://www.arbarplan.com/html/documents.html>

- 1. Consultation Statement
- 2. Consultation Statement Appendices
- 3. Basic Conditions Statement
- 4. Determination Statement on the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

GLOSSARY

ABNP	Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan
ACRR	Arborfield Cross Relief Road
ANVDS	Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement
BVDS	Barkham Village Design Statement
BVRA	Barkham Village Residents Association
Core Strategy	WBC Local Plan adopted in 2010
Development Limits	The identified areas within which development proposals would be acceptable, as shown in the WBC Core Strategy adopted 2010
Brownfield	Previously developed land
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment published by WBC 2004, updated 2019
LPU	Local Plan Update
MDD	Managing Development Delivery (Supplements Core Strategy; adopted in 2014)
NMRE	Nine Mile Ride Extension
NMU	Non-motorised users
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework July 2018
NPSG	Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Plan Area	The approved Plan Area comprising the parishes of Arborfield & Newland and Barkham
PROW	Public Right of Way
REME	Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
SANG	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace
SDL	Strategic Development Location
SuDS	Sustainable drainage systems
TPO	Tree Protection Order
VDS	Village Design Statement
WBC	Wokingham Borough Council

Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

FOREWORD

The Plan Area for the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan was approved by Wokingham Borough Council in July 2014. Initial progress was slow as uncertainties persisted relating to the redevelopment of the garrison site and then the proposed Arborfield Cross Relief Road. The Neighbourhood Plan was relaunched in 2016 with a reinvigorated Steering Group representing both parishes.

It has always been the intention throughout the process of preparing the Plan to encourage participation by residents of the two parishes, hence the strap line 'A plan for the community by the community' which has been widely used in publicity material. Participation has been achieved through a number of channels: focus groups, a dedicated web site, e-mail updates, social media postings, parish newsletters and three public events. Along the way, a number of topic papers were produced by the focus groups and professional assistance was brought in.

In June 2018, a public event was held as part of the Regulation 14 Consultation. In the light of comments received, the plan has been further revised. A main thrust of the plan is to reflect national and local policies, but to interpret how these can address specific local issues.

Other Neighbourhood Plans were reviewed. I would particularly like to thank Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council and their NP team led by John Darker, who provided much useful guidance. Their Neighbourhood Plan (which successfully passed its referendum earlier this year) has in many respects been used as a model. Ascot, Sunningdale and Sunninghill NP and Felpham NP were also sources of inspiration and reference.

The Neighbourhood Plan also builds on the excellent work of the Arborfield and Barkham Village Design Statements (see ABNP Annexes I and II), which were produced by residents in both parishes and were adopted by WBC.

Thanks must go to the large number of residents who have participated in the preparation of this plan including around 50 who contributed to focus groups and the many who responded to surveys and completed response forms at various stages of the process.

I would particularly like to thank the Steering Group who have attended a relentless series of meetings over the last few years and who put together three very polished displays for our public events. Special thanks to Rob Rowe who created an excellent website which has served us well and who has resolved the surprising number of IT issues encountered in putting together the various displays and papers.

Thanks also should go to the assistance from a number of people at Wokingham Borough Council, including James McCabe and Heather Reed who have provided guidance and especially a big thank you to Katie Green who, with great patience, put together the various maps. The assistance of Andrew Mathison (NPIERS), whose 'Health Check' provided much food for thought, was crucial in taking the Plan forward. The considerable co-operation by Henry Street Garden Centre was most welcome, allowing the Steering Group to run some pop-up events and displays on their premises. Finally the support of the Arborfield and Newland Parish Council, Barkham Parish Council and the Barkham Village Residents Association has been much appreciated.

Laurence Heath
Chairman of Steering Group
Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

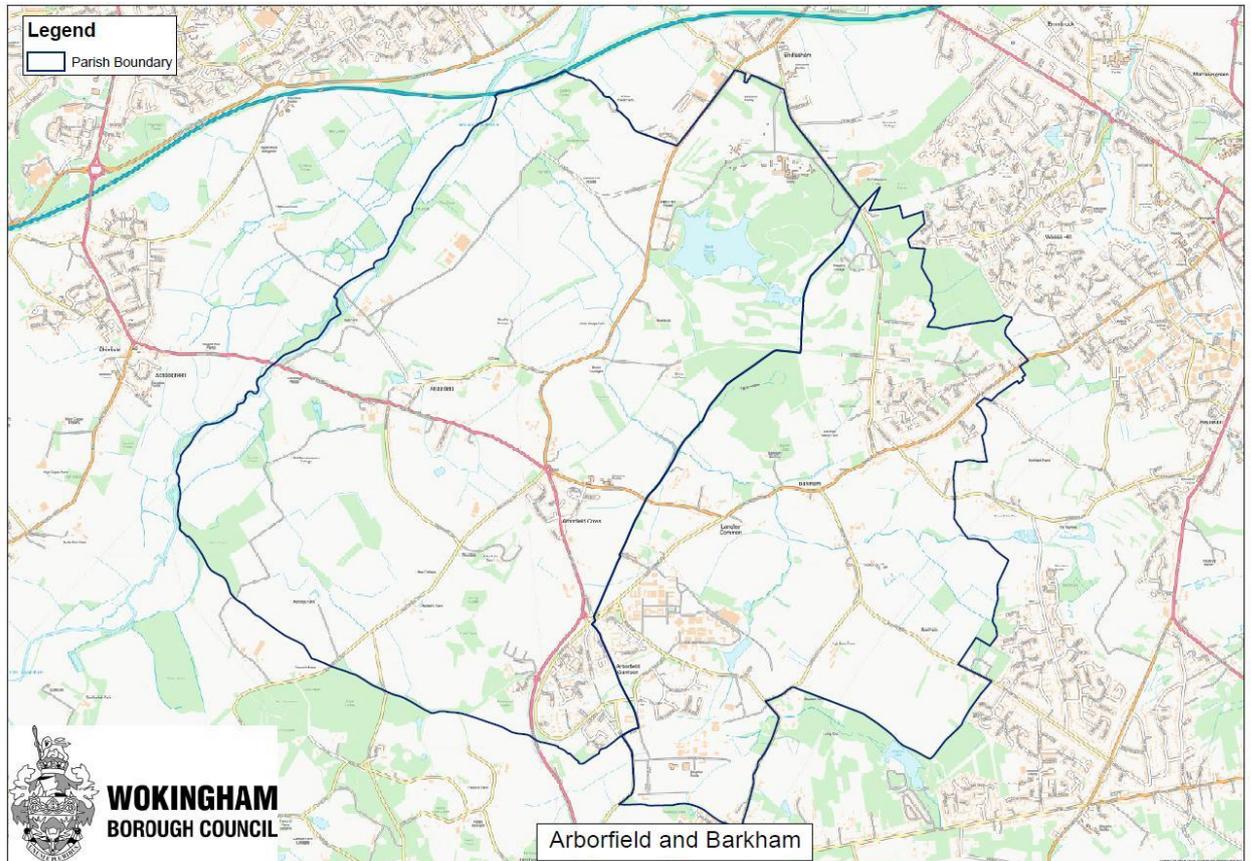
1. Introducing Arborfield and Barkham



Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

1. Introducing Arborfield and Barkham

Figure 1 Map of Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan Area



The Plan Area comprises the whole of Arborfield & Newland Parish and Barkham Parish. The boundaries of the two parishes are shown in the above map.

The two parishes are located to the west of Wokingham and south of the M4. The River Loddon forms the north western boundary of Arborfield. The eastern boundary of Barkham consists mainly of woodland, separating the parish from Wokingham Town. The boundary between the two parishes runs north east to south west, running across Bearwood Lakes Golf Course, The Coombes Woodland and then through the former Arborfield Garrison (the majority of which was actually in Barkham).

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Natural and historical background

- 1.1 Both Arborfield and Barkham are semi-rural Parishes in what was once a part of Windsor Great Park. Landscapes comprise historic farmland, wooded areas and ancient hedgerows, interspersed with residential areas of different ages and styles. Employment, traditionally, was farming or domestic service but residents now commute in all directions to work in modern technology and service industries.
- 1.2 The parishes have a rich and well-documented history with evidence of habitation from the Bronze Age. The earliest recording of Barkham, as Beorchamme, is in a Saxon Chronicle of 952 and both Parishes are referenced in the Domesday Book of 1086 – Arborfield as, then, part of Sonning and Barkham as Bercheham. The Bullock family of Arborfield, who for hundreds of years were the Lords of both Parishes, can be traced back to 1166.
- 1.3 The histories of Arborfield and Barkham have much in common. In 1220, the Rector of Arborfield was appointed as the Rector of Barkham and in 1330 the two Manors were united by marriage. In more recent times, they share a common war memorial erected at Arborfield Cross in 1919 and in 1974 the Churches of St Bartholomew, Arborfield and St. James, Barkham were combined. Despite having much in common, each parish nevertheless has its own distinct heritage and identity.

Development from 1900 onwards

- 1.4 Both parishes were small rural communities until comparatively recently. A major change occurred in 1904 with the War Office acquiring three farms in Barkham to create the Remount Depot, supplying horses for military needs. In 1931 the population of the combined parishes of Arborfield and Newland was 947 while Barkham contained only 211 people. As transport links improved and as commuting to larger settlements such as Wokingham, Reading and London became easier, so the parishes absorbed an increasing dormitory population. Meanwhile Arborfield Garrison became the main base for the REME, including a training college. By 2011 the populations of Arborfield had expanded to 2,860 and Barkham to 3,603. Map B Where People Live shows the main population areas.
- 1.5 Barkham began to expand in the 1920s, mainly as ribbon development, particularly along Barkham Road, Bearwood Road, Langley Common Road and School Road. This process continued, usually as individual houses and bungalows. This accounts for the wide variety of housing styles. Elizabeth Park, in the northeast of the parish, is a major housing development built in 1984-1989 so as to meet the Wokingham District housing target. The population of Barkham, consequently, has grown rapidly during the 20th century. The fifty years from 1921 saw population increase from 211 to 1,858 by the 1971 census. By the time of the 2011 census, the population had more than doubled to 3,603.
- 1.6 Arborfield housing began to increase after World War II. Anderson and Emblen Crescents were the first developments in the early fifties, followed by Link Way. Chamberlain and Melrose Gardens were added in the 1960s, and Harts Close in the early 1970s. The building of the Arborfield Garrison by-pass in 1968 caused a change in road layout and names, affecting the old main road through the garrison area. In the mid-1990s Whitehall Brick and Tile works closed, a business that was established in 1933. The land became available for development and Badgers Mount and Gerring Road were built. With the merger of Arborfield and Newland parishes in 1948, plus the growth in housing during the second half of the twentieth century, the population numbers had increased by 2001 to 2228. The early 21st century saw further expansion with the development of Penrose Park and Poppyfields in the first decade.
- 1.7 WBC's Core Strategy adopted in 2010 proposed the development of the Arborfield SDL on the site of the REME barracks which was imminently to close. The SDL is now under construction with completion initially planned for 2026. It is on a completely different scale from previous development in the parishes: the total development is planned for 3,500 dwellings of which some 1,800 will be within Barkham. Most of the balance will be in neighbouring Finchampstead.
- 1.8 This SDL, now known as Arborfield Green, is a brownfield site though roughly a half of the land available will not be built upon but used for SANGs and sports fields and amenity areas. This provides

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clearly defined open spaces within the SDL itself. Plans included a secondary school which opened in 2016. Two primary schools and a district centre are proposed and the area will be served by two new roads: the Arborfield Cross Relief Road (ACRR) and the Nine Ride Extension (NMRE). Other than the secondary school and a short section of the NMRE, the remaining infrastructure is still in the planning stage, although enabling works for the ACRR have commenced.

- 1.9 In addition to these open areas within the SDL, there is provision within Core Strategy Policy CP18(5) that the impact of the SDL itself on the local environment must be mitigated by ensuring open areas around the SDL are retained. During the review of the MDD (adopted in 2014), it was recognised that settlement separation areas should be preserved around the SDL, although the Inspector considered that the principle was adequately protected by settlement boundaries through Core Strategy Policy CP11.

Creating the Neighbourhood Plan – the first steps

- 1.10 Arborfield and Barkham Parish Councils first considered developing a plan in the early part of 2012. A working group of parish councillors was set up in February 2012 to investigate matters and report back to the Parish Councils. A proposal to develop the plan was approved by the two Parish Councils in May 2012 and a steering group of parish councillors was formed. WBC encouraged the two parishes to join with a third parish, but this was not considered practical. The Plan Area was eventually designated by WBC at an Executive meeting on 31 July 2014. However initial progress remained slow as there were still many uncertainties while the plans for the SDL were in a state of flux. Eventually the plan was relaunched in the summer of 2016.

A plan for the community by the community

- 1.11 It has been the intention throughout to encourage participation by residents of the two parishes, hence the strap line 'A plan for the community by the community' has been widely used in publicity material. Participation has been achieved in a number of ways:
- 1.12 An extensive programme of public consultation has been central to developing the plan. This has included a number of channels:
- Focus groups.** A number of focus groups have examined key issues. Amongst these were the Sustainability Group and the Greenways Group, both of which produced in-depth reports.
 - Website:** A dedicated website was set up at www.arbarplan.com in October 2016. This carries updates of recent activities, an explanation of the Neighbourhood Plan process, progress reports and key documents that users can download.
 - Email updates:** A mailing list has been put together to enable the circulation of updates on progress and forthcoming events.
 - Social media:** Similar bulletins have been posted on Facebook local interest pages including the Arborfield Community, Arborfield Green Village Community and the Finchampstead & Barkham Community pages.
 - Parish Newsletters:** Articles including progress reports and explanation of planning issues have been included in the local publications. These include the 'Arborfield News' which is produced by Arborfield and Newland Parish Council six times a year and the 'BVRA Newsletter' which is produced by the Barkham Village Residents Association and is distributed four times a year. In 2018 Barkham Parish Council also introduced its own in-house publication 'Village Info'.
 - Public Events:** The NPSG has organised public events and participated in other local activities, as shown in the Consultation Statement. These events were used as opportunities to explain the issues to residents and to obtain feedback on the topics raised.

To date, there have been nearly a hundred meetings held to identify issues, review, analyse and agree the content for the plan. Research methods are outlined in Sections 3 to 7. See also the Consultation Statement for further details about community engagement.

Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.13 The Neighbourhood Plan builds on the excellent work of the Arborfield and Barkham Village Design Statements (see Annexes I and II), which were produced by residents in both parishes and adopted by WBC.

Survey results

- 1.14 A residents' survey was carried out in 2016. Some of the main themes to emerge included:
- a) **Identity and setting:** The first major theme to emerge was that residents have a strong attachment to the rural and village character of the area. There was strong support for the proposition that the rural setting makes Arborfield and Barkham good places to live, with 98% of respondents agreeing. Meanwhile 91% strongly agreed and a further 8% agreed that the unique identity of the area is best preserved by retaining open spaces around the villages.
 - b) **A good place to live:** Other important reasons why Arborfield and Barkham are considered good places to live were access to motorways (63%) and good schools (35%). In the free format box, community spirit and village atmosphere were mentioned several times, which was nice to hear.
 - c) **Challenges facing Arborfield and Barkham:** Concern about development-related issues is widespread. The most important challenges faced by Arborfield and Barkham are traffic congestion (49%), protecting open spaces (29%) and absorbing development (18%). Unsurprisingly all three of these of these challenges relate to the rapid increase in new housing in the area.
 - d) Further breakdowns of the results are shown in section 3.5. A more detailed analysis of the survey findings can be found in Annex III: Residents' Survey (2016) Summary of Results.
- 1.15 The plan has been developed around a number of themes which emerged from the public engagement. The headline topics include:
- a) Sustainability
 - b) Identity and rural setting
 - c) Thriving communities
 - d) Appropriate development
 - e) Getting around

These themes are expanded in the Vision and Objectives (see Section 2) and are followed in the commentary and policies (Sections 3 to 7)).

The Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.16 The 15 policies shown in this document form the main body of the Neighbourhood Plan. In addition to the policies, there are many papers, shown as Annexes, which have been prepared by the Focus Groups and other organisations. These provide additional background information about the parishes and supporting material and evidence relating to the policies.
- 1.17 Section 8 includes a Project List containing issues that the parishes intend to address. These are items beyond the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan itself, which is intended to focus on spatial planning and land use.
- 1.18 This Neighbourhood Plan, including the Annexes, is to be read as a whole. Development proposals will be required to fulfil the conditions of all applicable policies.

2. Vision and objectives for the plan



Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

2. Vision and objectives for the plan

2.1 The Vision Statement and Objectives shown below were drafted by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and are intended to reflect the inputs from residents via the survey, focus groups and feedback from public events.

2.2 **Vision** *‘A sustainable future for Arborfield and Barkham as a thriving and accessible community, managing development to be inclusive for all age groups and enhancing the identity and rural setting of the villages.*

Objectives

2.3 *‘A plan for the community by the community’*

Protecting identity and rural setting of the villages

- Protect and enhance the countryside – new development should blend into the landscape, not dominate landscape views
- Retain separation of settlements to preserve their individual identities
- Protect and enhance heritage and natural environment and extend conservation designations where possible
- Enhance the natural and historic setting of Arborfield Cross village centre and Barkham Street

Thriving communities (includes community facilities and recreation)

- Provide full range of facilities – schools, leisure amenities, retail, medical
- Promote a strong rural economy

Managing development (housing, design, parking and flood management)

- Match housing to local needs – starter homes, key workers homes, lifetime homes and care of the elderly
- Require high quality design incorporating efficient use of resources
- Address local flood risks

Accessibility (transport and greenways)

- Minimise traffic on unsuitable roads
- Expand the greenways network and improve other PROWs.
- Expand opportunities for sustainable transport

2.4 These themes are expanded in the following matrix. The items listed in the Policy Index are examined in more detail in Sections 3 to 7.

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Policy Matrix

Policy Areas		Policy Objectives	Policy Summaries
Sustainability	Identity and rural setting	POLICY IRS1 PRESERVATION OF THE SEPARATION OF SETTLEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve character and appearance of countryside Not lead to physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements
		POLICY IRS2: RECOGNISE, RESPECT AND PRESERVE THE IDENTITY AND RURAL SETTING OF SETTLEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scale and density of the development The distinctive character and biodiversity of the area Important Landscape Views identified Comply with Village Design Statements.
		POLICY IRS3 PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN SPACES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum loss of biodiversity and where possible to provide a net gain. Extend the network of landscape and wildlife corridors Measures that will help mitigate the impacts of, climate change Locally valued natural assets recognised, respected, preserved. .
		POLICY IRS4 PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF THE AREA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance local character: Arborfield Cross Conservation Areas Areas of Special Character: Chamberlain’s Farm Area, Barkham Street Area of Special Character Locally valued heritage assets recognised, respected, preserved.
	Thriving communities	POLICY TC1 RETENTION OF EXISTING VALUED COMMUNITY FACILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain existing community facilities, unless it can be evidenced that they are no longer required;
		POLICY TC2 PROPERLY PLANNED AND DESIGNED NEW FACILITIES,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility for present needs and future growth on the one site Inclusive, providing appropriate access for all Incorporate adequate off-street parking Appropriately designed for the prospective use and users Safe access on foot and bicycle should be facilitated Evidence of long term viability
		POLICY TC3 CONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND AGRICULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-use of lawful buildings that are vacant The scale is appropriate for a rural location, and Potential impact on neighbours and the natural environment addressed, Site access and parking are appropriate for the scale, nature of business. Retain best and most versatile agricultural land
	Appropriate Development	POLICY AD1 NEW DEVELOPMENT WITHIN DEVELOPMENT LIMITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals for new housing will be supported within the Settlement Boundaries, including the Arborfield Garrison SDL Use of brownfield sites will be preferred
		POLICY AD2 PRIORITISE HOUSING FOR LOCAL NEEDS,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Types of homes provided to contribute to a balanced mix of housing Meet the needs identified in the most current assessment of housing needs (Arborfield and Barkham Housing Needs Analysis 2018) Affordable homes prioritised for households with a local connection
		POLICY AD3 NEW HOUSING OUTSIDE DEVELOPMENT LIMITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development outside the development limits will not normally be permitted in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CP11; If housing is to be consented (except replacement dwellings or affordable housing), approximately 50% of the site should be open space,
		POLICY AD4 HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT WITH GENEROUS OPEN SPACE AND PROPERLY LANDSCAPED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Density of any new development, internal space standards Lifetime Home standards, design in security Recognise local character, comply with Village Design Statements Layouts to encourage non-car travel for short journeys, Sufficient car parking, integrated it within landscaping Measures to minimise the use of energy and water resources
		POLICY AD5 ADDRESS LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All elements of flood risk management, including SuDS are fully addressed at the outline planning stage Use nature to provide measures to slow the rate of water runoff Adequate sewerage, drainage capacity to protect wider catchment area Encourage tree planting to reduce run-off rates
	Getting Around	POLICY GA1 MINIMISE ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC ON UNSUITABLE ROADS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development proposals must address their impact on the road system and its safety and implement mitigation measures if required Recognise deficiencies of unsuitable roads in the Plan Area.
		POLICY GA2 IMPLEMENT LOCAL NETWORK OF GREEN ROUTES FOR NON-MOTORISED USERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development proposals should not inhibit expansion of PROW network. Priorities include all weather routes, safer crossings of main roads, improved connectivity and opportunities for sustainable transport
		POLICY GA3 PUBLIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS WITH LONG TERM VIABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements to public transport will be supported Roads in SDL to be used for bus routes must have tracked, acknowledging likelihood of parked vehicles
		PROJECT LIST WORK WITH HIGHWAYS AND OTHER WBC DEPARTMENTS ON PROJECTS THAT BENEFIT THE PLAN AREA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring forward traffic management measures for Arborfield village centre to be implemented as part of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road Scheme; Progress to completion the widening of Barkham Bridge and the Nine Mile Ride Extension Seek designation of identified natural and historic assets

3. Sustainable Development



Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

3. Sustainable Development

How this theme was researched

- 3.1 A Focus Group of 24 residents came together to consider what sustainability could mean for Arborfield and Barkham. These residents represented a wide range of backgrounds and skills, from across the two villages. The full report prepared by the group is shown as Annex IV Sustainability.

In parallel, flooding issues were studied by a resident who is specifically an expert on flooding. Her report is shown in the Flood Risk Management Statement (Annex XII).

What does 'Sustainability' mean?

- 3.2 Sustainability is the 'Golden Thread' which runs through planning, according to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF suggests this should be achieved through a range of themes including a prosperous rural economy, sustainable transport, a wide choice of quality homes, and conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment. All these themes are relevant to Arborfield and Barkham.

- 3.3 All too often, development is driven by one particular need without fully considering the wider or future impact. Living within our environmental limits is one of the central principles of sustainable development.

- 3.4 The expression 'sustainability' is widely used in planning. In the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy a much used definition is quoted:

'Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

- 3.5 Sustainability should reflect what choices people have in how they manage their everyday lives. One simple yardstick for sustainability could mean that residents are able to live normally without the need of a car.

Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide SPD June 2012 provides guidance as follows:

'If places are to be sustainable then the aim should be to create:

- Walkable neighbourhoods, with a range of facilities within 10 minutes walking distance of residential areas, which encourage people to travel on foot or by bicycle; or*
- Neighbourhoods with sufficient density of development to support public transport services to provide access to facilities in centres'*

A ten minute walk is generally considered to be 800 metres.

- 3.6 Sustainability is clearly a far-reaching concept that affects every element of development. Shoddy solutions may provide short term fixes (and profit to the developer) but they will only create problems that will have to be resolved by future generations. The goal must be to create solutions that work not just for a plan period of 5-15 years, but ones that work for generations to come.

- 3.7 Sustainable development clearly is a broad concept. It embraces a range of issues relating to the environment and the future:

- a) Places that are pleasant to live in now and in the future, whilst protecting heritage assets within their setting.
- b) Managing the natural environment for current and future generations. This includes biodiversity and protecting the landscape – once it has gone, it has gone forever.
- c) Preserving heritage assets, to perpetuate history and local distinctiveness for future generations.
- d) Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- e) A thriving local economy, preferably one that is not totally dependent on the success or failure of one particular business sector.
- f) An appropriate mix of housing.

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- g) Recycling and renewable energy: avoiding waste that causes pollution and degradation.
- h) A transport system that allows a choice of modes that is both practical and convenient.

3.8 At its core, sustainability is an approach to development that looks to balance different, and often competing, needs. Our intention is to bring all the key sustainability themes together, weaving the 'Golden Thread' throughout the Neighbourhood Plan to address local concerns.

- a) How should sustainable development be reflected in the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan?
- b) How can the best balance between the environment, the local economy and social needs be achieved?
- c) What does the area need that is new and what should be protected or enhanced?

A number of the issues raised under the sustainability heading inevitably encroach on other headings within the Neighbourhood Plan. Indeed, it will be noted that the Policy Section does not include a specific sustainability group as the issues are absorbed in the other four policy groups on the principle that the 'Golden Thread' should reach all parts of the plan.

Sustainability in Arborfield and Barkham

3.9 Sustainability poses a number of challenges in the local area.

- a) Residents enjoy the community spirit of the various settlements and their historical identities. It is a worry that large scale development will smother these existing communities.
- b) Rapid development is threatening to erode the natural attractions of the locality.
- c) There is a danger that infilling gaps between the existing settlements will create a kind of urban sprawl, hence the importance of retaining separation between settlements.
- d) Increasing urbanisation is likely to reach a tipping point where natural green corridors are eroded, threatening wildlife and biodiversity.
- e) Planning for growth has become problematic with approved sites not yet built.
- f) Unlawful development is a challenge.
- g) It is a sad truth that larger four and even five-bedroom houses predominate in new housing proposals, bringing in new residents, but failing to satisfy the needs of local people, young and old.
- h) There is significant employment in the two parishes which is seen positively.
- f) There have been proposals submitted for large scale renewable energy schemes, for example wind farms (in one of the lowest wind areas in the country) and solar parks. These proposals are unpopular with local residents and have been deemed to be inappropriate by WBC. However it is disappointing that less intrusive solutions have not been forthcoming, such as maximising discreet solar panels on large roof buildings.
- g) Transport and the associated congestion is without doubt the biggest challenge of all. Congestion means an inefficient use of energy resources (and will still do so in the age of the electric car) and time wasted in unproductive activity. The road system depends on lanes built for the horse and cart era. Many of these became residential roads during the 1950s and 1960s and with increasing development in the wider area they are now used as main through routes. Meanwhile the alternatives to journeys by car are very restricted: the bus service is limited in scope while sustainable transport opportunities (as opposed to leisure routes) are virtually non-existent.

3.10 Sustainability objectives are shown in the matrix in Section 2. Although objectives are divided into four groups based on the other themes, most if not all the specific objectives have a sustainability element.

4. Identity and Rural Setting



Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

4. Identity and Rural Setting

Overview

- 4.1 The rural setting of Arborfield and Barkham defines the character of the villages. The attractive landscape comprising farmland and woodland is punctuated with small settlements, hamlets and individual dwellings which form the thriving parish communities. The 2016 Residents' Survey (Annex III) demonstrated a very strong attachment to the rural and village character of the area which reflects many of the goals as exemplified below: 98% of respondents agree that the rural setting makes Arborfield and Barkham good places to live (Q1) while 91 strongly agreed and another 8% agreed that the unique identity of the area is best preserved by retaining open spaces around the villages (Q2).
- 4.2 The NPPF cites the importance of character as a key objective for achieving sustainable development.
- 9 ... Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.**
- 4.3 The NPPF also goes on to highlight the importance of the natural and historic environment. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to apply these objectives to the local area in Policies IRS3 and IRS4 below.
- 170. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:**
- a) **protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);**
 - b) **recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland ...**
- 185. Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:**
- a) **the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;**
 - b) **the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;**
 - c) **the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and**
 - d) **opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.**
- 4.4 Crest Nicholson, the lead developer for the SDL, has adopted the concept of rural living and a large hoarding proclaims 'Idyllic Village Living'. They have been true to the garden village concept. Similar standards will be expected by any other development projects in the area.

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SEPARATION OF SETTLEMENTS

POLICY IRS1: PRESERVATION OF SEPARATION OF SETTLEMENTS

In order to protect the separation of settlements, development outside development boundaries will generally not be acceptable. Development proposals outside of development boundaries will be required to:

- a) Preserve the character and appearance of the countryside; and
- b) Not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements.

4.5 Arborfield and Barkham include a number of separate settlements:

- a) Arborfield Cross, stretching south of the war memorial roundabout is a distinct village in its own right with its own shop, pub and village hall.
- b) Arborfield village: the original centre of the village is around the old church, now a scheduled monument. It is near the river down the Chestnut Ave. The 'new' Victorian church is in Church Lane which has a number of more recent houses.
- c) Arborfield Green combines the SDL on the former garrison site (mainly in Barkham Parish), some ex MOD housing and some adjacent and more recent developments, often referred to collectively as Penrose Park.
- d) Barkham village, like Arborfield village is a small community around the church and along Barkham Street.
- e) Barkham Hill is the most populous part of Barkham, comprising some ribbon development from the 1930s through to the 1960s, along Barkham Road and Bearwood Road, along with a 1980s development known as Elizabeth Park.
- f) Langley Common, some mixed housing along Langley Common Road and School Road.
- g) Carters Hill, a small settlement of old buildings in the north of the Plan Area. Carters Hill House dates from the Queen Anne period while Cordery Cottage (formerly The Glen) dates from the 15th Century.

4.6 Each of the seven settlements listed above have their own individual identity and are physically separated from each other and neighbouring parishes. The great fear of residents is that uncontrolled development will see them all merged into a continuous urban sprawl creeping south from Reading and west from Wokingham.

The Core Strategy adopted in 2010 aimed to absorb the development into the landscape (para A7.4c) and identifies separation areas around the Arborfield SDL. The intention was indeed to retain the new development as a distinct settlement and to avoid coalescence with the neighbouring villages (Refer Core Strategy para A7. 5 and Key Diagram on page 128).

4.7 During the government planning inspector's review of the MDD (Adopted in 2014), it was recognised that settlement separation areas should be preserved around the SDL and the Inspector considered that the principle was adequately protected by settlement boundaries. In his final report dated 23 Jan 2014, he states:

30 *The MDD indicates that Settlement Separation Areas are related to the four SDLs to ensure their separation from other settlements, although the Policy does not clearly state this to be the case – that is left to the supporting text ... Whilst CC02 seeks to protect specific areas from development that would harm the physical and visual separation of settlements, it is difficult see why Policy CP11 would not achieve the same level of protection in that any proposal which would fail the CC02 test would also fail in terms of CP11.*

34 *This is not to deny that settlement separation is important and the previous Inspector supported the identification of 'critical gaps' in the SDLs on the CS Key Diagram ...*

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IDENTITY AND SETTING

POLICY IRS2: RECOGNISE, RESPECT AND PRESERVE IDENTITY AND RURAL SETTING OF SETTLEMENTS

1. Development proposals must recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements, with regard to:
 - a) Scale and form of the development
 - b) Density of the development
 - c) Materials used in the development to reflect local character
 - d) Tree and hedgerow planting that reinforces and reflects local biodiversity in the parishes
 - e) The distinctive character of the varied landscapes of the area
 - f) Landscape and Important Views identified (refer Annex V)
2. Applications should demonstrate how the design of new development complies with the guidance set out in the most recently adopted Village Design Statements (refer Annexes I and II).

Village Design Statements

4.8 The Arborfield and Barkham Village Design Statements provide guidance on items a) to d) of Policy IRS2.

4.9 Arborfield Village Design Statement (Annex I)

- a) Particular attention is drawn to design which reflects existing landscape and heritage assets. (Refs Pages 3,5,6 and 19).
- b) Appropriate density aspirations regarding Building Lines and Street Scenes are demonstrated on pages 6 and 18.
- c) The VDS expresses a desire for new development not to have a negative visual impact upon the landscape (page 19) and to reflect features of nearby housing (page 6)
- d) Existing native planting should be valued and also applied to new development areas. Pages 8 and 9.

4.10 Barkham Village Design Statement (Annex II)

- a) Barkham Village Design Statement provides guidance for development with regard to infilling, landscaping, form and architectural features in its 'Impact on surroundings' section, and stresses the importance of diversity. (pages 14, 15 and 16)
- b) With regard to density of development the Barkham VDS advises the need for development to 'blend with the rural environment' (page 15 point 7)
- c) With regard to the mix of materials guidance, two different approaches are seen in the VDS; one for the established rural area, the other for the Garrison. (Page 17, point 14 and Page 15, point 7)
- d) The need to retain and to care for trees is reflected in the VDS (page 18 point 19) while the need to 'Conserve Barkham's Greenery' is headlined (page 19).

Landscape

4.11 The 2004 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was initially used as a basis for reviewing landscape characteristic (see Annex V). The LCA is being updated in 2019. Four main landscape areas were identified within the two parishes.

A2 Loddon River Valley This follows the course of the River Loddon along the Arborfield western boundary broadening into a relatively small area towards the south of the parish. The alluvial flood plain contains gravel beds and the boundaries tend to be well defined by changes in elevation. The

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area is characterised by irregular fields, mixed agriculture and natural wetlands. Most of this area lies over the parish boundary to the west.

C1 Arborfield River Terrace This area to the west of Arborfield runs along the Parish Boundary and is characterised by farmed fields. Over the centuries, these have increased in size at the expense of hedgerows and copses but sufficient remain to break up the landscape into varied and attractive areas. The subsurface is a combination of London Clay and gravel beds, allowing drainage into the nearby flood plains of the Loddon Valley. The area is farmed and many public right of ways make this an attractive area for walking and riding.

J2 Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay Most of the Parishes of Arborfield and Barkham fall into this category. Much of the area is intensively farmed, interspersed with housing of varying age, style and scale which range from the older housing around the Arborfield Cross Conservation Area and the Area of Special Character along Barkham Street to sizeable housing estates built towards the end of the 20th Century such as Elizabeth Park in Barkham, Penrose Park to the south of Arborfield Cross and developments that span both parishes near to the site of the former Garrison. These more substantial developments tend to be on the margins of the parishes and are screened so do not overtly impact the key landscape views of today. The topography of the area is also helpful in this respect. The Strategic Development Location on and around the former Garrison site, is transforming a brownfield area by replacing tired army buildings with, at least in part, a garden village style development. This includes 50% greening which is a significant contribution to mitigating the impact of such a large development.

L1 & L2 Bearwood and Farley Hill Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills Here, sand and gravel deposits overlie London Clay and the area is mostly wooded. By the nature of the terrain, development is limited and should be as the area is an important landscape feature which includes a local Geological Area of Interest because of the evident stratification. Much of the area provides outstanding opportunities for walking and enjoying the wildlife throughout the year. It contributes markedly to the landscape diversity of the two parishes and forms a useful barrier from the more intensive settlement to the north. There are two distinct areas:

- a) Bearwood Park which is Grade II* listed and straddles the Arborfield-Barkham Boundary and originally provided a parkland setting for Bearwood House, now Reddam School, including an attractive man-made lake resulting from brick manufacture. Coniferous trees have been planted and the Rhododendron Drive along the adjacent Bearwood Road is a particularly attractive and well known feature.
- b) The Coombes, which is a woodland area which falls away in the south towards Barkham Manor which had its own parkland. The vast majority of trees in this area are deciduous.

Landscape Views

- 4.12 In addition to Bearwood Park and The Coombes, there are many other wooded areas and copses across the two Parishes that are fragments and reminders of earlier times when the area was more heavily wooded before being cleared for cultivation.
- 4.13 Key to maintaining the rural nature of the area and the quality of the environment is to retain the separation areas around the individual settlements within the two parishes and other neighbouring parishes. These separation areas are protected by Core Policy CP11.
- 4.14 What really makes the landscape of Arborfield and Barkham so distinctive is the diversity that occurs in such a small area of just 1,800 Ha – riverside wetlands, trees and hedgerows, small copses, open fields and heavily wooded areas with many public rights of way – all offering great opportunities to those who want to enjoy rambling, cycling, photography, riding and the wildlife.
- 4.15 The views shown in Appendix III of Annex V have been selected to reflect the diversity of this landscape, to illustrate how this countryside can rival any that has been afforded ‘Green Belt’ status elsewhere and to emphasise the importance of maintaining settlement separation. They can all be viewed from public vantage points.

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

POLICY IRS3: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN SPACES

1. Development proposals should conserve and enhance the natural environment and green spaces of the area, specifically:

- a) Ensure that there is minimum loss of biodiversity and where possible to provide a net gain. Where there is likely to be a loss of biodiversity, mitigation measures should be put in place to ensure there is no net loss of biodiversity, through the creation of like-for-like habitats.
- b) Take any opportunities to protect, enhance and extend wildlife corridors between existing open spaces and habitats as a means of mitigating the impacts of development on biodiversity.
- c) Conserve the environment for nocturnal species, through the avoidance of lighting and mitigating the impact of external lighting.
- d) Contain measures that will help to mitigate the impacts of, and adapt to, climate change

2. Development on designated Public Open Spaces (see Map L) will not be permitted. Public open spaces currently available for recreational purposes include:

- a) Arborfield Park
- b) Junipers Field
- c) All SANGS
- d) The cricket and rugby pitches within the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location

3. Locally valued natural assets have been identified within the plan as follows (see Map K):

- a) The Coombes woodland and adjacent areas
- b) The Holt woodland
- c) Rhododendron avenue along Bearwood Road

- 4.16 This review follows an approach suggested by WBC's Ecology Officer, who directed the team to The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC). TVERC produced a report covering the biodiversity of Arborfield and Barkham. Follow-up was facilitated by the various public events.
- 4.17 Within the Plan Area there are several wildlife sites, copses, ancient woodlands and a bluebell wood. Specifically, The Coombes, The Holt and various smaller pockets are designated as a Local Wildlife Site. There are some 400 locations where protected species have been recorded by TVCER. These include:
- a) Amphibians: 5 species including Palmate Newt, Smooth Newt, Great Crested Newt, Common Toad, Common Frog
 - b) Birds: 23 species including Gadwall, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Osprey, Kestrel, Hobby, Lapwing, Woodcock, Common Sandpiper, Stock Dove, Cuckoo, Barn Owl, Swift, Green Woodpecker, Willow Warbler, Skylark, Dunnock, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Whitethroat, Common Crossbill, Common Crossbill, Bullfinch
 - c) Higher Plants: Juniper and 8 species of Flowering Plants including Loddon Pondweed, Good-King-Henry, Sharp Rush, Coralroot, Ghost Orchid, Bluebell, Butcher's-broom, Fringed Water-lily,
 - d) Invertebrates – Stag Beetle and three species of butterflies
 - e) Mammals - Terrestrial (bats): 9 species and series
 - f) Mammals - Terrestrial (excl. bats): Eurasian Badger, West European Hedgehog, European Water Vole
 - g) Reptiles: Grass Snake

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- 4.18 Other (mainly non-protected) wildlife commonly encountered in the last year include, Badger, Brown Rat, Common Frog, Common Shrew, Common Toad, Field Mouse, Fox, Grey Squirrel, Mole, Muntjac Deer, Newts, Pipistrelle Bat, Rabbit, Roe Deer, Lizard, Grass Snake, Blackbird, Blue tit, Buzzard, Canada Geese, Chaffinch, Collared Dove, Crow, Jay, Robin, Sparrow, Magpie, Mistle Thrush, Green Woodpecker and Spotted Woodpecker.
- 4.19 Barkham Parish has by far the highest density of Veteran Oak Trees in the whole of Wokingham Borough.
- 4.20 There are two areas of geological note which are designated as Local Geological Sites:
- The Coombes stratigraphy of London Clay, Bagshot Sands and overlying river terrace gravels.
 - Iron Rich Streams, in the southern part of Barkham, towards Rooks Nest Wood.
- 4.21 The above features provide diverse, interesting and varied opportunities for walkers, nature lovers, horse-riders and photographers, and not just for local residents. It also provides relief for residents from around the Borough where development has already encroached on much of the countryside.

Locally Valued Natural Assets

- 4.22 The following locations have been identified as Valued Natural Assets, as mentioned in Policy IRS3. These locations require special recognition. In the longer term should it is an aspiration for these to receive formal protection within Wokingham's Local Plan.

The Coombes woodland



The Coombes seen from the south



Coombes Lane

- 4.23 The Coombes is a large area of deciduous woodland in what was once part of the Bearwood Estate. It is now in private ownership.
- The site is used as an amenity area especially as the network of PROWs make it very accessible.
 - Noted by the TVERC report is the wide variety of species of trees, some typical of Ancient Woodland. Furthermore, there are varieties of lower growing vegetation providing habitats for a number of Amber List birds, and the Bullfinch, which is on the Red List of endangered species.
 - The TVERC report also notes that the site has educational and scientific interest, being 'One of the few good examples of the younger Palaeogene beds in Berkshire'.
 - There are also a number of Veteran Trees recorded in the area worthy of preservation while WBC has extended TPOs over all of The Coombes woodland and along adjacent PROWs.
 - It is an important feature of the local landscape and views of The Coombes woodland are possible from many miles distant. From the highest points there are vistas of surrounding settlements in all directions, yet in spite of the elevated woodland setting it has an intimate, secluded feel. Towards the south there is a classic pastoral view above Barkham Manor, while to the north there are parkland views of the old Bearwood Estate and other vantage points of adjacent agricultural land.

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- f) The Barkham Village Design Statement supports the protection of more than just the wooded area of the Coombes, with its wish to ‘conserve and protect the pasture in The Coombes’ (page 7). The Neighbourhood Plan extends this ambition by defining the area to be protected more widely than simply the area of woodland in order that the views, environment and landscape character can be suitably preserved in the face of pressures on increased development.

It is considered important to protect The Coombes for all the above reasons to ensure the retention of the area’s amenity value, biodiversity and its influence on the character of the area.

The Holt woodland



View of The Holt with bluebells

- 4.24 The Holt woodland is an area of woodland in the north of the Plan Area containing Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland. It is significant in a number of ways:
- a) It serves as a scenic buffer between the M4 motorway and the nearby settlement of Carters Hill.
 - b) The Holt has been known to flood on a regular basis. This reduces the rate of run-off in the immediate area which is important in protecting the local settlement of Carter's Hill and the lowland dairy farm adjacent to the site.
 - c) The area of the Holt site that does not stand within the floodplain contains six veteran trees; five Oaks and one Field Maple, which are worthy of extra recognition through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- It is considered important to protect the Holt in view of its influence on the landscape and character of the area, its role in local flood protection and its biodiversity.

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Rhododendron avenue along Bearwood Road



Bearwood Road looking south



Bearwood Road looking north

- 4.25 The rhododendron avenue was originally an avenue through the Bearwood estate, it offers a spectacular display of rhododendrons in May each year thus providing an iconic rural drive. In recent years it has suffered from fires and overzealous pruning. The avenue is important for two reasons:
- It is noted as a special landscape feature. With the largest volume of traffic passing along Bearwood Road, it is appreciated not just by residents of the local parishes, but by people across the borough and further afield.
 - The rhododendrons also have an important landscape importance as they screen the road from a scrap yard, a caravan site, a golf course and several residential properties.

It is considered vital to protect the rhododendron avenue for both the above reasons to ensure the retention of the character of the area. If the avenue is allowed to deteriorate, it would be a great loss to the character of the wider area.

HERITAGE

POLICY IRS4: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF THE AREA

- Development proposals will need to demonstrate how they protect or enhance the historic and natural character of the area, specifically:
 - Arborfield Cross Conservation Area
 - Chamberlain's Farm Area of Special Character
 - The Barkham Street Area of Special Character
 - The local historic environment, including the setting of Listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments and other historically significant buildings
- Locally valued heritage assets have been identified in the plan as follows (see Map K):
 - The historic chestnut avenue in Arborfield, linking The Old Rectory to the remains of the old church, which is a scheduled monument, and some early buildings at Hall farm.
 - The lime grove at Nashgrove Ride in Barkham.
 - Carters Hill
 - The granary in Barkham Street

- 4.26 Guidance was provided on the approach by WBC's Conservation Officer, and a number of sources were suggested. The issues emerging have been discussed with residents at a number of public events and the full Focus Group report is shown in Annex VII.

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- 4.27 Despite much change, many important buildings and sites remain which depict events and styles from 1300 through to present times. Moreover, the setting for many of these locations has remained virtually unchanged and needs equal consideration. The designation of important sites should be continually reviewed as their contribution to the evolution of the local area is further understood (refer Maps I and J).
- 4.28 Although heritage is the past, it is also very much part of the future and should be used to reinforce local distinctiveness and contribute to the economic well-being of the area wherever possible.

Designated areas of historic interest or of special character

- 4.29 The Plan Area includes a Conservation Area and two Areas of Special Character.
- The Arborfield Cross Conservation Area** is centred on the roundabout and extends to the south along the A327, Eversley Road. It includes Newland Farm to the north of the Cross, the former Swan Inn, The Bull Inn, Magnolia Cottage, The Old Post House and Birch House all of which are listed. There are also a number of Victorian buildings, the village hall, plus the war memorial commemorating the dead of Arborfield and Barkham.
 - Chamberlain's Farm Area of Special Character** is located on Swallowfield Road, past The Bull pub. It was formally designated by Wokingham Borough Council as an Area of Special Character in 1994. It incorporates the listed farmhouse of Chamberlain's Farm and outbuildings in its rural setting and the listed buildings of Applemore Cottage and Yew Tree Cottage. This designation further illustrates the importance of the history that has shaped the character of Arborfield & Newland Parish.
 - Barkham Street Area of Special Character** centred on Barkham Street stretches from the original medieval centre of Barkham, marked by the church, a moated manor building that is still occupied and the village pond. It then extends along Barkham Street passing Barkham Square, The Bull Public House and Sparkes Farm, all of which are listed, towards Barkham Manor which dates from the late 1700s.

Locally Valued Historic Assets

- 4.30 The following locations have been identified as Valued Historic Assets, as mentioned in Policy IRS4. These locations require special recognition. In the longer term should it is an aspiration for these to receive formal protection within Wokingham's Local Plan.

The historic chestnut avenue at Arborfield



Chestnut avenue in spring



Chestnut avenue in summer

- 4.31 The historic chestnut avenue at Arborfield connects The Old Rectory, adjacent to Church Lane, to the remains of the old church at Arborfield, which is a scheduled monument and some early buildings at Hall Farm including the original Arborfield Mill. Avenues were the invention of the Renaissance, when the rules of scientific perspective were being applied to garden design. In the centuries that followed, the approach to the villa or great house was always by way of an avenue of cypresses, oaks, limes or chestnuts. In this case the 'great house' would have been Arborfield Grange, the residence of John

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Ponsonby Conroy (1786-1854) who was the controversial and hated advisor of Queen Victoria as a young monarch. He is buried in the old Churchyard. Thus the avenue is important for two reasons:

- a) Its historic context in the original village of Arborfield
- b) Its value as a landscape feature

The lime grove at Nashgrove Ride



The lime grove

- 4.32 The four-line lime avenue seems to have been planted at the behest of John Walter III who then owned the land, circa 1884-5. It was said that he wanted to create a grand route for his sons to travel along to Wellington College; it was however uncompleted. It is very unusual to find four lines of limes; it is not unusual to find limes and sycamore or limes and chestnut on either side of a private roadway, but the only other place known to have four lines of limes planted is at Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire which is over two miles in length. Thus the avenue is important for two reasons:
- a) Its historic context in the former Bearwood estate
 - b) Its value as a landscape feature

Carters Hill



Tudor House at Carters Hill



Carters Hill House from the west

- 4.33 Carters Hill is a small settlement in the northern part of the Plan Area, containing a number of old buildings. The Carter's Hill/Loaders Lane area, as defined by the names, was historically linked to the Mill at Sindlesham in that it was home to a number of large medieval barns. Arborfield Barn is now to be seen in the Chiltern Open Air Museum. From the 18th Century to the present day, in addition to farming, the area was associated with both the Bearwood Estate (The Times Newspaper) and the Simmonds family (Brewing and Banking). Thus retention of the avenue is important for three reasons:
- a) Its historic context
 - b) The contribution it makes as a landmark in the local landscape
 - c) The character presented by a group of old and unusual buildings isolated from other more modern development.

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Granary in Barkham Street



The granary

- 4.34 The granary is an interesting example of a grain store dating from the early 19th century. In order to keep the grain dry and protected from vermin, it is raised on mushroom shaped staddle stones to keep the floor above ground level. It has been kept in good repair by its current owner. Located on an open plot adjacent to a busy road, it is clearly visible to passing traffic. Preservation of the granary is important for two reasons:
- a) The granary is an unusual architectural feature
 - b) It is a significant component of the Barkham Street Area of Special Character

5. Thriving Communities



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5. Thriving Communities

Overview

- 5.1 There are a number of well-utilised community facilities located throughout Arborfield and Barkham providing a wide range of services to a broad cross-section of residents. These work alongside other bodies such as pubs, religious organisations and local businesses to establish strong, vibrant and thriving communities (refer also to Annex VIII Community Facilities and Annex IX Recreation & Open Spaces).
- 5.2 The advent of the SDL has meant that some new facilities are available to the local communities, in particular Bohunt School, a state of the art secondary using an ex-military facility. Additionally new SANGs have been created at Hazebrouck Meadows, adjacent to the SDL.
- 5.3 The S106 agreement (2014) relating to the SDL includes provision of 35% affordable housing either on-site or off-site, connectivity and greenway links, PROW improvements, construction of two primary schools on the site, community centre, secondary school on-site, early years nursery, healthcare site, open space and allotments, retention of existing pavilion, sports pitches and gym and laying out SANGs. Separately, WBC proposes the building of a swimming pool in the SDL. The secondary school has been built and was opened in 2016.
- 5.4 The NPPF includes a number of objectives to achieve sustainable development. Amongst these is a social objective (NPPF Para 8 b) refers):

... to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.

Policies TC1 and TC2 are intended to address these issues.
- 5.5 The NPPF seeks to support a prosperous rural economy, which is also the goal of Policy TC3.

83. Planning policies and decisions should enable:
 - a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
 - b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
 - c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and
 - d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

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EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

POLICY TC1: RETENTION OF EXISTING VALUED COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Proposals for new development which involve existing community facilities, will be supported only if The proposal does not result in the loss of, or have an adverse effect on, the asset or facility concerned, unless

- a) Satisfactory alternative facilities are provided or
- b) It can be evidenced that such assets are no longer required; or
- c) They will provide sufficient community benefit to outweigh the loss of the existing facility.

- 5.6 There are a number of existing community buildings. These are well valued by residents as generally they are well used: facilities requiring advance reservations such as the two village halls are frequently fully booked. The existing community buildings include:
- a) Arborfield Village Hall: Used for a wide range of local activities including the Arborfield & Newland parish office and a doctors' surgery one day a week.
 - b) Arborfield Pavilion: Provides changing rooms for sports activities, also used as a meeting room and as a pre-school nursery.
 - c) Arborfield, Barkham & District British Legion includes a large hall, two bars, a games area and garden. It also houses a temporary library and has ample car parking.
 - d) Barkham Village Hall: Used for a wide range of local activities. The outside area means it is popular for social and children's events.
 - e) Arborfield Garrison Community Centre: Former military facility is used as a childcare centre and for other activities. Barkham Parish Office is also located in the building.
 - f) The Coombes School is an established primary and junior school with a long-standing tradition of outdoor learning and working with animals.
 - g) Reddam College is a private secondary school which was previously known as Bearwood College and originally was the Royal Merchant Navy College. The facilities, including the grounds and a modern theatre are often used for public events.
- 5.7 Outdoor recreation facilities and open spaces are valued by the local community. The proximity of these amenities is often cited as a reason for moving to the area. This is reflected in the number of users including ramblers, dog walkers, horse riders and off-road cyclists who can be observed in the various open areas. Children's play grounds are also well used with queues for the swings not unusual at peak times. The open spaces include:
- a) The Coombes: An extensive area of woodland. It is privately owned but with a network of public rights of way, including The Coombes Circular Walk. Originally this land was part of the Bearwood Estate. It has the status of Local Wildlife Site and Local Geological Site, and is appreciated for its fine landscape value and biodiversity.
 - b) Arborfield Park: owned and managed by Arborfield and Newland Parish Council, it includes a football pitch and a children's play area.
 - c) Pound Copse: owned and managed by Arborfield and Newland Parish Council, is a small attractive tract of ancient woodland, some 2.31 acres in extent. It is covered by a preservation order.
 - d) Rooks Nest Wood: a SANG owned and managed by WBC.
 - e) Hazebrouck Meadows: a SANG recently created and managed by Crest Nicholson.
 - f) The Junipers: owned by WBC, it includes a children's play area and is widely used by dog walkers.
 - g) Former MOD sports grounds at Arborfield Green, adjacent to Princess Marina Drive.
 - h) In addition there are a number of local play areas.
 - i) There is a considerable mileage of PROWs. Though they do not function well as a network owing to a number of gaps and difficult crossings of main roads (See also Annexes XIII and XIV Greenways Report and maps).

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PROPOSED COMMUNITY FACILITIES

POLICY TC2: PROPERLY PLANNED AND DESIGNED NEW FACILITIES,

1. Proposals for new community facilities should ensure that:
 - a) Incorporate sufficient flexibility to allow for present needs and future planned growth to be accommodated on the one site.
 - b) Be inclusive and provide appropriate access for all generations.
 - c) Incorporate adequate off-street parking.
 - d) Be appropriately designed for the prospective use and users
 - e) Support and facilitate safe access on foot and bicycle.
2. Proposals will be considered more favourably where clear evidence of long-term viability is provided

- 5.8 A Village Centre is proposed as part of the SDL. This is covered in the S106 agreement (2014) which specifies provision of the following:
- a) Construction of two primary schools on the site
 - b) Community centre
 - c) Early years nursery
 - d) Healthcare site
 - e) Open space and allotments

Note that there is strong community interest in the provision of shops, medical centre and a community centre as priorities.

- 5.9 The development will also include extra care facilities of around 80 self-contained homes for older people with varying levels of care and support available on site. Outline permission has been granted for the extra care facilities but the details are yet to be decided.
- 5.10 New community facilities can be a great benefit to the local community. In order to maximise this benefit, it is important that new facilities provide long-term benefits to the locality. This includes utilising adaptable designs which provide flexibility of use to changing needs in the future, and/or through evidence of long-term viability of the proposed use. Applicants are encouraged to provide sufficient detail with proposals to establish their long-term financial viability.

Possible future use and management of community buildings:

- 5.11 The old garrison swimming pool has now been demolished but it is expected it will be replaced with a similar sized resource for use by the public and the local schools. The library has yet to be decided upon but at present it remains as a resource for Bohunt school. The Gymnasium has been modernised and can now also be used by the public outside school hours. It includes provision for football, netball and tennis with 3G, floodlit all weather pitches. The old Horse infirmary is being extensively renovated but the precise nature of how it will be used is still under discussion.
- 5.12 There will be a requirement for developers to demonstrate that, where on-site provision is provided, it will be appropriately managed and maintained on a long-term basis.
- 5.13 Two new primary schools are proposed for Arborfield Green. The primary schools are not in the first phases of development, but will come as part of a later phase.

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SMALL BUSINESSES

POLICY TC3: CONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND AGRICULTURE

1. New or existing businesses in the countryside are encouraged to re-use lawful buildings that are vacant, derelict or unviable provided that:
 - a) The scale of the proposal is appropriate for a rural location, and
 - b) Proposals assess and address their potential impact on immediate neighbours and the natural environment, and
 - c) New or expanding activities do not cause excessive encroachment away from the original buildings, and
 - d) Site access and parking arrangements are appropriate for the scale and nature of the uses.
2. Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land should be protected.

- 5.14 There are a number of successful businesses within Arborfield and Barkham, mostly based on horticulture and animal husbandry or of a relatively small scale, including home working.
- a) Reading University School of Agriculture, Policy and Development is a sizeable commercial farming operation, employing 147 staff, plus cleaning and ancillary workers.
 - b) Reddam School, part boarding, has places for 500+ students in an historic parkland setting of over 125 acres. It also has about 60 professional members of staff.
 - c) There are at least 6 restaurants.
 - d) A major garden centre and a farm shop flourish
 - e) Many stables with equestrian support services including livery and riding schools.
 - f) Bearwood Lakes Golf Club. It provides Conference and Restaurant facilities, a stunning Wedding venue as well as providing an excellent golf course.
 - g) Reading Football Club is currently building a world class Academy with many sports pitches and facilities for their athletes.
 - h) There are a number of existing Commercial Units: the take-up is impressive with few or no vacant units left available.

The departure of the Army as a major employer in the area is being replaced by new sectors which draw on the natural assets of the area.

- 5.15 Small and medium business enterprises are common in rural areas and are currently subject to Government efforts to provide support. The importance of high speed broadband to encourage home working should be stressed. Although working from home is increasing and a large proportion of the local population is reaching retirement age, the vast majority of local people commute outside the local area to reach their places of work. This is discussed further in Section 7 Getting Around.
- 5.16 Unfortunately there are many locations where business is carried out without the necessary land use permissions, hence the requirement to specify re-use of lawful buildings only. Many of these sites have been the subject of enforcement action.
- 5.17 The rural nature of local business should be encouraged in the following ways:
- a) Support current businesses. In particular consider how new technology can be utilised to enable more people to work from home.
 - b) Encourage expansion and development of new businesses that do not detract from the environment by utilising heritage buildings and integrating shared 'start-up' facilities.
 - c) Maintain and protect existing farming activity. In particular encourage communities to consume fresh produce grown locally through access to allotments, community farms and local farm shops and markets.

6. Appropriate Development



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6. Appropriate Development

Overview

- 6.1 Arborfield and Barkham Parish Councils want to ensure that the needs of residents and the community are aligned with housing design to maintain community cohesion and ensure the development of desirable communities. The parish councils are working with developers to build homes that are in keeping with their surroundings, are visually interesting, provide sufficient attractive green areas and do not have a negative impact on neighbours.
- 6.2 These objectives reflect the intent of the NPPF, translated to reflect local needs in Appropriate Development Policies.

124. The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

- 6.3 The NP Steering Group initiated work on housing in two stages:
 - a) Stage 1 was to commission planning consultants Bell Cornwell to prepare a review paper.
 - b) Stage 2 Based on the work done by Bell Cornwell, the Steering Group produced its own Housing Needs Analysis.

These studies are shown as Annexes X Briefing Note Neighbourhood Area Housing Need April 2017 and XI Housing Needs Analysis.

- 6.4 The housing needs analysis produced by the Neighbourhood Planning team, based on census data indicates a requirement for 899 homes by 2036. Using the formula suggested by the DCLG indicates a very slightly higher figure of 917 homes. Both of these calculations suggest the requirement to 2036 is roughly a half of what is already committed at the SDL for the period to 2026. It could therefore be argued that there is no local need for any additional housing. However recognising the wider pressure on housing, the following two policies are designed to permit a small amount of housing in suitable locations.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

POLICY AD1: NEW DEVELOPMENT WITHIN DEVELOPMENT LIMITS

1. Where they meet other policy requirements in this Neighbourhood Plan and the local plan, the principle of new housing within the current Development Limits is supported, (including the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location). However the use of brownfield sites will be preferred.
2. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those which cannot. Applicants are encouraged to:
 - a) Engage in early discussion with the local community and Wokingham Borough Council to clarify design expectations;
 - b) Incorporate, as appropriate, the views of the community in the design of proposals;
 - c) Incorporate a Statement of Community Consultation into any application.

Note Development Limits apply to Barkham Hill and Arborfield Cross. The SDL boundary should also be treated as a settlement boundary, with the exception of land designated as SANG or other open spaces including sports field.

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HOUSING FOR LOCAL NEEDS

POLICY AD2: PRIORITISE HOUSING FOR LOCAL NEEDS

1. All proposals for new housing development must demonstrate how the types of homes provided will contribute to a balanced mix of housing and meet the needs identified in the most current assessment of housing needs – at the time of publication this is the Arborfield and Barkham Housing Needs Analysis 2019 (Annex XI).
2. In all new housing developments providing affordable housing, the occupancy of all affordable homes will be prioritised for households with a local connection with the Parishes of Arborfield and Barkham and for key workers.
 - a) ‘Local connection’ refers to people who have lived continuously in the Plan Area for any ten year period.
 - b) ‘Key workers’ refers to school teachers and medical staff employed locally.

Housing Needs Analysis - Methodology

6.5 Methodology was based on Localities toolkit and used a six step approach.

- Step 1 Establish a baseline for the population of the two parishes.
- Step 2 Compare with national, regional and local age distribution.
- Step 3 Project forward 25 years, i.e. 2011 to 2036, including demographic adjustments to include replacement population for 0-25 year cohort and projected death rates.
- Step 4 Adjust to correct age profile imbalances. This adjustment will absorb growth to cover economic growth, migration and market pricing.
- Step 5 Convert population to household units.
- Step 6 Assess housing requirements by age group.

Population and Area

6.6 A review of the 2011 Census information provides the following information for the two parishes.

Figure 2 Arborfield and Barkham Census Information 2011

	Arborfield	Barkham	Combined
No. of Residents	2,860	3,603	6,463
Number of households	1,094	1,226	2,320
Average household size	2.56	2.69	2.63
Residents in households	2,797	3,295	6,092
Residents in communal living	63	308	371
Area (hectares)	1,116	677	1,793
Population density (per hectare)	2.56	5.32	3.60

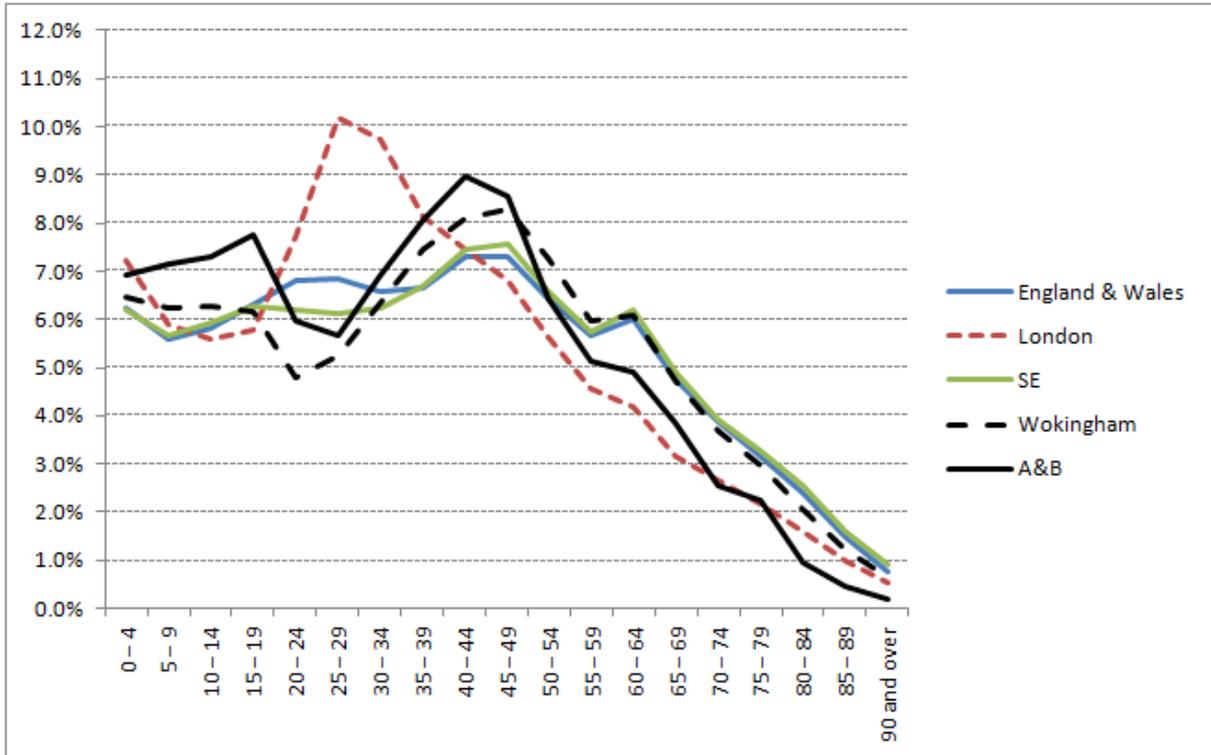
6.7 Barkham has the larger population of the two parishes. A distortion is that in 2011, Barkham contained 308 residents in communal living, compared with 63 in Arborfield: these would primarily have been military personnel living in barracks accommodation. In the last few years this number will have been reduced due to the closure of the military premises concerned.

6.8 When taking into account the population figures, there is also the need to factor in the impact of the significant level of development already in the pipeline relating to the Arborfield SDL. The SDL is planned to deliver 1,800 dwellings in Barkham which will more than double the population of parish compared with the 2011 census baseline.

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6.9 Using 2011 census data, the following comparison with national, regional and local age profiles was created.

Figure 3 Comparison of age distribution at national, regional and local levels
(% of population by age group)



6.10 Significant trends identified include the following:

- a) The largest groups in Arborfield and Barkham are 35-39 (8.1%), 40-44 (9.0%) and 45-49 (8.6%). This reflects the fact that most new housing in recent years has been characterised by larger family homes with 3 or more bedrooms which currently would sell at £500,000 or more.
- b) The younger age groups 20-24 (6.0%) and 25-29 (5.7%), by contrast, appear to be under-represented. In part this is a natural trend as this age group moves away from home to go to university and to take new jobs elsewhere, especially in London. It is also likely to have occurred because of the lack of low cost housing in the area. The houses that have been built are outside the price range for younger buyers who would like to get on to the property ladder. In the age groups 0-19, Arborfield and Barkham share is significantly higher than those for the local authority (Wokingham), region (London and South East) and nationally (England and Wales).
- c) The 20-34 age group is under-represented for the two parishes and for the local authority. The London share, in contrast surges, especially for the 25-29 and 30-34 group. As explained earlier, this is in part because of life style choices with this age group often choosing to live in rented accommodation but it will also be affected by the lack of low cost housing available for purchase.
- d) The shares peak in the 35-49 group for all four geographies except London. The peak is most extreme in Arborfield and Barkham.
- e) From 50-79, the shares fall away for all the geographies. Arborfield and Barkham are the lowest except for London.
- f) The 80+ age group is a remarkably small proportion in Arborfield and Barkham. This would seem to be a reflection of there having been a large influx of family groups during the 1980s and 1990s who have not yet reached the most senior age group.

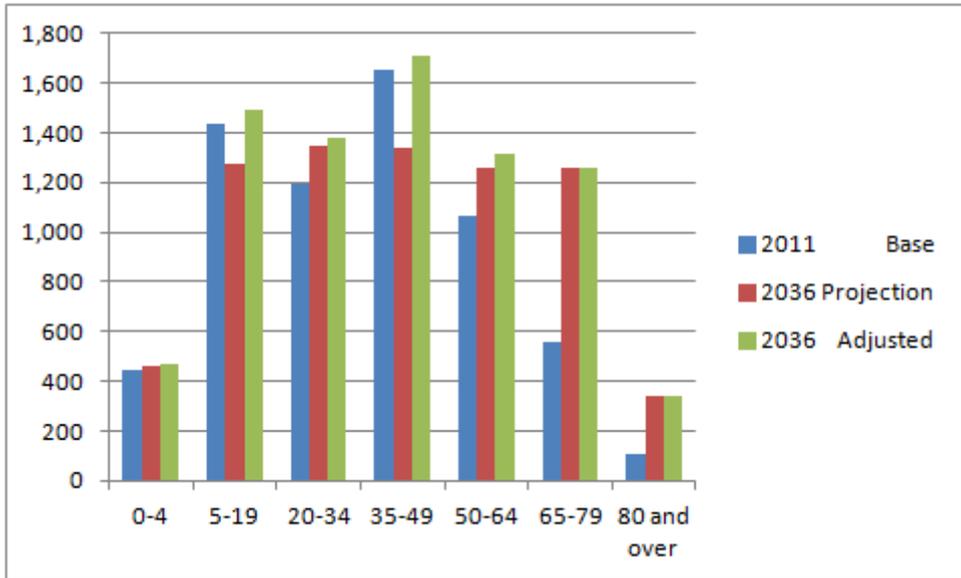
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6.11 The population in Arborfield and Barkham was projected forward to 2036.

Birth rates have been calculated on the basis of the age group 25-44 fully replacing itself. Death rates have been derived from national statistics.

6.12 In the base projection, inward and outward migration are expected to compensate each other. This is a simplification as London and the South East generally have a very mobile population. However it is a reasonable judgement that the types of housing will see more or less a like-for-like replacement by age group. This is shown graphically in the next figure.

Figure 4 Chart of Population Projections



6.13 The following trends emerge:

- a) All the age groups from 55 upwards experience large increases in share, with 65-69 group doubling and groups over 80 more than trebling. The growth of these age groups results in relatively reduced share for younger age group.
- b) Age groups from 35 to 49 show a significant decline though, in absolute terms, these are actually the largest groups. This is a consequence of relatively low numbers in the 10-25 age groups in the base year.
- c) A decline also occurs in the 50-54 age group.
- d) The shrinking of these groups results in a reduction in the 5-19 age groups.

6.14 As just noted, the 2036 projection results in an age profile overloaded at the higher end of the population scale, with numbers in the lower groupings actually shrinking in the period 2011 to 2036. To achieve a more balanced age structure, additional growth in the age groups up to 59 has been assumed. The outcome is shown in the following table.

6.15 Average household size in Arborfield and Barkham is 2.67. This is weighted by the relatively small proportion of older people, the majority of whom live either alone or in two person households.

The national average is 2.51. This reflects a higher proportion of older people.

Based on the adjusted projection for 2036, household size in Arborfield and Barkham is projected to drop to 2.43.

6.16 Housing requirements have been calculated by applying average size of household by age group to the population projection.

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Figure 5 Housing Requirement by Age Group

Age group	2011 Base	2036 Adjusted	Population increase	Population increase %	Household size	Housing units req'd
0-4	448	466	18	4%	NA	0
5-19	1,436	1,493	57	4%	NA	0
20-34	1,198	1,381	183	15%	1.75	105
35-49	1,655	1,707	52	3%	2.40	22
50-64	1,064	1,318	254	24%	2.40	106
65-79	557	1,261	704	126%	1.50	470
80 and over	105	342	237	226%	1.20	198
	6,463	7,968	1,505	23%	2.51	901

- 6.17 The additional housing units required in Arborfield and Barkham between 2011 and 2036 is 899. This is a half of the 1,800 already committed up to 2036 in the SDL. This means that any additional housing would be adopted to accommodate an influx of people from elsewhere, whether from neighbouring authorities, London or further afield.
- 6.18 On the face of it, the greatest requirement is for houses for the 60+ age group. However, it can be expected that the majority of this group will remain in family houses that they acquired in earlier years. Some of these houses could be released, but only if suitable accommodation is provided to permit downsizing. Besides space, the requirements of this group will include lower maintenance properties and premises adapted to allow easy movement in the event of disability. Specialist housing such as sheltered accommodation and high dependency units will also be necessary for the anticipated increase in the 80+ age group.
- 6.19 There has to be a major focus on smaller starter homes so that the 20-39 age group can more easily settle in the parishes.

Government Consultation

- 6.20 In September 2017, the Department for Communities and Local Government initiated a consultation entitled 'Planning for the right homes in the right places'. This contained details of the number of new homes required by 2036 in each local planning authority area and a proposed formula to assess housing need for neighbourhood plans.
- 6.21 The proposed formula is simply to take the population of the neighbourhood planning area and calculate what percentage it is of the overall population in the local planning authority area. The housing need figure in the neighbourhood planning area would then be that percentage of the local planning authority's identified housing need. Applying this formula for Arborfield and Barkham produces the following result:

Figure 6 Projection based on DCLG formula

Populations	2011	2036
Wokingham (WBC) population	154,380	182,000
Arborfield and Barkham (A&B) population	6,463	7,969
A&B proportion of WBC	4.2%	
Wokingham annual housing need	876	
A&B annual housing need	36.67	
A&B projected housing need 2011-2036		917

The projection of 917 is very slightly higher than the NPSG projection of 901, but it is still only about half of the Core Strategy commitment of 1,800.

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NEW HOUSING OUTSIDE DEVELOPMENT LIMITS

POLICY AD3: NEW HOUSING OUTSIDE DEVELOPMENT LIMITS

1. Development outside the development limits will not normally be permitted in accordance with Policy CP11 of the current Core Strategy.
2. Where new housing is to be consented and these are not replacement dwellings or affordable housing on exception sites then, in common with the approach adopted for the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location, approximately 50% of the site should be open space including SANG but excluding the area occupied by highway infrastructure.
3. Any development within the Thames Basin Heaths 7Km zone should be treated in the same way as within the 5km zone in terms of provision of SANGs.
4. For sites of 0.4ha and greater, the SANG should be on site or nearby.

Open Space

6.22 WBC uses standard formulae to determine open space requirements as shown in the following table.

Figure 7 WBC Open Space Requirements (as at July 2018)

Category	ha /1,000 population	Sub categories	ha /1,000 population
SANG (assumed all within 5km zone)	8.00		
Sports pitches	1.66		
General open space, comprising:	3.20	amenity space	0.98
		Allotments	0.50
		parks and gardens	1.10
		play space	0.25
		Natural/Semi natural (small allowance but majority in SANG)	0.37
Total	12.86	Subtotal	3.20

These are derived from WBC's current open space, sports and recreation strategy (Nov 2013), with an additional allowance made for additional natural/semi-natural green space on top of SANG. In addition an allowance should be made for primary schools, but this will normally be off-site.

6.23 The following figure demonstrates that where a SANG is required, roughly 50% of a site should be allocated to open space.

Figure 8 Ratios of housing to open space

Population	household size *	Housing units	Density/ hectare **	Hectares	% open space incl. SANG
1,000	4.0	250	18	13.9	48%
1,000	3.0	333	30	11.1	54%
1,000	2.4	417	35	11.9	52%
1,000	2.0	500	40	12.5	51%

* Assumed that household size equates to number of bedrooms

** Indicative housing densities used which include roads and other infrastructure.

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- 6.24 Arborfield Green has been created using 'Garden Village' principles. Around 50% will remain open space to include SANGS, sports fields, parks and lakes. A key feature is a linear park with a greenway providing opportunities for sustainable transport, walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The same principles should apply to any future developments outside the currently defined settlement limits, recognising that this is a rural area with considerable biodiversity.

HIGH QUALITY DESIGN

POLICY AD4: HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT WITH GENEROUS OPEN SPACE, PROPERLY LANDSCAPED
All new developments must reflect the rural character and historic context of existing dwellings within the Plan Area. New development must deliver good quality design. In order to achieve this, all new development must wherever possible:

- a) Recognise, in the design of developments, the distinctive local character of the area and contribute sensitively in order to create dwellings of a high architectural and rural quality, referring to the published Village Design Statements.
- b) Consider the density of any new development which must be in character with the surrounding area, respect the rural nature of the area and be designed to give an impression of spaciousness and variety with uniform houses and plots being avoided.
- c) Recognise possible impacts of climate change and consequently reflect sustainable development standards.
- d) Homes of three or more bedrooms should be designed to allow ground floor living for elderly or disabled people.

Building Styles

- 6.25 With a long history, the parishes are blessed with a great variety of architectural styles which have evolved over the ages. Houses in Arborfield & Newland tend to sit in small, cohesive groups in terms of their style whereas Barkham's character reflects a scattered settlement pattern and lacks the usual nucleated structure of an English village. Some common characteristics define the character of the of the parishes:
- a) Low density housing with ample outside space.
 - b) Variety of building designs.
 - c) Properties set back from the roads.
 - d) One or two storeys only in pre-1990 developments.
 - e) Predominance of dormer style upper windows.
 - f) Extensive use of local red brick amongst older properties.
 - g) Development merged into natural green spaces.
 - h) Green canopy of trees.
- 6.26 The Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement and the Barkham Village Design Statement should be used as a guide for achieving good quality design of properties in the Plan Area. In particular the following principles should be followed (relevant VDS Design Guidelines shown in brackets):
- a) Development should have regard to the surrounding landscape and neighbouring development, particularly where this is of unique local character (ANVDS 1 and BVDS 1).
 - b) Diversity is encouraged where this would enhance the particular character of the street scene. Building design should thus be sensitive to the general design and features of nearby properties (ANVDS 2 and BVDS 4).

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- c) Building lines should continue to be set back from the road, where this would maintain the character of the area (ANVDS 3 and BVDS 5).
- d) Any infilling should be appropriate in scale and mass relative to surrounding properties, and discouraged if a more cramped environment may result. Unsympathetic infilling can have a detrimental visual and spatial effect on adjacent properties, especially as residential gardens are an intrinsic feature of a rural community (BVDS 3).
- e) Parking: It is essential that new developments provide adequate off-road parking for both residents and visitors (ANVDS 4 a) and BVDS 17).
- f) Driveways: Driveway surfaces of natural materials such as gravel, pebble and shingle give a more traditional look than tarmac and provide better water soak away (ANVDS 4 b) and BVDS 18).
- g) All trees should wherever possible be retained and cared for. New tree planting should be encouraged so that the leafy appearance of Barkham is conserved and enhanced. In particular locally native broadleaf species should be planted (ANVDS 5 b) and BVDS 19).
- h) Hedges, fences (wooden, iron), walls and gates should blend with existing boundary features and should not dominate the building beyond. Natural frontages such as relatively low hedges are encouraged but boundaries should suit the style of building development and area character (ANVDS 5 c) and BVDS 20).
- i) Redundant agricultural buildings that are used for commercial purposes, including storage and parking facilities, should be adequately screened by planting evergreen or native broadleaf species of trees (ANVDS 6 and BVDS 22).

6.27 Development proposals should recognise possible impacts of climate change and so should reflect sustainable development standards that are appropriate to the character of the area.

- a) Sustainable/eco housing is welcomed in balance with the surrounding character of the development area (ANVDS 7 also refer to Sustainability Paper Annex IV 17.3)
- b) For new developments, such as the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location, it would be beneficial to consider alternative forms of heat capture such as ground source heat pumps or the use of design to increase solar gain and benefit from the passive stack effect to both heat and ventilate buildings. In larger developments, it may even be possible to consider the use of combined heat and power plans with possible district heating schemes. (ANVDS 7 also refer to Sustainability Paper Annex IV 17.1).
- c) Design all new buildings and/or developments with the security of the building and its occupants at the forefront in terms of personal safety, crime prevention and environmental efficiency (Sustainability Paper Annex IV 17.1).
- d) Be laid out so as to encourage travel by means other than the car, for shorter journeys.
- e) Provide streets which encourage low vehicle speeds and which can function as safe, social spaces. (refer to Sustainability Paper Annex IV 16.5).
- f) Incorporate charging points for electric vehicles, and measures to minimise the use of energy and water resources (refer to Sustainability Paper Annex IV 17.3).

6.28 Given the increasing proportion of older people, as identified in the Housing Needs Analysis, there is a clear need to consider the requirement for lifetime homes. By 2036 the over-65 age group will represent over 20% of the population in the Plan Area, having more than doubled since 2011 (refer para 6.13 and Figure 5 above). This requirement was also supported in the Residents Survey with 91% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing (Annex III Q18). As an interim step, developers are encouraged to ensure that houses of 3 bedrooms or more can easily be adapted for ground floor living. In practice this would mean ensuring that doors are wide enough for wheelchairs, that there is a separate room that could be used as a bedroom and that downstairs cloakrooms can be adapted to accommodate a shower.

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DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE

POLICY AD5: ADDRESS LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Planning applications for development must ensure that:

- a) All elements of flood risk management, including SuDS are fully addressed at the outline planning stage and, ideally, in pre-application discussions. This includes SuDS maintenance plans and funding for the lifetime of the development.
- b) Applications must show how they have addressed Wokingham Borough Council's SuDS strategy* (and any replacement strategy) and have designed appropriate SuDS accordingly.
- c) Confirmation from the water company during planning that there would be adequate capacity in the sewerage system prior to occupation of new homes
- d) Provide measures to slow the rate of water run-off by adequate provision of swales, ponds and other SuDs measures.
- e) Encourage tree planting to reduce run-off rates. As an ideal a new tree should be planted to replace every one that is removed
- f) Account is taken of known local flooding problems (see 6.31 below).

* WBC Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) strategy:

<http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/community-and-safety/emergencies/drainage-and-flooding/>

6.26 Policy AD5 is intended to translate the requirements of the NPPF to local conditions.

149. Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.

6.27 Flood management is a key part of sustainability. This was examined as a specific topic, led by a local expert on flooding who is a resident of Barkham. The key theme is an Integrated Catchments Approach (refer Map M Hydrology).

6.28 As a tributary to the Thames, any reduction in peak flows and water levels from the Loddon catchment will benefit the Thames. It is far cheaper to invest in simple improvements to control the flow in the upper reaches of the river than to invest in extremely expensive engineering projects downstream. The concept of using nature to help reduce flooding can be extended to surface water problem.

6.29 Thames Water encourages developers to use their free pre-planning service

<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/preplanning>

This service can tell developers at an early stage if there will be capacity in water and/or wastewater networks to serve their development, or what Thames Water can do if capacity is inadequate. The developer can then submit this as evidence to support planning applications. Thames Water can then prepare to serve the new development at the point of need, helping avoid delays to housing delivery.

6.30 In the past few years it is apparent that flood events are being experienced more frequently than used to be the case. Climate change is likely to make such events more frequent. Current protection measures cannot always cope.

Known Local Flooding Problems

6.31 Within the Parishes of Arborfield and Barkham there are a range of flooding problems. From roads that flood, to properties that flood from either surface water or river flooding.

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- a) The Holt woodland stands within Zones 2 and 3 of the Floodplain, but it must be noted that this categorisation does not protect the whole site. The river which runs through the site is a tributary to the nearby Loddon River. The Holt has been known to flood on a regular basis and is therefore of value to protect the local settlement of Carter's Hill and the dairy farm adjacent to the site.
 - b) The area of Carter's Hill (a tributary to the Loddon runs through it, and the Loddon is known to 'back up'). Nearby flood plains could be adapted to increase flood storage and additional wet woodlands would be helpful.
 - c) Biggs Lane (within the SDL) has known flooding problems. Crest are addressing this by using swales and holding ponds. This needs to be done generally in the Plan Area, especially in areas with clay soil. Other possible solutions could include soil decompaction and planting long rooted plants.
 - d) Barkham Bridge can cause flooding especially as the small arch causes water to back up. It is planned to carry the road on a new, higher bridge on columns but it is proposed to retain the old bridge for pedestrian use. This may still cause water to back up, especially if a blockage occurs in the small arch as occurred in 2007.
 - e) Barkham Ride and parts of Barkham Road west of Bearwood Road, where water drains off adjacent fields.
 - f) There are properties in Barkham that flood which could benefit from 'greening the street' schemes which include permeable drives, water butts as well as converting front gardens into green spaces or converting areas of footpath into green areas. All of these approaches help increase the roof-to-drains time of rainfall and therefore reduce flood peaks.
- 6.32 The challenge for the Plan Area is to find integrated solutions that aim to work with the environment rather than against it. For example, 'slowing the flow' approaches should be adopted to reduce the speed that water enters the drains and onto roads. These approaches could include filter strips at the end of fields which are designed to slow the passage of water across them through a combination of careful planting and soil improvement. In addition, areas could be developed where water can be diverted and retained until the heavy rain passes whereby the flood water then slowly drains out or drains into the soil.
- 6.33 Wet woodlands and woodlands in general have a positive impact on flood risk and also have large positive environmental and biodiversity impacts. It is now a well researched fact that planting trees can help reduce flooding by slowing or holding back water, as with surface water, effectively reducing peaks flows. Note: care must be taken with the location of wet woodlands and the trees used (the right tree in the right place) to ensure that they don't cause flooding by backing up water in places where flooding will affect properties, and essential infrastructure nor generate woody debris in locations where it could be a flood risk. Trees not only add amenity and aesthetic value but also provide a flood risk reduction benefit.
- 6.34 Further supporting evidence and information is shown in the Flood Risk Management Statement (Annex XII).

7. Getting Around



Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

7. Getting Around

Overview

- 7.1 Arborfield and Barkham is an area of dispersed settlements with complex travel needs. This results in great dependence on cars as the main means of transport as is shown by the following measures:
- a) The Residents Survey (Annex III) showed that 86% of respondents used the car to travel to work or education.
 - b) The survey also showed that only 3% of residents travel to work or education by bus.
 - c) Car ownership in Wokingham Borough is among the highest of any authority in the country, and has been so throughout recent decades. At 1.64 cars per household, as recorded at the 2011 census, ownership outstrips the national average of 1.1 cars/household by almost 50%.

Despite this already very high level, car ownership continues to grow at much the same pace as the national average, with little indication that any saturation level is being approached. The notion that car usage will be reduced by restricting car parking will not have the desired effect and to use artificially low trip rates is not recognising the real problems. In Arborfield and Barkham, where opportunities to travel by public transport are limited, reliance on the private car as the primary means of travel will remain high.

- 7.2 The Neighbourhood Plan aims to bring realistic expectations to transport planning in terms of the limited road network (Policy GA1) and to encourage effective promotion of non-motorised modes (Policy GA2) and public transport (Policy GA3). The NPPF shares similar values:

102. Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that:

- a) **the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed;**
- b) **opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;**
- c) **opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;**
- d) **the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains; and**
- e) **patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places.**

- 7.3 In 2013, a Transport Focus Group began to examine all aspects of transport provision, and smartly redirected its efforts to a review of the Arborfield Green transport proposals when they were published. This was quickly followed by a period of engagement with Wokingham Borough Council's work on the Arborfield Cross Relief Road. Through its analysis, the group expanded its appreciation of the issues and underlying causes, and some residential traffic surveys were prompted. The following documents may be found on the Neighbourhood Plan web site:

Residential Trip Rate Survey
Barkham Traffic Count Diagram

- 7.4 Another focus group has studied greenways in considerable detail, including surveys of rights of way and a questionnaire. Besides preparing a far-reaching report, the group also initiated some practical projects, in particular two signposted walks: the Barkham Way and The Coombes Circular Walk, both these projects being completed in 2017. The report of the group's findings is shown in Annex XIII.

Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

TRAFFIC

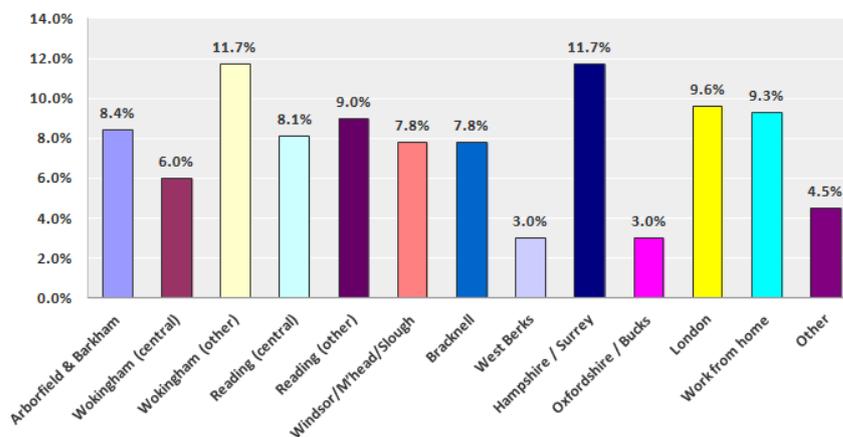
POLICY GA1: MINIMISE ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC ON UNSUITABLE ROADS

1. Development proposals must consider, assess and address their impact on junctions and the roads and other PROWs that connect them, including road safety, and implement measures of mitigation as required. In establishing the capacity of individual roads, consideration must also be given to the general frontage land-use and its sensitivity to traffic.
2. Proposals should recognise that there are many examples in the Plan Area of roads that are unsuitable even for the existing traffic.

Connectivity

- 7.5 The Plan Area is well-located for access to centres of employment and to the strategic road network, including the M3 and M4 motorways, and this is appreciated by local residents, 63% of whom cited motorway access as one of the factors that make the area a great place to live, and 86% travel to work by car. However, this is accompanied by frustration at the extent and level of traffic congestion – 49% of residents regard it as one of the major challenges facing the area.
- 7.6 Travel to work, not unexpectedly, produces a very complex picture with a wide spread of destinations, as is shown in the following chart.

Figure 9 Residents' Survey Q3 – Where do you travel to get to work/education each day?



The largest groups are Wokingham (other) and Hampshire/Surrey. Figures exclude the 'not applicable' group (mainly retirees). The free format box demonstrated the complexity of modern life, with residents working in more than one place, or who commute (presumably not on a daily basis) to overseas locations.

Existing and Planned Roads

- 7.7 The local road network has developed over time but remains largely unchanged over the last century. No major improvements have been constructed, save for the Arborfield Garrison Relief Road in the 1970s, which realigned the A327 away from residential properties. Consequently, the network is struggling to cope with vastly increased levels of traffic, producing congestion and unwelcome traffic levels on unsuitable roads. Some roads are unsuitable because they have insufficient traffic-carrying capacity; others because traffic levels are incompatible with the residential and other traffic-sensitive development located alongside them such as schools and community facilities. Notwithstanding the

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planned Arborfield Cross Relief Road, there are concerns that traffic from the 3500 new homes at Arborfield Green will exacerbate the situation.

7.8 The following road improvements are planned in or adjacent to the Plan Area:

- a) Arborfield Cross Relief Road. This is now under construction and completion is targeted for 2020. This will relieve the village centre at Arborfield Cross of much of the through traffic passing along the A327, as well as most of the additional traffic emanating from the new development at Arborfield Green
- b) Barkham Bridge. Widening is in the planning stage with target completion in 2019. This will eliminate a single lane pinch point which causes considerable queuing and is a safety hazard. However it will contribute to further congestion at the Barkham Road/Barkham Street junction.
- c) Nine Mile Extension; a portion of this road has been built to access the Bohunt School. When complete it will connect the A327 to Nine Mile Ride.

Note that none of these improvements will increase capacity between the west of the Plan Area and Wokingham town centre.

7.9 Local residents have, for some time, been campaigning for lower and more consistent speed limits throughout the Plan Area, where many of the roads currently have 40 mph limits. Plans to reduce speed limits on certain routes are currently being considered, along with junction improvements.

Some examples of roads not suited to additional traffic

7.10 The following roads in the Plan Area are narrow country lanes not wide enough for two way traffic

- a) **Church Lane, Arborfield.** This is a narrow lane passing through the settlement of Arborfield, close to St Bartholomew's Church. It has a number of narrow stretches not wide enough for two cars and several blind bends. The speed limit of 40 mph is unrealistically high, especially as the lane is used as a rat run for traffic coming from Shinfield towards Winnersh.
- b) **Church Lane, Barkham.** This is a narrow lane, only wide enough for a single car from Barkham Street to St James Church. Though it is not a through route, it is well used as the only access road for Barkham Village Hall as well as the church.
- c) **Commonfield Lane, Barkham.** A country lane with mature trees along both sides. It is narrow with passing places, it is well-used as a rat run from the Nine Mile Ride area of Finchampstead towards Winnersh and the M4. Particularly at the southern end, adjacent to the SDL, there is a long bend with poor visibility. The Greenway from Finchampstead to Arborfield Green happens to cross as about the midpoint of this bend. Speed is a problem as the national speed limit (60mph) applies.
- d) **Edneys Hill, Barkham.** Another narrow country lane which has a number of narrow stretches not wide enough for two cars and with several blind bends. Nevertheless it is well used as a rat run from Finchampstead Road towards Winnersh, the M4 and Reading, effectively providing an unofficial bypass for the congested town centre. Speed is a problem as the national limit (60mph) applies.
- e) **Greensward Lane, Arborfield.** This is a narrow lane, only wide enough for a single car for much of its length.
- f) **Park Corner Lane** is a single track road.

Note: The UK's best selling cars are getting broader and have increased in width by 17 per cent (28cm/11 inches) over the last 20 years, Direct Line research has found. It means narrow country lanes are becoming more difficult, as drivers are struggling to squeeze past each other without scraping or going off the side of the road. The AA has also observed that on narrower roads, more cars are hitting the kerb, adding to breakdown claims.

7.11 Roads where parking restricts two way flows

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- a) **School Road, Arborfield/Barkham.** Officially part of the B3349, this is well used as a through route from Wokingham towards Shinfield and Reading. It has a number of bends with poor sight lines. As The Coombes School is located towards the Arborfield end of this road, visibility on bends is made much worse owing to large numbers of parked cars which can affect several hours a day. Pinch points and speed humps have been placed on the stretch of the road nearest to the school, although these are welcomed as a traffic calming measures, it does mean that the flow of traffic is significantly impeded. It should also be noted that the junction with Langley Common Road is at an acute angle with poor sightlines looking west: this makes turning west extremely difficult.

7.12 Country roads not wide enough for large vehicles to pass and with difficult topography and/or bends

- a) **Mole Road** is below standard width, has no footway for much of its length, and has a number of tight bends and hills. As it is heavily used as a route towards the M4, traffic is fast; this makes crossing by non-motorised users, especially horses, at a well-used byway (AN4 Gravelpit Hill Lane and Copse Barnhill Lane) very hazardous.
- b) **Swallowfield Road** is a country road which for much of its length is less than two vehicles wide.
- c) **Barkham Street** includes the original Barkham village, an area designated an Area of Special Character, though the road is signed as being restricted width (2 metres) except for buses. There is only a very narrow footway on one side of the road, just 75cm wide in places. As part of the informal western bypass for Wokingham, in particular serving traffic from Finchampstead heading towards the M4, traffic tends to be fast-moving. It has been particularly apparent that traffic along Barkham Street and Barkham Ride has increased substantially in the last five years as drivers seek to avoid congestion elsewhere.
- d) **Barkham Ride** is also part of the informal western bypass. It has many bends and has no footways, making this road effectively out of bounds for non- motorised users. Like Barkham Street it is signed as being restricted width (2 metres) except for buses.

7.13 Residential roads that have already become busy and where the environment for residents is being impaired.

- a) **Barkham Road** is the main road through Barkham. It is the main artery into Wokingham from the west. It begins at a very busy level crossing and has congested junctions with Bearwood Road and Barkham Street. It was recognised as having inadequate capacity as long ago as 1974 in the Inspector's report for the Woosehill enquiry and even in the First World War, horses were driven along the road at night from the station sidings to the Arborfield Remount Depot due to the congestion by day.
- b) **Bearwood Road** (southern section) forms part of an informal western bypass for Wokingham.
- c) **Langley Common Road** is the westward continuation of Barkham Road.

7.14 It is encouraging that a circular was published in 2013 by the Department of Transport (Circular 01/2013) which seems to be more accommodating in recognising the practical difficulties of vulnerable users and other environmental issues. The circular actively encourages 20 mph zones, though primarily in urban areas. The following extract is illuminating with regard to walking cycling, walking and riding:

- 32 **Different road users perceive risks and appropriate speeds differently, and drivers and riders of motor vehicles often do not have the same perception of the hazards of speed as do people on foot, on bicycles or on horseback. Fear of traffic can affect peoples' quality of life and the needs of vulnerable road users must be fully taken into account in order to further encourage these modes of travel and improve their safety. Speed management strategies should seek to protect local community life.**

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GREENWAYS

POLICY GA2: IMPLEMENT LOCAL NETWORK OF GREEN ROUTES FOR NON-MOTORISED USERS

Development proposals should not inhibit the delivery of the wider network of Greenways and other PROWs. Proposals should where possible support:

- a) The achievement of a network of all-weather routes.
- b) The provision of safe crossings for the benefit of non-motorised users, wherever PROWs meet primary routes.
- c) Better connectivity throughout the Plan Area, including the new developments proposed in the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location-
- d) Creation of opportunities for sustainable transport including safe routes to schools.
- e) Provision of better access to the countryside and surrounding destinations for amenity purposes.

- 7.15 The following priority projects are identified in the Arborfield and Barkham Greenways Report (Annex XIII Section 2)
- a) Greenway suitable for cycling from Arborfield Cross to the SDL (safe route to school). (Section 8 route 1)
 - b) Greenway suitable for cycling from Barkham to the SDL (safe route to school) and extension to Wokingham centre (commuting). (Section 8 route 2c and Section 9)
 - c) Improved crossings at various locations including Barkham Road adjacent to Barkham Bull, Edney's Hill and Pegasus crossing in Mole Road. (Section 14)
 - d) Ensure proposed greenways in SDL are fit for purpose, in particular adequate crossings provided for main roads, specifically Biggs Lane, Shearlands Road and the Nine Mile Ride Extension. (Section 17)
 - e) Signs for existing footpaths, e.g. The Coombes Circular Walk, Barkham to Rooks Nest. (Section 19)
 - f) Plans for longer leisure routes, e.g. Bearwood Circle connecting The Coombes, Woosehill. Sindlesham and Carters Hill. (Section 19)
 - g) Loddon Path. (Section 18)
 - h) Develop circular routes for horse riding especially in The Coombes and Carters Hill area. (Section 11)
 - i) Bridge over Arborfield bypass (Section 14)
 - j) Reclaiming quiet lanes, specifically. Church Lane (Arborfield) and Edney's Hill (Barkham) (Section 16)
 - k) Promotion of greenways including maps and websites (Section 19)
 - l) Maintenance arrangements for stiles, kissing gates and ensuring adequate drainage to facilitate all weather usage. (Section 20)
- 7.16 Arborfield and Barkham have an extensive network of rights of way, including public footpaths, bridleways and byways (refer Map N Public Rights of Way). This network is well used as an amenity, including walks in The Coombes and cross-country routes from Arborfield towards Farley Hill, Barkham to Rooks Nest Wood and around Carters Hill. Surfaces are poor and can be almost impassable in prolonged wet weather.
- 7.17 The Greenways Survey carried out at the Arborfield Fete in June 2015 indicated that there is great enthusiasm for walking, primarily for leisure and exercise. Dog walking was popular and organised rambling groups were also well supported. There was a split verdict in the Residents' Survey as to whether or not connectivity of footpaths and pavements is adequate (51%/49%).

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- 7.18 Horse riding is popular in the parishes with a relatively large number of livery stables and riding schools. However there is a general feeling that the bridleways have two serious shortcomings: the lack of circular routes and the difficulty of crossing main roads.
- 7.19 Cycling in the parishes is limited. This is partly because the road network is considered too dangerous, while the off-road routes do not have suitable surfaces. The Residents' Survey indicated that the proportion of residents cycling at least monthly is less than 20% though there is a hard core of commuters (2%). Cycling, whether for leisure or work, would be encouraged by dedicated cycle ways (72% of respondents felt this) or roadside cycle ways (38%).
- 7.20 A major concern is the lack of safe walking and cycling routes to school. Specifically the Bohunt School draws students from Arborfield and Barkham and also from Finchampstead. In theory there are roadside footpaths from all three parishes, but given the distances involved, there is really a need for all-weather cycle routes, an aspiration shared by residents and councils in all three parishes.

Current and Proposed Greenway Projects

- 7.21 A greenway has been completed along the Barkham/Finchampstead boundary, using bridleway BR14. This will connect to a greenway through the SDL which is already under construction and which will ultimately lead to the existing Pegasus crossing on the A327 near Baird Road. This in turn leads to a bridleway towards Farley Hill. This will eventually create a route all the way from Finchampstead to Farley Hill, a distance of 5 kilometres. The greenway portion of this route (from Finchampstead to the A327) will use a flexi-pave surface suitable for walking, cycling and riding. Safe crossings of various main roads are yet to be resolved.
- 7.22 Barkham Parish Council has initiated two 'branded' walking routes; The Coombes Circular Walk and The Barkham Way (from Barkham Road to Rooks Nest Wood). These now have improved signposts and are supported by online maps and other publicity.
- 7.23 There is a strong desire for a Pegasus crossing of Mole Road in order to link bridleways on either side.
- 7.24 A footbridge across the Arborfield Cross Relief Road is proposed. This will utilise footpath AN17 and will be future-proofed by being built to full greenway standard.
- 7.25 Wokingham Borough Council has a long-term plan to create additional greenways including an east-west route that will connect Wokingham to Arborfield Cross via Barkham and The Coombes, and routes from the SDL to Wokingham and from the SDL northwards towards Shinfield.
- 7.26 Another WBC long term project is to create a Loddon Path along the banks of the river.

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PUBLIC TRANSPORT

POLICY GA3: PUBLIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS WITH LONG TERM VIABILITY

1. As a general principle, improvements to public transport will be supported, recognising that schemes must have the prospect of long term viability.
2. Proposals for new roads which are expected accommodate bus routes should be tracked for larger vehicles, acknowledging the likelihood of parked vehicles

- 7.27 There is good evidence that there are increased resident numbers using the recently improved bus services. Development proposals within Arborfield and Barkham include a number of additional measures to encourage use of alternative travel methods, which the parish councils positively encourage, to help relieve traffic congestion. Unfortunately many key roads lack the infrastructure to permit safe walking and cycling even though they form walking routes to local schools. Many busy roads lack suitable pedestrian footways.
- 7.28 Planners of the major developments have envisaged a shift away from private car use to alternative methods of transport. The Parish Councils will work with Wokingham Borough Council to achieve the key aims of Wokingham's Local Transport Plan 3, which include:
- a) Policy AT1: 'Actively encourage integrating walking and cycling routes and facilities into key destinations'.
 - b) Policy AT2 – 'Improving access to public open space and country parks will help to encourage walking and cycling as a leisure activity'.
 - c) Policy AT3 – 'Provide walking and cycling opportunities that are inclusive of residents with mobility, visual and hearing impairments and other disabilities.'
- 7.29 It is disappointing that there is little sign of a shift away from car use with only small numbers of residents walking, cycling or going by bus to work or education. This is a consequence of the complex travel patterns with such a wide range of destinations, and the absence of safe walking or cycling routes for many journeys. Walking and cycling are covered also in the Greenways section.
- 7.30 Commuting by bus applies to a very low proportion of residents (3%) but nearly a quarter of residents (23%) use buses at least monthly. The proportion is higher for Arborfield residents (28%) where there are more frequent bus services available to Reading, three times hourly. The equivalent proportion for Barkham is much lower (18%), where the lower frequency, hourly service is clearly less attractive.
- 7.31 The survey responses indicate that different improvements are required in Arborfield and Barkham to encourage bus travel. For Barkham residents the priority is frequency (41%) while more direct routes (29%) and fares (24%) are more of a factor in Arborfield. 20% of respondents in either parish would never use a bus in any circumstances.

8. Project List



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8. Project List

The following list includes a number of topics which have emerged during the preparation of this plan but which are not land use issues appropriate for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan policies. The two parish councils will endeavour to progress these items as the opportunities arise. (Relevant Policy Groups shown in brackets.)

- a) Task force of residents to recommend environmental improvements in centre of Arborfield Cross, taking opportunity to improve traffic management on completion of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road. (IRS/GA)
- b) There are potential Areas of Special Character under review at Carters Hill and at Hall Farm including Hall Farm House, the Old Rectory (listed) and neighbouring buildings. (IRS)
- c) Targets for additional designation include: (IRS)
 - The Coombes woodland and adjacent area.
 - The Holt Woodland.
 - The Rhododendron avenue along Bearwood Road.
 - The historic chestnut avenue leading to the remains of the old church at Arborfield, which is a scheduled monument
 - The lime grove at Nashgrove Ride in Barkham.
 - An area at Carters Hill and at Hall Farm including Hall Farm House, the Old Rectory (listed) and neighbouring buildings
- d) The Parish Councils will work with the developers, the Borough Council and other stakeholders on the planning of the new Village Centre at Arborfield Green.
- e) Superfast broadband to be made available to all houses and businesses. (TC)
- f) Management of allotments. (TC)
- g) Encourage shared use of community facilities e.g. school/public use. (TC)
- h) Ensure long term viability of community facilities by developing business plans. (TC)
- i) The Parish Councils will participate in the development of plans for progressing a suitable and viable use of the historic infirmary stables. (IRS/TC)
- j) Maintain and protect existing farming activity. (TC)
- k) The Parish Councils will work with the Highway Authority on the following; (GA)
 - Bring forward traffic management measures for Arborfield village centre, to be implemented as part of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road Scheme; (see also a) above
 - Progress to completion the widening of Barkham Bridge and the Nine Mile Ride Extension
 - Reduce speed limits to 30mph (or less) along all residential roads.
 - Reclaim quiet lanes by providing appropriate traffic management schemes.
 - Provide safe footways along busy roads.
 - Provide safe crossing areas on major roads by managing speed limits and ensuring good sight lines.
 - Improve crossings where existing Public Rights of Way cross main roads.
- l) Create additional signposted walking routes on the lines of the Barkham Way and The Coombes Circular walk. (GA)
- m) Review effectiveness of public transport to enhance local services. (GA)

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Appendix 1 Maps

Maps which are part of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan are published separately at <https://www.arbarplan.com/html/documents.html>

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Appendix 2 Acknowledgements

Steering Group Cllr Laurence Heath (Chairman) (B) Cllr Graeme Dexter (B) Jan Heard (A) Cllr Karen Hughes (A)	Cllr Paul Townsend (Deputy Chair) (A) Rob Rowe (B) Cllr Paul Stevens (A)
Steering Group: Part times or previous members Cllr Vanessa Starkey (A) Cllr Andrew Clint (A) Mike Heard (A) Geoff Hughes (A) Cllr John Kaiser (Ward Member Barkham)	Cllr Ken Lane (B) Cllr Roger Loader (B) Angie Seal (A) Cllr Pam Stubbs (Chairman Barkham Parish Council) Cllr James Thatcher (A)
Focus Group Participants and other contributors Heather Bacon (A) Steve Bacon (A) Tim Bailey (B) Mr D Bartlett (A) Nick Blair (B) Dr I Bossowska (A) Mrs H Burges (B) Dr C Danbury (A) Mr P Evans (B) Mrs L Evans (B) Janet Firth (B) Miss A Graham (A) Cllr Chris Heyliger (B) Bernie Hicks (B) Mr T Hodbury (B) Kath James (B)	Martin James (B) Mr O Jones (A) John Knowles (A) Liz Mackay (A) Mrs P Mehring (B) Paul Montgomery (A) Dr S Mudie (A) Cllr Derek Oxbrough (B) Mr N Plant (A) Mrs C Plant (A) Mr M Reeves (B) Mrs P Reeves (B) Mr B Salter (A) Cllr Alan Scott (B) Mr G Steadman (B) Mrs K Steadman (B)
Parish Clerks Alison Ward (Clerk Arborfield & Newland)	Ellen Tims (Clerk Barkham PC)
Consultants Liz Alexander (Bell Cornwell) Alexia Kemp (Bell Cornwell)	Andrew Mathison (NPIERS)

(A) Resident of Arborfield

(B) Resident of Barkham

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Appendix 3 References

2011 Census

An introduction guide to valuing ecosystem services (DEFRA)

Barkham A History by David French and Janet Firth

BREEAM Sustainability assessment for Master Planning projects, infrastructure and buildings.

<http://www.breeam.com/>

Wokingham Riders Survey from The British Horse Society and Horse Riders Right to Ride

Wokingham Monitoring Report

Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007

Protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land (Natural England)

Rightmove: <http://www.rightmove.co.uk/>

Research 'Impact on floodplain woodland on flood flows' by Thomas, H and Nisbet T 2006

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (WBC 31 March 2016)

Wokingham Riders Survey (British Horse Society)

Zoopla: <http://www.zoopla.co.uk/>

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TITLE	Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Consultation
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 27 June 2019
WARD	None specific
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Locality and Customer Services - Sarah Hollamby
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Business and Economic Development – Stuart Munro

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

To submit a formal response to the consultation on the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Framework Document and endorse the work done to date by Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVP LEP) and other stakeholders. The Council seeks to ensure that the vision and priorities set out in the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Framework Document are informed by Wokingham Borough’s local needs and aspirations.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive

- 1) endorses the work that Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership has done to date on the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Framework Document
- 2) approves the responses from Wokingham Borough Council to the consultation questions posed on the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Framework Document.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government introduced Local Industrial Strategies in the Industrial Strategy White Paper (November 2017). The overarching aims of the Industrial Strategy White Paper is to improve the UK’s overall productivity performance and ensure that future economic growth is more inclusive.

In early 2018, the TVB LEP was tasked by Government to shape the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS). As a major milestone in developing the final BLIS the LEP has been working with stakeholders, including business representatives and the six Berkshire unitary authorities to develop the attached BLIS Framework Document.

The BLIS Framework Document identifies Berkshire’s economy as performing ‘very strongly’. The success of the Berkshire economy is attributed to its outstanding location (proximity to Heathrow and London) and a sense of place - the mix of urban and rural places with beautiful countryside with major historical and cultural assets.

Whilst in absolute terms Berkshire's economy is performing well the BLIS Framework Document identifies a number of negative economic trends suggesting that productivity has slowed considerably. For example in terms of GVA (per job filled) Berkshire grew by 1.3% last year placing it only 34th out of 38 LEP areas in England

The high cost of living in Berkshire, particularly in terms of the high cost of housing, makes it a place where inclusive growth is, a challenge. Evidence suggests that the workforce has polarised into well-paid jobs and poorly paid, insecure jobs. The Framework Document identifies other factors influencing the economy including traffic congestion, a transient population and too few mid-skilled jobs in the workforce.

The vision is that "*Berkshire should grow with ambition and intent*" The BLIS highlights the wish to accelerate the pace of economic growth and then to sustain it at a high level. It stresses the need for that growth to be "*good growth*" – meaning growth that is smart, knowledge intensive, inclusive and resilient. As such it sets out an ambition to see businesses thrive, communities prosper and individuals of all ages progress and flourish.

The vision is supported by the five priorities: *enhancing productivity within Berkshire's enterprises; ecosystems which are maturing and evolving and extend beyond Berkshire; international trade, connections, collaborations and investments; vibrant places and a supportive infrastructure; making Berkshire an inclusive area where aspirations can be realised.*

The document also poses a number of consultation questions to ensure that the BLIS meets the needs of local stakeholders (responses from WBC are attached).

In general, the council is supportive of the work done so far in the Framework Document. In particular, that the imperatives of the need for more affordable housing and the impacts of congestion are recognised. Overall, the council would like to see more holistic approach with the emphasis on balanced, inclusive growth. Including, more emphasis on tackling climate change, supporting arts and culture and proving good infrastructure (including superfast broadband).

The consultation process closes on the 21st June. The Government timetable for completing the BLIS is early 2020.

BACKGROUND

The Government introduced Local Industrial Strategies in the Industrial Strategy White Paper (November 2017) as a mechanism to coordinate local economic policy and national funding streams and establish new ways of working between national and local government.

The overarching aims of the Industrial Strategy White Paper is to improve the UK's overall productivity performance and ensure that future economic growth is more inclusive

In early 2018 the TVB LEP was tasked by Government to shape the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS)

As a major milestone in developing the final BLIS the LEP has been working with stakeholders, including business representatives and the six Berkshire unitary authorities to develop the attached BLIS Framework Document.

Based on a strong body of evidence, the Framework Document sets out a vision and five priorities for the BLIS and poses a number of consultation questions to ensure that these meet the needs of local stakeholders

Over the coming months these strategic priorities will be developed in more detail. This will be done through a co-design process with Government, TVB LEP and be informed by feedback from this consultation process.

The work in the BLIS Framework Document will become the overarching strategy document, which will be supported by a suite of further documents to form the BLIS in its entirety. These will include a full evidence base, a spatial economic narrative and a set of implementation plans

Completion of the Framework Document marks the halfway point in the process of developing the BLIS. The consultation process on the Framework Document closes on the 21st June. The next stage will involve a period of more detailed co-design with Government throughout the summer. The Government timetable for completing the BLIS is early 2020.

BUSINESS CASE (Analysis)

BLIS FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT SUMMARY

Berkshire's Economy

The BLIS Framework Document identifies Berkshire's economy as performing 'very strongly' and appearing at, or close to the top of the UK league tables for GVA, employment rates, qualifications and so on.

The success of the Berkshire economy is attribute to its outstanding location and sense of place. It is in an outstanding location because of its close proximity to Heathrow airport, one of the world's major international gateways, and because of its location adjacent to London.

Economic success is also accredited to a sense of Place. This is due to the intrinsic nature of Berkshire being comprised of mix of urban and rural places with major historical and cultural assets as well as beautiful and accessible countryside.

Whilst in absolute terms Berkshire's economy is performing well the BLIS Framework Document identifies a number of negative economic trends suggesting that productivity has slowed considerably). In terms of GVA (per job filled) Berkshire grew by 1.3% last year placing it only 34th out of 38 LEP areas in England.

The high cost of living in Berkshire, particularly in terms of the high cost of housing, makes it a place where inclusive growth is a challenge. Evidence suggests that the workforce has polarised into well-paid jobs and poorly paid, insecure jobs, which are incongruous with the character of local housing market. Resulting in high levels of in work poverty.

The Framework Document identifies other factors influencing the economy including traffic congestion, a transient population, lack of commercial land and too few mid-skilled jobs in the workforce.

The paper concludes that growth should come about through increasing productivity through increasing the output from jobs rather than the number of jobs.

Vision and Priorities

According to Government requirements Local Industrial Strategies should be structured around the five foundations of productivity; Ideas (Innovative economy), people (good jobs and greater earning power for all), infrastructure (a major upgrade to the UK's infrastructure), business environment (best place to start and grow a business) and places (prosperous communities across the UK). As well as the four grand challenges, artificial intelligence and data , ageing society, clean growth and future of mobility

Evidence set out at the beginning of the Framework Document has been interrogated against the five foundations and grand challenges proposed by Government to develop a vision and five priorities.

The proposed vision is that *“Berkshire should grow with ambition and intent”* The BLIS highlights the wish to accelerate the pace of economic growth and then to sustain it at a high level. It stresses the need for that growth to be *“good growth”* – meaning growth that is smart, knowledge intensive, inclusive and resilient. As such it sets out an ambition to see businesses thrive, communities prosper and individuals of all ages progress and flourish.

The vision is supported by the five priorities: *enhancing productivity within Berkshire's enterprises; ecosystems which are maturing and evolving and extend beyond Berkshire; international trade, connections, collaborations and investments; vibrant places and a supportive infrastructure; making Berkshire an inclusive area where aspirations can be realised.*

Consultation responses

The consultation poses questions about the vision and priorities as well as the underpinning evidence and how this have been analysed. The attached document sets out the responses from Wokingham Borough Council.

The consultation responses broadly endorse the work of the BLIS Framework Document and are supportive of the work carried out so far.

The consultation responses welcome the recognition that there is a need to tackle Berkshire's very slow economic growth in productivity and that the importance of places in creating a successful economy has been identified.

The council would like to see more emphasis on inclusive, balanced growth in the Framework Document including an emphasis on tackling climate change and developing the arts and culture offer in the borough. More weight needs to be given to ensuring that TVB LEP supports WBC in placing the right housing in the right places with more high-quality, affordable homes. There is an imperative to manage congestion better and provide good infrastructure (including superfast broadband).

Next Steps

The council will continue to support the further development of the BLIS in partnership with TVB LEP and other stakeholders and ensure that there is a read across to the Wokingham Borough Council Economic Development Strategy and the priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £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)	Nil	N/A	
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	N/A	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	Yes or No	

Other Financial Information

There are no direct financial implications from endorsing the BLIS. However, the Government does use the TVB LEP to channel funding to local authority infrastructure projects through the Growth Fund. The BLIS along with the TVB LEP key Economic Development Strategy will be used to inform future funding decisions

List of Background Papers

1. Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Framework Document for Consultation March 2019
2. Wokingham Borough Council Response to the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Framework Document for Consultation March 2019

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Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy

Framework Document for consultation

March 2019



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1: Introduction

About Local Industrial Strategies

Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – like all other LEPs and Combined Authorities in England – has been tasked by government with developing a **Local Industrial Strategy (LIS)**.

The requirement for LISs was set out in the Industrial Strategy White Paper which was published in November 2017. Structured around five **Foundations of Productivity** and four **Grand Challenges**, the overarching aims of the White Paper are essentially to:

- improve the UK's overall **productivity performance**; and
- ensure that future economic growth is **more inclusive**.

Our approach to the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS)

Work has been underway to develop the **Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS)** for well over a year. The process has been highly iterative and consultative. Overseen by the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP Forum and Board, it has involved:

- discussions with key **stakeholders and stakeholder groups**, including the voluntary and community sector, further education colleges, transport stakeholders, business representative organisations, rural stakeholders, and organisations with an interest in Heathrow Airport
- regular meetings of a **Task and Finish Group** which includes two officers from each of the six unitary authorities within Berkshire, and is genuinely multi-disciplinary

- the work of a specially-convened **Productivity Commission** – drawn from the private sector and including academic inputs from the University of Reading (see Box 1).

The early stages of BLIS development have been strongly **evidence-based**. As well as the work of the Productivity Commission (which we explain in more detail later), it has drawn on a substantial body of existing literature and data, including that generated by the six unitary authorities and by Thames Valley Berkshire LEP.

Where we are up to...

The timetable for the development of LISs has been set by government, but it has also been subject to change: plans are now quite different from a year ago. As it stands, government's expectation is that Thames Valley Berkshire LEP will have a finished LIS by early 2020, close to a year from now.

We are therefore approximately mid-way through the process. Substantive work has been done, but there is more to do. Over the months ahead, this needs to include an element of co-design with government.

At this stage, we are presenting a **Framework Document** for discussion and input. This is a key milestone in our process.

Our Framework Document...

Our **Framework Document** is a "working version" of the **Strategy** element of the BLIS. As illustrated in the graphic below, it will be supported by other documents – notably a full **evidence base**; a **spatial economic narrative**; and a set of **implementation plans**. We will also produce a short – and visually compelling – **summary statement**.

Figure 1: Proposed structure of the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy



In relation to the **strategy**, the Framework Document reflects the decisions we have made. In the light of these decisions, it describes our broad strategic priorities.

Within the Framework Document:

- the first four main chapters are drafted in full, based on the evidence we have reviewed and inputs from partners and stakeholders

- Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are presented in skeletal form only: they will need to be fleshed out and developed over the months ahead, informed by the feedback/comments that we receive.

...And your feedback

Over the next few months, these strategic priorities will be developed in detail and it is here particularly that we are looking for further inputs – from businesses, from the unitary authorities, from partners and stakeholders, and from individuals of all ages across Berkshire.

We welcome – and encourage – responses to this document before midday **Friday 21 June 2019**, by email to BLIS@thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk

These responses should be structured around the main questions which are set out at the end of individual Chapters. We will use these inputs to develop the full BLIS (including the documents which support the strategy) in discussion with central government over the summer and autumn.



Three locally-defined imperatives for the BLIS

But these assets and advantages also define imperatives and responsibilities.

In framing the BLIS and defining its overall purpose, three have been formatively important. All three are discussed in more detail later – and all three have been considered by our Productivity Commission (see Box 1 below) – but the main arguments are outlined briefly here.

First, Berkshire must advance a growth process that is both net additional in relation to the UK and is “smart”; and in co-designing the BLIS with government, this should be a shared mission.

In other words, Berkshire should not seek to grow by attracting businesses or jobs from elsewhere in the UK; instead, growth should be of a form that simply would not happen anywhere else.

Moreover – given the tightness of the labour market, the recruitment challenges that already exist and some of the problems surrounding congestion – growth really needs to be “smart”. It needs to focus on the quality of jobs and the output linked to them, not simply the quantity. More generally, it needs to have regard to the efficiency of resource use in the round.

Second, it must be recognised that Berkshire is the kind of place in which inclusive growth is a real challenge. The BLIS must address this head-on.

Proximity to London and a prominent international gateway function together mean that Berkshire is a very expensive place to live and work. The costs of both housing and commercial property are well above the national average and the evidence suggests that “middle level” functions and “middle level” occupations are, literally, being priced out.

In socio-economic terms, the consequence is that Berkshire is polarised: it does well in relation to top end jobs and occupations

and these in turn generate demand for an array of local services, but they tend to be associated with poorly paid and increasingly insecure employment which is incongruous with the character of (in particular) local housing markets.

One consequence is high levels of in-work poverty. Looking ahead, this combination of circumstances is as undesirable as it is unsustainable – but in Berkshire, there ought to be an opportunity to develop a more efficient and inclusive labour market. What is missing are routes to progression.

Third, the strength of national and international flows of people, ideas and investment into (and out of) Berkshire is perhaps masking places that are, in themselves, rather “underpowered”. There is a need for strengthened place-making in response.

This third imperative may be controversial, but it is important. In the language of economics, the issue is whether spill-over effects are being captured fully or whether there is so much transience that they are effectively dissipated and lost. This in turn poses major questions for Berkshire’s towns: are they places that attract and retain talent and engender a sense of commitment, attachment and reinvestment, or are they simply places in which to reside for a short while?

Box 1: Berkshire Productivity Commission

The Commission was drawn from Berkshire’s business community and it included: individuals from both corporates and smaller companies; individuals who work with businesses in Berkshire (in an advisory/deliver capacity); and academics from the University of Reading.

Its main Terms of Reference were to:

- review the initial evidence in relation to the performance of Berkshire’s economy, particularly on indicators linked to productivity
- consider – in a technical sense – where the greatest opportunities might be to effect an improvement in productivity, consistent with the overarching priority set out in the Strategic Economic Plan (“to secure better access to talented people and bright ideas, and to use both more effectively”)

- take a forward view in terms of how productivity imperatives might be changing – informed in part by the contents of the national Industrial Strategy – and identify areas requiring further evidence gathering and investigation.

And then to:

- review the outputs from the second stage of evidence gathering
- agree (in a technical sense) what the priorities should be in seeking to effect productivity improvements across Berkshire.

The Productivity Commission met three times and its deliberations focused on five main issues:

- the changing role of the IT sector within Berkshire’s economy
- the significance of internationalisation in relation to the area’s productivity performance
- the changing scale and nature of “the middle” of Berkshire’s economy, and the implications for inclusion and progression
- the scale, character and role of the public sector in economic terms
- spatial considerations relating to all four of the points above.

The evidence gathered by the Productivity Commission is considered throughout this document.

The requirements of central government

These three, locally-defined, imperatives are demanding ones. They have been defined within Berkshire and are *in addition to* the basic requirements of LISs set out by government in its *Prospectus* of October 2018.

The BEIS Prospectus states that LISs should be:

- based on **evidence**, with a rigorous understanding of the local economy
- informed by a good understanding of the area’s **strengths and weaknesses**, including in relation to the five **Foundations of productivity**
- developed **collaboratively**, both with local stakeholders and partners, and with neighbouring areas
- focused on clear **priorities**
- informed by the disciplines of **evaluation**.

Our emerging response is set out in the chapters that follow.

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 2

Local industrial strategies have a very broad potential remit and in principle, they could be positioned in any number of ways. We have sought to chart a middle ground by retaining a strong focus on the economy, and thinking hard about the nature of growth processes within Berkshire, whilst also recognising the requirements of central government.

In this context:

2-1: Is the overarching purpose of the BLIS clear?

2-2: Is this purpose addressed through the chapters that follow?



UKRAIL

TES

3: Berkshire's economic geographies

Berkshire has a population of just over 900,000 people. It is also home to 44,600 enterprises and 580,000 jobs.

Underpinning these metrics is a distinctive spatial form which helps to explain how the economy of Berkshire “works” – and how its performance might be enhanced.

Berkshire's largest towns are (in descending order of population size, and based on data from Census 2011): Reading (over 220,000 people in terms of urban footprint) and Slough (over 150,000 people), then Bracknell and Maidenhead (both well over 60,000), and then Wokingham and Newbury (over 35,000).

London

However, the urban area that has the greatest influence on Berkshire's economy is London. At the time of the last Census, some 43,000 Berkshire residents commuted to London while over 24,000 London residents commuted in the opposite direction. In fact, even in terms of travel patterns, the links are stronger than these numbers would on their own imply: many residents travel to and from London, either whilst “doing business” or because they work in London for part of the week. But there are also many other, wider, flows relating for example to goods, services, finance, ideas/know-how and international tourism.

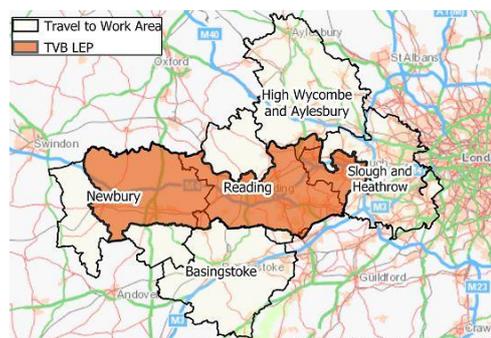
There is another facet of London which is important. From the draft London Plan, planned housing growth within the capital is insufficient to meet some scenarios

relating to projected demand. The inference is that surrounding areas will absorb London's unmet housing need. This has consequences for all of London's neighbours, Berkshire included.

Functional economic areas within Berkshire

Much of Berkshire – but particularly the area in the east – needs to be understood as part of agglomerative processes and pressures which are defined around London¹. Slough alone accounts for 13,000 of Berkshire's London-bound out-commuters and 11,000 of its in-commuters. It is because of these flows that Slough and parts of Windsor and Maidenhead are included within the west London Slough and Heathrow Travel to Work Area² (TTWA).

Figure 3: Map showing Travel to Work Areas across (and beyond) Berkshire



Source: Produced by SQW 2018. Licence 100030994

Across Berkshire, two further TTWAs are identified through commuting data, signalling distinctive labour markets:

- Reading TTWA (which includes all or part of the unitary authority areas of Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell Forest, but also South Oxfordshire and part of Hart (north Hampshire), and small areas in both West

¹ Data throughout this document are sourced from ONS datasets – principally BRES, ASHE, APS, Jobs Density dataset, and IDBR

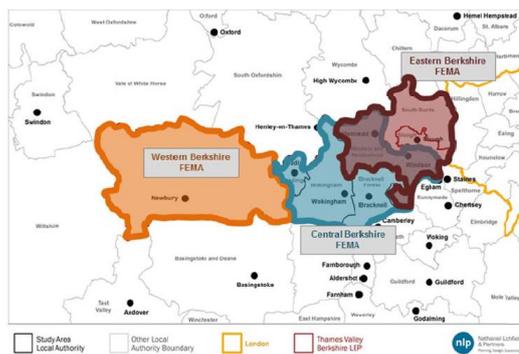
² TTWAs are data driven and defined principally in relation to levels of self containment

Berkshire and Windsor and Maidenhead); and

- Newbury TTWA (which covers most of West Berkshire but also extends into North Hampshire and Wiltshire).

Informed by these data and evidence relating to housing markets, commercial property markets, key sectors and key infrastructures, three **Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs)** have been identified across Berkshire³. These are important because they signal potentially different economic pressures and opportunities, and these differences are important in effecting economic growth that is sustainable and appropriate.

Figure 4: Functional Economic Market Areas across Berkshire



(Source: NLP)

The FEMAs are:

- **Western Berkshire FEMA** which maps onto West Berkshire and is predominantly rural in character; Newbury is the largest settlement and much of the area is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- **Central Berkshire FEMA** which includes four of the six unitary authority areas in Berkshire and is defined functionally around Reading/Wokingham in the west and Bracknell in the east

- **Eastern Berkshire FEMA** which overlaps with Central Berkshire, and includes Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead, and (neighbouring) South Buckinghamshire and is strongly “edge-of-London” in character.

These broad demarcations are functional and indicative rather than political or administrative, but they are important. They provide some insight into the spatial underpinnings of the growth opportunities and constraints that the BLIS must both shape and respond to. They are therefore material in relation to both the BLIS and the six unitary authorities’ emerging Local Plans.

The three Functional Economic Market Areas

Western Berkshire FEMA

Overall, the **Western Berkshire FEMA** is very constrained in terms of future growth. Some 74% of the land area is within the North Wessex Downs AONB and 12% is functional floodplain. West Berkshire’s Local Plan (to 2036) is currently being prepared.

A major site at Grazeley is being investigated (jointly by West Berkshire District Council, Wokingham Borough Council, Reading Borough Council and Bracknell Forest Borough Council) and it is possible (although not certain) that this will be the focus for a sizeable new settlement. Beyond that, future growth will depend on the vibrancy of Newbury and Thatcham, and – longer term – on possibilities linked to AWE at Aldermaston. The strength of the rural economy – ranging from the equine cluster at Lambourn to the performance of market towns – will also be important.

³ *Berkshire Functional Economic Market Area Study*. Report by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners for Thames

Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership, February 2016

Central Berkshire FEMA

Central Berkshire FEMA is similarly constrained through a combination of Green Belt and environmental constraints (including flood risk). In growth terms, its narrative is more complicated for it impinges on four different unitary authorities, each of which has its own Local Plan preparation process (which in most cases is currently at an advanced stage although still on-going). General themes, however, surround the shortage of employment land; the need for urban densification linked to the better use of town centre sites (particularly in Reading and Bracknell); and the imperative for better connectivity both within and between the major urban areas.

Bracknell has made substantial headway over recent years and progress with the Lexicon (itself the product of a town centre masterplan from 2002), is widely applauded. Reading too has seen major investment in the town centre, linked in part to the improved railway station. The imminent prospect of Crossrail (for Reading, Twyford and Maidenhead) ought to create growth opportunities – if these can be accommodated. Separately, if it is advanced, Grazeley will also have a major bearing on Central Berkshire FEMA and it will need to be part of the future growth narrative.

Eastern Berkshire FEMA

The **Eastern Berkshire FEMA** is also under some pressure.

Its future is linked intrinsically to plans for Heathrow Airport. Construction of a third runway at Heathrow should start within 2-3 years. This will be a major project in its own right but once completed, it ought to reinforce further the economic significance of international connectivity

through Heathrow Airport. A Heathrow Strategic Planning Group is exploring the surrounding issues within (and beyond) Berkshire.

A second key (on-going) piece of work is the Wider Area Growth Study⁴. This reflects the complexity of the area in growth terms – including in respect of Slough, the largest town within the Eastern Berkshire FEMA.

Significant headway has been made in respect of Slough Trading Estate, which has strengthened its position as a nationally-significant business hub (including, increasingly in relation to data centres). Slough town centre is the next priority. The £400m Heart of Slough project to redevelop the town centre is underway. 2017 saw the opening of The Curve, Slough's new cultural hub and the Porter Building, which offers a fresh and dynamic environment next to Slough Station. Future development may well see residential development featuring strongly – partly because there is a pressing need to deliver more housing and partly because Slough town centre (like many others) needs to redefine its own economic purpose given profound changes within the retail sector.

Geographies linked to key sectors

Places matter – but for businesses and investors (who must be the central focus of the BLIS), administrative boundaries are irrelevant. We have already made reference to the huge importance of London, but Berkshire needs to be understood on a wider spatial canvas still.

This is illustrated amply by the **IT sector**. Its scale and concentration is a defining characteristic of Berkshire's economy; within Berkshire, it accounts for almost

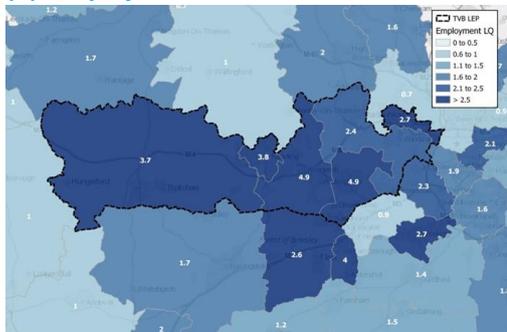
⁴ This has been commissioned by Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM), in conjunction with Slough Borough Council (SBC), South Bucks District Council (SBDC) and Chiltern District Council (CDC). It is

intended to jointly address issues arising from growth that is anticipated across the area, and potentially, more widely.

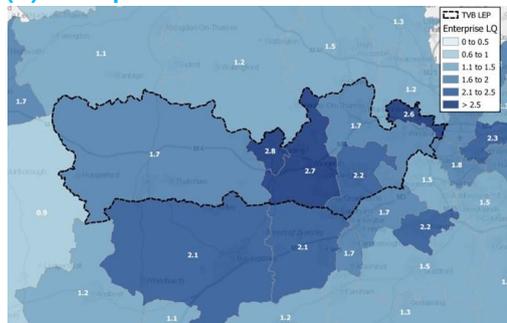
70,000 jobs and over 7,500 enterprises. It is also a major driver of productivity (see Box 2). In terms of numbers alone, the spatial pattern is very distinctive. As the maps above illustrate, in parts of Berkshire, the sector is nearly five times more significant locally than is typically the case across the UK: Reading and Wokingham (and, to a lesser extent, Slough) stand out on measures of both enterprise and employment numbers, but the sector is strongly concentrated across the piece.

Figure 5: Understanding the significance of the IT sector across Berkshire, in terms of:

(A) employment



(B) enterprises



Source: Produced by SQW 2018. Licence 100030994
Contains OS data © Crown copyright [and database right]
[2018]

What the maps also show is that the local authority district/unitary areas with very high levels of IT activity extend beyond Berkshire’s boundaries into – in particular – North Hampshire and Surrey. This wider footprint is very significant. It was explored as part of the Innovation South Science

and Innovation Audit which alighted on the potential of the area’s strengths in relation to digital enabling technologies⁵.

Similar arguments can be made in respect of **life sciences**. Here though, the footprint has a different shape. It extends to the north of Berkshire into Oxfordshire. Various networks – such as the Oxford Academic Health Sciences Network – extend across both areas; and Oxfordshire and Berkshire are together developing a life sciences sector deal. This recognises that the two areas play different roles, but also that the life sciences sector needs to be understood in relation to both.

Conclusions

Across Berkshire, the spatial narrative is complex. It is the result both of policy (particularly land use planning) and the decisions made by individual businesses and investors. It defines the canvass on which economic life is acted and the spatial opportunities and constraints which give it form.

This all matters because:

- it influences the extent to which activities can co-locate (which in turn may be important in sharing knowledge, innovation and learning (virtual solutions notwithstanding))
- it shapes both the geometry and scale of labour markets and therefore the range and depth of skills that are available to employers and the diversity of job opportunities that are open to local people
- it affects the sustainability of economic life in environmental terms – an issue which is increasingly important given concerns about resource use and climate change

⁵ Innovation South – A Powerhouse of world class strengths in digital enabling technologies SIA report, sponsored by BEIS, 2017

- it influences the balance between supply and demand across many different factors of production.

In other words, it has a material bearing on competitiveness and all the underpinnings of productivity. It is therefore a central consideration within the BLIS.



4: Berkshire's economy today

Berkshire's productivity performance

According to data from ONS, Berkshire's economy generated output (GVA) to the value of **£37.8bn** in 2017 (in current prices). It is therefore a sizeable economy.

Within this context, **Berkshire is a top-performing LEP area on the main metrics of productivity:**

- On **GVA per hour worked**, Berkshire is ranked second to London amongst 38 LEP areas in England. In 2017, every hour worked in Berkshire generated GVA with a value of £40.30 compared to a UK average of £33.60.
- In 2017, every filled job in Berkshire generated GVA valued at £68.8k; the UK average was £54.3k. So, on this second measure – **GVA per filled job** – Berkshire is again ranked second to London.

By virtue of being both the capital city, and a world city, London is not directly comparable to Berkshire: it hosts certain functions and plays particular roles that are, within the UK, unique. It is fair to observe therefore that among reasonable UK comparators (i.e. excluding London), **Berkshire is currently the best performing LEP area in terms of headline productivity performance.** Part of the reason for this relates to its sectoral make-up and the high incidence of international investment (see Boxes 2 and 3).

Box 2: Insights from the BLIS Evidence Base – The IT Sector

In 2017, the sector accounted for about 13% of all employment and 16% of the total business stock. Evidence suggests that, over recent years, it has seen substantial growth in employment (+21% between 2010 and 2017) and enterprises (+51%). Nationally, IT is a sector which is linked to strong productivity performance. The inference is that

Berkshire's productivity performance is causally linked to the sector's scale and concentration.

Data suggest that some sub-sectors have seen rapid growth (e.g. computer programming activities and computer consultancy activities), but others have experienced declining employment and/or business stock (e.g. repair of computers and peripheral equipment; other information technology and computer service activities). In general terms, growing sub-sectors have either been those with few barriers to entry (linked to self-employment) or those which are typically regarded as higher value added.

There is some evidence of specialisms within the ICT sector at a local level in Berkshire – e.g. datacentres in Slough; cyber security (which appears to link to University of Reading); and cloud computing.

A review of literature found that Berkshire's international links via Heathrow Airport, regional links with London through the M4 motorway, the Great Western Mainline and the Reading to Waterloo Mainline, and the size of the "tech talent pool" are key reasons for IT businesses locating in Berkshire.

However, alongside this first observation, it is important to make a second: **Berkshire has been dogged by very slow productivity growth over recent years.**

Between 2007 and 2017:

- **GVA per hour worked** in Berkshire grew by 1.2% per annum compared to 1.9% per annum across the UK and 1.6% per annum in London
- **GVA per filled job** grew by 1.3% per annum in Berkshire – placing it 34th amongst 38 LEP areas in England in terms of growth rates and well below the UK average (2% per annum).

This all suggests that Berkshire's strong absolute performance is the result of its economic endowment and accumulated past investment – but also that **its comparative advantage is diminishing.**

For the BLIS, this presents an overarching challenge.

Box 3: Insights from the BLIS Evidence Base – International investment

Berkshire has the highest concentration of foreign-owned companies of all 38 LEP areas. Data from Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) (2017) demonstrate that whilst 98% of enterprises in Berkshire are UK owned, foreign-owned businesses

account for 47% of turnover in Berkshire and 30% of employees. Two main conclusions follow:

- foreign-owned businesses account for a substantial share of the Berkshire economy (in terms of employment and turnover)
- foreign-owned businesses are typically relatively large – certainly as compared to the economy as a whole.

Sectorally, Berkshires inward investment profile is dominated by knowledge-economy sectors. ICT-related investments accounted for the lion's share of recent FDI wins in 2017-18, life sciences and biotech/pharma were also apparent.

There is a substantive literature and evidence base describing the attractiveness of Berkshire in relation to inward investment. From this material, five factors appear to be uppermost in explaining what attracts internationally-owned businesses to Berkshire: accessibility – linking to Heathrow and proximity to London; the importance of Reading as a “node” within Berkshire; cost (relative particularly to London); workforce availability; and business confidence.

There is much academic and other literature to suggest that companies with Foreign Direct Investment out-perform their domestically-owned competitors. In July 2018, ONS figures revealed that businesses under foreign-ownership are up to three times as productive as domestic ones. This in turn bites at two levels: the performance of the businesses themselves (i.e. the direct effect) and the performance of local economies which benefit from indirect effects linked to spill-overs. Berkshire has long been a beneficiary of this process and the FDI data appear to suggest that – at least for now – this is continuing.

Key data:

The value of goods and services exported from Berkshire is high. The value of services exported from Berkshire was £7.7bn (in 2016), the highest local (NUTS3) area outside of London

Foundations of Productivity

In order to interrogate the causes of productivity performance, the Industrial Strategy White Paper considers five Foundations of Productivity. The fifth Foundation – place – is cross-cutting and in relation to the specifics of Berkshire, it was introduced in the previous chapter. The other four Foundations provide a lens on

Berkshire's assets – and its principal strengths and weaknesses.

Ideas

Nationally, government has set a target that 2.4% of GDP should be devoted to R&D. R&D expenditure as a proportion of local economic output (GVA) is high in Berkshire at just over 4%; this is the fifth highest figure of all 38 LEP areas. Neighbouring areas also perform strongly.

Within Berkshire, there is one main higher education institution – **University of Reading** – together with small facilities linked to other institutions (e.g. University of West London).

2026 will mark University of Reading's centenary as an independent university and its vision is to be a “*vibrant, thriving, sustainable, global and broad-based institution, responsive to, stimulated by and informing changes in the world around us*”. Consistent with this vision, it has five Interdisciplinary Research Institutes (including the Institute of Food, Nutrition and Health and the Institute for Environmental Analytics). These are well-aligned with major themes from the White Paper, particularly the four Grand Challenges (artificial intelligence and data; future of mobility; clean growth; ageing society). They are also well aligned with the wider competencies and possibilities that define Berkshire in socio-economic terms.

University of Reading is, increasingly, recognising the importance of links – in both directions – to the business community, and it has put in place an infrastructure to facilitate these. This includes an Enterprise Centre which is located on its main campus, and Thames Valley Science Park. Having been identified as a project priority at the time the Strategic Economic Plan was drafted in 2014, Thames Valley Science Park is now open and operating; its completion is rightly regarded as one of the major developments of recent years.

Alongside the University of Reading, other major organisations/corporates are functioning as anchor institutions in the “ideas economy” – in the sense both of providing a local driver for research and innovation *and* (in some cases) providing a focus for the possibility of spatial clustering. Examples include:

- **AWE** – with a range of defence-related specialisms, including high performance computing and materials science, at a large site at Aldermaston, some of which could come forward for employment uses
- **Deloitte’s Cyber Intelligence Centre** which has grown quickly within Berkshire
- **Syngenta** – with its global R&D centre for agro-chemical research, and aspirations to develop a science park at its site near Bracknell.

Business environment

Berkshire is a place where enterprise can flourish. There are 44,600 enterprises in total, suggesting roughly 780 for every 10,000 residents of working age. Across the UK, the equivalent figure is about 640. This points to a vibrant and entrepreneurial business environment within Berkshire and a strong small business community.

In parallel, Berkshire also has a strong complement of larger businesses, many of which are internationally owned. It is these for which Berkshire is best known – the likes of Cisco, Microsoft, Telefonica, Oracle and Vodafone in the IT sector; Bayer, Syngenta, GSK, UCB and RB in life sciences; and a raft of household names across professional and financial services (PwC, EY, Deloitte, etc., as well as regional firms like Shoosmiths). It also has a new generation of companies with specialisms in artificial intelligence and cloud

computing; examples include Cloud Factory, Rapid 7, Carbon Black, Tanium, CrowdStrike.

In practice, the business environment within Berkshire has supported the formation and growth of both small, entrepreneurial businesses and larger players. Proximity to Heathrow Airport and London have been helped to shape the business environment, but its character is not reducible to external influences alone: Berkshire *as a place* has been important too.

Major employment sites – most notably Green Park (on the edge of Reading) and Slough Trading Estate – have helped to provide a visible focus. Increasingly, they fulfil many of the functions of anchor institutions in their own right – through, for example, the provision of formal and informal networking and support. They are genuine economic hubs of some scale: a cluster of data centres has, for example, emerged at Slough Trading Estate.

However, elements of the business environment require attention. In general terms – as the previous chapter explained – there is a shortage of employment land, in part because of changes to residential uses, accelerated through permitted development. Moreover, available sites and premises are expensive, pricing out lower value uses and forcing businesses seeking grow-on space to look elsewhere.

In addition, there is concern that provision for very early stage businesses may still be under-developed. Some flexible and managed workspace is available within Berkshire’s town centres, and there is evidence of commercial investment, but the provision of more animated incubator, accelerator and co-location spaces – which are fully part of a wider ecosystem – is limited⁶.

Against this backdrop, Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Hub is supporting the

⁶ Thames Valley Berkshire Supporting Workspace – Report by Renaissi, November 2016

development of small businesses from across a wide range of sectors.

In parallel, building on the ScaleUp Berkshire Programme, the challenge must be to encourage more businesses to scale-up, recognising the importance of the wider business environment in this context. Access to appropriate forms of growth finance is one key element; access to people with the right skills is a second; and the provision of appropriate commercial property is a third. The BLIS must in practice respond to all three.

Key data:

Berkshire has the 6th highest concentration of scale-up firms of all 38 LEP areas – with 580 firms scaling between 2013 and 2016

Supporting scale-up is important in terms of economic performance and productivity. But it also matters in relation to wider aspirations for inclusive growth. Growing firms provide a range of occupations and they play a key role in facilitating progression within the labour market. If these businesses are “squeezed out”, there is a risk that the prospects for progression are similarly curtailed.

People

Berkshire’s labour market: buoyancy, quality and “tightness”...

Within Berkshire, people constitute both a critical economic asset, but also – increasingly – a growth constraint. Two sets of data-driven observations explain why:

- Between 2006 and 2016, the total number of jobs in Berkshire grew by 15%. Over the same period, the resident working age population increased by around 5%. So, the number of jobs has grown much more quickly than the number of working age people.
- Across Berkshire, employment rates are high. Overall, the proportion of 16-64 year olds in employment is

around 80%, some five percentage points higher than the national average.

The inference is a very tight labour market – and all the qualitative evidence from employers points to the challenges of recruitment and retention. The clear implication is that Berkshire’s economy needs to grow principally by increasing the output from jobs, not the overall number; in other words, the overarching imperative must be one linked to productivity.

Within this context, it is also important to recognise the attributes of the labour market on which employers can draw. Within Berkshire, qualification levels are generally high: the proportion of working age adults with degree level (or higher) qualifications is close to ten percentage points above the national average. Locally, it is higher again (in Windsor and Maidenhead, and in Wokingham).

Particularly for major corporates, the effective labour market catchment is larger than Berkshire: people can be attracted from a wide area, including internationally. And as noted already, whilst there are high levels of out-commuting (especially to London), flows in the opposite direction are substantial too.

This overall picture – of buoyancy, quality and “tightness” – undoubtedly brings some challenges, and any dialogue with employers will quickly turn to these. Recruitment is difficult. Retention is also hard, particularly given the attractions that London presents for aspirational and ambitious employees, young ones especially.

Berkshire’s labour market: challenges for those in low pay jobs...

However, there is a second narrative which is equally important in Berkshire, and to which the BLIS must respond.

Research by University of Oxford found that for every ten middle-skilled jobs that disappeared in the UK between 1996 and 2008, about 4.5 of the replacement jobs

were high-skilled and 5.5 were low-skilled.⁷ The consequence is polarisation across the labour market. Nationally, this process is forecast to continue⁸.

Although both the indicator and the data are imperfect, one insight into the consequences for Berkshire relates to earnings. In absolute terms, earnings have become more polarised in every unitary authority across Berkshire since 1997. Relatively – on the basis simply of the ratio between the 10th and 80th percentiles – they have become slightly more polarised in Reading and West Berkshire and slightly less polarised in the other four areas, but the differences are still sizeable.

For those in low pay employment, Berkshire is a very challenging place to be: house prices are well above the UK average and affordability ratios are, for many, prohibitive.

Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that progression within the labour market is difficult. Jobs in “the middle” have been squeezed. Historically, these have played a crucial role in relation to progression for individuals. Finding alternative routes will be essential if more inclusive growth is to be achieved (see Box 4).

Box 4: Insights from the BLIS Evidence base – Unpacking “the middle”

A concern identified by the Productivity Commission during its first meeting was the apparent absence of “the middle” (in terms of jobs, occupations and activities) in Berkshire: both “the top” and the “the bottom” have grown, but “the middle” has all but disappeared. Patterns of this nature are recognised nationally, but because Berkshire is expensive (particularly in relation to housing and employment land/premises), these issues are exaggerated locally.

Using workplace-based data from ASHE, we considered the polarisation of employee earnings within Berkshire and how this has changed over the last two decades. Data suggest that employee earnings have become more polarised in absolute terms in every unitary authority area across

Berkshire since 1997. Relatively, though, the picture is more mixed.

Nationally, the issues around polarisation are significant ones. For those who find themselves in “low pay” employment, progression is crucial, which in turn is key for inclusive growth. A national analysis by the Resolution Foundation found that the likelihood of progression is affected by four main factors:

- propensity to move jobs - generally speaking, moving jobs is a catalyst for pay growth
- type of employer - UK wide, public sector employers are considered a better route to progression than private sector companies (although large private sector employers are better than smaller ones)
- sector of employment - cleaning, hospitality, hairdressing and childcare are identified as having the highest incidence of low pay jobs
- skills: while education “helps”, a degree is less effective than it used to be in securing progression, while the evidence suggests that lower level qualifications help people to enter the workforce but not to progress within it

Across these four dimensions, the overall assessment of Berkshire is mixed. Simply because of the buoyancy of the labour market, the scope for job moves must be higher than elsewhere. However, Berkshire’s public sector is relatively small. We also know that there is high demand for labour in sectors where progression appears to be difficult nationally (such as cleaning, hairdressing and childcare).

A view expressed by the Productivity Commission was that the cost of business space prevents “non high-end” businesses – those which typically seek to hire people “in the middle” - locating (or remaining) in Berkshire. CoStar data found that the cost of business space – both office and industrial – is amongst the highest in the UK outside of London.

Polarisation, progression and commercial property are rarely considered together, but the links are clear and important in shaping Berkshire for the next two decades, particularly in respect of its ability to achieve growth that is both rapid and inclusive.

Skills priorities

Cutting across all of this – and at all points in the labour market – there is a need to ensure that employers can recruit the right people with the right skills. This is both an

⁷ Dr. Craig Holmes of Oxford University: Why is the Decline of Routine Jobs Across Europe so Uneven? (November 2014) from: [Social Mobility Commission: State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility in Great Britain]

⁸ UK CES: Working Futures 2014 to 2024; Main report (April 2016) from: [Social Mobility Commission: State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility in Great Britain]

immediate imperative and a future-facing one, recognising profound changes in the nature of work, an evolving sectoral make-up and the overarching consequences of technological change.

In this context, between 2016 and 2018, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP undertook a major piece of work to develop a Skills Priority Statement⁹. This involved extensive business consultation and it resulted in the identification of distinct skills priorities relating to “jobs families”. These were:

- **Tier 1** – focused on high value and fast-growing sectors in which employers are finding it hard to fill vacancies (digital tech, and engineering and science)
- **Tier 2** – covering construction, health and social care, and education; these sectors too have hard-to-fill vacancies although their significance for Berkshire is as much about quality of life and the functioning of the place as it is economic output, and their links to the labour market are different
- **Tier 3** – encompassing a wide group of other sectors/occupations, ranging from transport and distribution to creative.

The key point is that all of these are important for a sustainable and inclusive labour market, and efforts to promote productivity and progression apply across the board.

Box 5: Learning today, leading tomorrow
Berkshire has excellent education providers at every key stage, with first class teaching and facilities to match. It has the University of Reading, five further education colleges and many excellent schools, including Wellington College and St George’s, as well as top-rated state-funded schools

Infrastructure

The fourth of the Industrial Strategy White Paper’s Foundations of Productivity relates to infrastructure – both physical and virtual.

Transport and congestion

Over recent years, Berkshire has benefited from major transport investments and more are planned; these include Crossrail, Western and Southern Rail Access to Heathrow, M4 Smart Motorway, and, longer term, a third runway at Heathrow. For the most part, the rationale for these investments is defined nationally. It reflects, again, the importance of London within the economic life of the UK and/or the significance of international gateways.

In parallel, it is important to recognise a set of infrastructure issues that needs to be defined at a more local scale. This includes long-established priorities (like a third crossing of the River Thames), but also on-going imperatives around both intra- and inter-urban connectivity. Both have seen some investment and improvement in recent years, but there is more to be done.

The context for all of this is high levels of congestion. In some respects, this is the inevitable consequence (and cost) of economic buoyancy. Resources from the Local Growth Fund have been used to invest in local improvements. In addition, transport-related stakeholders have noted that:

- local attitudes to large scale development are becoming more positive, because of the potential for major schemes to unlock infrastructure-related investment
- the appetite for virtual and IT-enabled solutions is growing quickly.

Berkshire is ripe for intelligent mobility – one of the Grand Challenges from the

⁹ Thames Valley Berkshire Skills Priority Statement 2018, published by Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

Industrial Strategy White Paper. There is also widespread recognition that behavioural changes will need to be a central part of the solution. This will require more flexibility from employers over working hours, and a greater commitment to sustainable transport modes. Relatively small changes (such as the provision of bicycle storage facilities at more railway stations) could make a big difference in terms of the efficiency and capacity of the transport network overall.

Energy and water

However, another infrastructure that is under pressure is that relating to key utilities.

Investment cycles/processes linked to energy infrastructure are not well aligned to the needs of buoyant local economies: they struggle to react quickly in the context of fast-changing patterns of demand.

Two processes within Berkshire are especially challenging in this context. One relates to major new developments which bring a step-change in demand at a local level. A second reflects sectoral economic changes which are occurring within existing patterns of land use. The increasing number of data centres which occupy sites with B8 warehouse and distribution Use Classes is one important element; and the provision of EV charging facilities (for electric cars) is another.

It appears therefore that solutions to specific infrastructure constraints (notably transport-related) are creating pressures – but also potentially market opportunities – elsewhere. Indeed, it is increasingly recognised that demands on the energy infrastructure are materially important in relation to the pace of, and constraints to, economic growth.

Housing

As noted already, housing pressures across Berkshire are substantial. All six unitary authority areas have affordability ratios that are both challenging and deteriorating. The ratio of median house prices to median gross annual residence-based earning in Slough was 7.7 in 2007 but 11.0 in 2017, and throughout Berkshire, the pattern is similar. Rental levels are also very high.

The housing stock is increasing: between 2006 and 2016, it grew by over 27,000 dwellings with the biggest absolute increases in Reading and Slough. Looking ahead, significant additional housing growth is planned, although the balance may shift spatially towards the other unitary authority areas, most of which have one or more big planned (or at least possible) developments.

For the economic potential of Berkshire to be realised, it will be important that these sites come forward and the housing numbers set out in emerging Local Plans are indeed achieved.

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 4

Chapter 4 “boils down” a huge volume of evidence which we have gathered in earnest over the last year (and indeed before that). It seeks to probe the nature of the Berkshire economy, and to flush out both its strengths and weaknesses – and its distinctive characteristics. The strategy (presented in Chapter 6) really is founded on this assessment – so it is important.

In this context:

4-1: Do the “Foundations of Productivity” help explain the nature of economic performance across Berkshire?

4-2: Are there other factors/issues that ought to be considered given the purposes of the BLIS?



 **Apprenticeships**
BERKSHIRE APPRENTICESHIP SERVICE

5: Assets, challenges, constraints and opportunities

Berkshire has a mix of world-leading assets, but also major constraints linked to the growth process. These attributes need to be understood in the context of more general trends and drivers – social and environmental as well as straightforwardly

economic. Cutting across all of these are specific global trends which will transform our future. Identified in the Industrial Strategy White Paper as Grand Challenges, four key ones are: artificial intelligence and data; future of mobility; clean growth; and ageing society.

Table 1 below summarises the future-facing opportunities and/or challenges that are linked to the key assets and constraints which define Berkshire. These frame both the Vision and Priorities for the BLIS (which are described fully in the chapter that follows).

Table 1: Framing the BLIS: Assets, challenges, constraints and opportunities

Asset/constraint	Future-facing opportunities and challenges for Berkshire
High incidence of internationally-owned businesses, particularly in the IT/digital sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major risks and uncertainties linked to the process of Brexit Concerns relating to the “hollowing out” of higher value or higher knowledge content functions in Berkshire Risks surrounding the retention of younger workers within Berkshire, including international ones
University of Reading – as Berkshire’s only major higher education institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist research and teaching within the ambit of all four of the Grand Challenges Scope to invest in the wider innovation ecosystem, recognising that the University of Reading needs to be a central player within this
Well-qualified and economically active working population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing workforce skills ought to mean that Berkshire can be an agile economy, adapting effectively to technological change and, at times, being in the vanguard Those people that are not well-qualified are at risk of in-work poverty, particularly given the nature of the housing market (both owner occupied, and rental)
Retaining young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> London has magnetic appeal to younger adults and Berkshire struggles to hold on to its young people – particularly recent graduates
Fragmented innovation ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The innovation ecosystem is under par, particularly in comparison to the well-qualified nature of the workforce: it may struggle to compete with the best in the world and this may matter as knowledge content rises Opportunities exist to forge alliances, particularly with Oxfordshire (through Oxfordshire LEP), and Hampshire and Surrey (EM3 LEP), to accelerate and encourage innovation and enterprise within key sectors Major challenges surround the lack of “ecosystem champions”: who “talks up Berkshire” as a focus for dynamic and entrepreneurial small businesses and a hub for young entrepreneurs?
Berkshire’s towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town centre issues are “writ large” and there is a need for creative responses, informed by the achievements in Bracknell

Asset/constraint	Future-facing opportunities and challenges for Berkshire
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some cases, Crossrail ought to provide a catalyst for town centre regeneration and growth (Reading, Tyxford, Maidenhead) Smaller towns in the more rural parts of Berkshire need to function as economic hubs Berkshire’s towns need more profile – and they need to develop a more consistently excellent cultural offer
Berkshire’s “brands”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Windsor Castle, Ascot, Eton College, etc., are known around the world, and they present a great opportunity to raise the profile of Berkshire vis-à-vis investors and businesses The multicultural nature of Berkshire also needs to be celebrated: “<i>the world comes to Berkshire</i>” and this ought to be a headline that is promoted
Employment land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower value uses are in the process of being squeezed out with major consequences for the mix of jobs within Berkshire: looking ahead, there is a need to ensure that appropriate provision is retained, despite market and other pressures
Rural parts of Berkshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The natural environment is, in large part, outstanding and it needs to be celebrated in these terms, recognising the contribution it makes to the area’s quality of life Rural communities must however be sustainable – and the loss of young people in the context of very high house prices is a threat
Transport infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Berkshire’s transport infrastructure is very congested despite seeing major investment projects: modal shifts and behavioural changes will be important, as potentially will be the use of autonomous vehicles and other digital solutions
Housing provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are major challenges relating to housing supply – both the quantity and the affordability in the owner-occupied and rental markets
Large parts of Berkshire are functional floodplain and/or Green Belt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is relatively little developable land – meaning that high density solutions will be needed and also that hard decisions may need to be taken about the nature and direction of growth over the medium-long term

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 5

Although short, Chapter 5 is important in moving from analysis towards strategy, and ensuring that the BLIS is future facing: it needs to anticipate major risks (upside and downside) for the economy of Berkshire as it looks ahead to 2030 and beyond.

5-1: Is the summary assessment a fair one? Does it capture the principal challenges that Berkshire is facing?



6: Vision, strategy and priorities

Vision: the best of both global and local

At the core of our Vision is a commitment to becoming **the best of both global and local**.

We have an outstanding location at the heart of one of the world's major international gateways and adjacent to a thriving world city. This gives us tremendous opportunities for international business and for trading around the world. At the same time, we cherish the places (both urban and rural) that define Berkshire. These must be encouraged to thrive – as must the businesses and communities that call them “home”.

Against this backdrop, our Vision is simply that **Berkshire should grow with ambition and intent**. We want to accelerate the

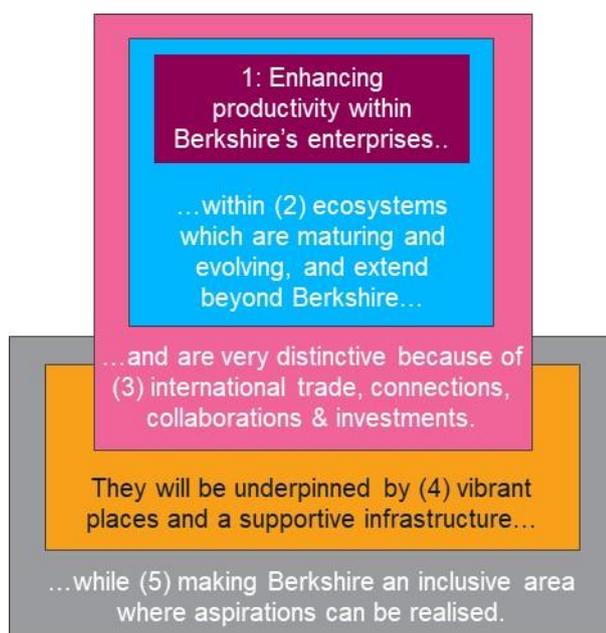
pace of economic growth – consistent with the strength of our assets – and then to sustain it at a high level, but we also want to see *good* growth. By this, we mean growth that is smart, knowledge-intensive, inclusive and resilient. We want businesses to thrive, communities to prosper and individuals of all ages to progress and flourish.

The consequence will be that we generate businesses, jobs and output that would simply not occur elsewhere. These will add to the health of the UK economy overall.

From Vision to Priorities

Although our economic fundamentals are robust, there is much to do in achieving this Vision. Our immediate priorities are set out in the graphic below and explained in the pages that follow. Our intention is to develop these in the light of consultation feedback over the summer months, and in discussion with central government through the process of co-design.

Figure 6: Our Priorities



Priority 1: Enhancing productivity within Berkshire's enterprises

Why this is a Priority:

- Evidence from the Productivity Commission suggests that levels of investment have stalled within Berkshire owing to macro-economic / political uncertainty and high levels of caution within the business community. Perversely, this means that productivity may have been inflated over recent years (as existing assets have been sweated hard), but future prospects may be less good. The imperative now must be to encourage businesses to invest such that productivity improvements can take place over the medium-long term.
- For most businesses, their key resource is their staff. Investing in appropriate forms of workforce development is crucial for firms to thrive in the medium-long term.
- Berkshire has a reasonable group of scale-up businesses, but it is important that these continue to invest and grow. Berkshire must provide a business environment that nurtures growing businesses. Issues with regard to the stock of commercial premises are important in this context, as are workforce skills.

What we propose to do in response:

- We want to encourage Thames Valley Growth Hub to work with businesses from different sectors to ensure they understand what productivity is, and unlock investment decisions.
- We want to build on the ScaleUp Berkshire Programme to continue encourage small businesses to grow to medium size and beyond.
- We want to build on the Funding Escalator – with links to British Business Bank and Business Growth Fund – to ensure that more businesses within Berkshire have appropriate access to growth finance.
- We want to provide an appropriate supply of sites and premises to help smaller businesses invest and grow. This will include some lower cost provision which will help in relation to the “middle level” jobs which have been identified as critical in relation to progression and inclusivity.
- We want to ensure that Berkshire's businesses have access to the best possible (existing and emerging) digital infrastructure; to this end, we will work with the major providers to ensure that major employment sites are prioritised.
- We want to work with the area's SMEs to support them to invest in their staff throughout their careers, including through an increase in the uptake of apprenticeships.
- We want to develop a more flexible approach to skills provision, which responds to the increasing diversity of working practices.

Priority 2: Ecosystems which are maturing and evolving and extend beyond Berkshire

Why this is a Priority:

- Berkshire's business community is ensconced in wider ecosystems (networks of relationships and interdependencies linked to economic life) – although compared to elsewhere, these are currently relatively weak and fragmented.
- Ecosystems are important in terms of knowledge spill-overs and more general processes of innovation; they

are also crucial in relation to risk and resilience.

- The process of enterprise/growth needs to be encouraged within deepening and evolving ecosystems which follow their own economic geography(ies): for IT and digital sectors, this extends to the south and east of Berkshire, whereas in life sciences, the stronger links are to the north.

What we propose to do in response:

- We want to forge alliances with partners in Oxfordshire (through Oxfordshire LEP) for life sciences, and Hampshire/Surrey (through EM3 LEP) and Heathrow/London on the digital front, building on the SIAs and working towards sub-national sector deals.
- We want to develop the role of University of Reading as an anchor institution, building on Thames Valley Science Park and recognising its assets in terms of the Grand Challenges.
- We want to investigate the potential surrounding other major organisations (possibly including AWE and Syngenta) and also major employment sites (like Green Park and Slough Trading Estate) to develop a network of institutional anchors across Berkshire. We consider this model to be highly appropriate given the settlement structure and the distribution of businesses/people.
- We want to support the appropriate development of innovation spaces in our town centres and/or close to railway stations.
- We want to develop flexible and market-led skills/workforce plans that are driven by the needs of major sectors, build “Berkshire’s future talent”, and use apprenticeship (and other) routes to make them happen;

this could potentially include an Institute of Technology.

- We want to identify, encourage and celebrate reinvestment cycles, building a stronger “sense of place” in the process.

Priority 3: International trade, connections, collaborations and investments

Why this is a Priority:

- Berkshire is among the most outward facing local economies in the UK and its prosperity and sectoral make-up owes much to sustained inward investment. There is also evidence to suggest that inward investment is correlated with strong productivity performance. The inference therefore is that Berkshire’s productivity strengths may reflect its international make-up.
- Berkshire has big economic advantages and potentials linked to Heathrow Airport; in principle, these ought to be strengthened further in the context of a third runway.
- However, the scale of inward investment fell in 2018/19 and patterns and processes of both inward investment and international trade may well change in the context of Brexit. This presents risks – upside and downside – and designing in resilience needs to be a priority.
- There is some concern that the international corporates have “hollowed out” activities in Berkshire. Specifically, Berkshire appears to attract sales, marketing and management functions, with innovation-focused activities located elsewhere.
- More generally, there is a need to deepen/strengthen relationships within broad ecosystems and

emphasise the importance of place-based assets from the perspective of international investors and the internationally mobile workforce.

What we propose to do in response:

- We want to exploit fully the benefits of Heathrow proximity including, most immediately, through the work of the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group and the priorities identified in the Heathrow-focused Science and Innovation Audit.
- We want to stay close to the major companies in Berkshire to understand how their thinking is evolving, particularly as the Brexit process unfolds.
- We want to involve the corporates in ecosystem development ventures – both in branding terms, and attitudinally: the major inward investors ought to be functioning more as anchor institutions and contributing fully to economic life within Berkshire. We believe there is scope to develop networks of businesses that are operating internationally to “share war stories” and strengthen links.
- We want to build our relationships with the “next generation” of international investors in Berkshire, ensuring that we remain a leading location for global tech investment.
- Through the Growth Hub and the Department for International Trade (DIT), we want to encourage small businesses to “think global” and trade internationally.
- We want to continue to promote Berkshire internationally – as a culturally rich and beautiful place that is also a thriving hub for IT/digital businesses and for the life sciences. In this context we want to forge stronger links with similar “global places” (e.g. Boston, Zurich).

- We also want to highlight more explicitly the quality of the area’s countryside (as part of the area’s USP in relation to international investors and investment).
- We want to take steps to celebrate “the world coming to Berkshire”, welcoming workers and investors from across the world.

Priority 4: Vibrant places and a supportive infrastructure

Why this is a Priority:

- Berkshire lacks a dominant city (other than, arguably, London) and its towns – and in particular its town centres – need to function well. Some have seen real progress over the recent past (e.g. Bracknell) and some are developing ambitious plans (e.g. Slough), but across the piece, it will be important that the towns flourish, including with regard to their cultural offer.
- In parallel, Berkshire needs to continue to make better use of employment sites – whilst recognising the pressure that exists to divert employment land to housing uses. Throughout, there is a need to be flexible and responsive: “meanwhile uses” have a key role to play.
- Berkshire also needs to confront a range of infrastructure constraints and possibilities, recognising that energy/utilities is under considerable pressure and new investment is required.
- The transport network is congested. In part, this is an inevitable consequence of economic success. But the network also lacks resilience. It is overly dependent on key routes (such as the M4). Digital solutions need to be a key part of the response (including Smart M4, which is due to be completed in 2022).

- Finally, housing delivery is an overarching concern. Although this is creating pressures in relation to congestion, there is an urgent need to improve affordability and provide more (young) people with a home. There will be a need for mixed tenures (shared ownership, market rent, and opportunities to move between tenures).

What we propose to do in response:

- The agenda relating to Priority 4 is enormous. It extends well beyond the immediate remit of the BLIS and into the domain of spatial planning. However, there are steps that could be taken by wider partners and stakeholders.
- There is a need to celebrate and promote Berkshire's town centres as interesting and rewarding places, linking in part to Berkshire's cultural/leisure offer and recognising that they need to help attract and retain young people (particularly recent graduates). There is also a need to re-establish town centres as a place for enterprise. This will link with Priority 1 and Priority 2.
- With regard to transport, the imperative is to emphasise the ongoing importance of
 - modal shifts and the development of sustainable transport solutions
 - the use of big data in redefining transport issues.
- In relation to spatial development, it will be important to ensure that good use is made of sites close to railway stations and motorway junctions, and in strategic transport corridors, nurturing the development of connected ecosystems.
- More generally, it will be important to ensure that the full range of provision for land and premises required by

major sectors is available – from start-up (incubator, managed workspace) to grow on space – in suitable locations (both urban and rural)

- In relation to housing, steps need to be taken to accelerate delivery. In addition – given the costs linked to Berkshire – there may be a case for a Berkshire-specific “help to buy” scheme.

Priority 5: Making Berkshire an inclusive area where aspirations can be realised

Why this is a Priority:

- There are particular risks linked to inclusivity in Berkshire: the downside of outstanding international connectivity is that it has the scope to be a very unequal place.
- Within this context, there is a need to focus strongly on the challenges and potential of “the middle” in terms of labour market, sectoral composition, property provision, housing, etc. This may well define a particularly important role for the public sector – but in the context of a dynamic, commercially-driven economy.

What we propose to do in response:

- The agenda linked to Priority 5 is enormous and many of the key levers are national in scale. However, working with partners and stakeholders, we can make a difference locally.
- There is a need to refocus adult learning on employment flexibility, recognising the impact of technology need to plan for major career changes. Steps ought also to be taken to develop a dialogue around the concept and process of “progression”, both *within* and *across* firms and

sectors as lifetime working patterns become more complex.

- More specifically, there is a case for promoting the uptake of the Living Wage, building on the success of Heathrow Airport, and linking any public support to the adoption of the Living Wage.
- Linking to Priority 2, steps ought to be taken to ensure that “ecosystem leaders” reflect the wider population of Berkshire, particularly with regard to ethnicity, nationality, age and gender. In this context, the

importance to productivity and growth of culturally diverse workforces in vibrant ecosystems ought to be recognised and celebrated – a workforce for/from the world.

- There is a need to consider the scope for delivering social value through procurement decisions (for example to support local recruitment) and training), and recognise the role of the public sector more generally.

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 6

Chapter 6 is the main statement of strategy, based on the evidence and analysis set out in preceding chapters and anticipating the implementation arrangements that are described later. The detail of Chapter 6 however remains to be developed and it is in this domain that we will focus particularly over the summer months. Comments and feedback in relation to Chapter 6 are therefore especially important.

6-1: Chapter 6 begins with a Vision. Do you support it?

6-2: Chapter 6 sets out a huge agenda for action under five distinct Priorities. Within this, what do you consider to be the most important Priority(ies) in seeking to achieve the Vision?

6-3: Moving down a layer, what do you consider to be the most important potential actions under each Priority, taking each in turn:

- *Priority 1: Enhancing productivity within Berkshire’s enterprises*
- *Priority 2: Ecosystems which are maturing and evolving and extend beyond Berkshire*
- *Priority 3: International trade, connections, collaborations and investments*
- *Priority 4: Vibrant places and a supportive infrastructure*
- *Priority 5: Making Berkshire an inclusive area where aspirations can be realised*

6-4: Currently, actions under each Priority are set out in headline and indicative terms only. How might you/your organisation contribute to their development over the summer and their delivery thereafter?

6-5: Currently, many people who live in Berkshire are not really benefitting from the area’s economic vibrancy. What more should be done to help improve their life chances?



7: Delivery commitments and alliances

Chapter 7 will need to be developed once the detail of Chapter 6 is agreed.

However, it will be based on the following points of principle:

- Alliances will need to be forged and sustained to deliver the BLIS which extend beyond the boundaries of Berkshire: they will be driven by relevant functional footprints, and spatially, they may vary from one intervention to the next. These alliances will include regional arrangements where appropriate – e.g. Transport for the South East (TfSE), partnerships linked to Heathrow Airport, and Innovation South.
- National relationships will also be needed – and Berkshire will be a national trailblazer in relation to parts of its BLIS. For these, we would expect close relationships with relevant parts of central government (e.g. with DIT in relation to inward investment and Heathrow Airport).
- The unitary authorities will play a key role – particularly in relation to infrastructure. Implementation plans will be important here.
- Grant funding will need to feature, but in a minor and targeted way only (e.g. Shared Prosperity Fund). More generally, there will be a need to commit to potential funding mechanisms that are self-sustaining – including for infrastructure and other investments that have traditionally been funded through the public purse.
- There will be a mix of short- and long-term priorities and interventions. Amongst the former, there should be some that are “ready to go”, should relevant bidding opportunities emerge.

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 7

This chapter needs to be developed once delivery priorities are more clearly specified, but it will be crucial in terms of giving the BLIS traction – both locally and nationally.

7-1: How will you/your organisation contribute to the delivery of the BLIS?



8: Monitoring and evaluation

This chapter will be developed once the strategy is complete. It will set out some high level and indicative quantified targets, taking into account the overarching purposes set out in Chapter 2 – and the emphasis will be on measures of productivity and inclusivity.

It will provide relevant logic chains with a statement of possible methods and approaches. These ought to be informed by a discussion in terms of the level of resource that we (and our partners) are willing and able to commit to M&E.

In addition, it may be appropriate to discuss and agree M&E plans with other areas (e.g. in relation to sectoral approaches) and central government (in relation to elements where Berkshire is – in some sense – a national leader).

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 8

This chapter will be developed once the rest of the BLIS is essentially in place, but comments in response to three questions would be helpful:

8-1: Is there any evidence linked to monitoring and evaluation – and an overall assessment of “what works” – that you might find especially useful?

8-2: What could you/your organisation contribute to generating that evidence?

8-3: How much resource do you think should be devoted to M&E – and in what ways could your organisation contribute?



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Wokingham Borough Council Response to the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Framework Document for Consultation March 2019

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 2

2-1: Is the overarching purpose of the BLIS clear?

Wokingham Borough Council welcomes the publication of the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS) Framework Document and the renewed emphasis on improving productivity and achieving an economy that works for everyone.

The development of the BLIS will help develop a longer-term approach to the economy helping to provide businesses with more certainty and supporting them to thrive.

The document identifies three imperatives in relation to the Berkshire economy. Wokingham Borough Council agrees that these imperatives are key in terms of the impact they have on the economy. In particular, we acknowledge the need for organic growth. Where we encourage our own businesses to set up and grow rather than relying on businesses relocating into the area the importance of smart growth and the focus on improving the quality of jobs to drive up productivity.

It is welcomed that the Framework Document recognises the negative impact of a polarised workforce (in terms of earnings). As well as the impact that the high cost of housing and of lack of in work progression has on economic inclusion. Mechanisms to support the supply of key workers are needed. Including, lobbying to expand the London weighting zone beyond Bracknell - Forest to attract more key workers such as police officers to Wokingham Borough.

The third imperative is described as controversial but one that has resonance in Wokingham Borough. Where the population has a level of transience because of international flows and investment out of Berkshire. This raises questions about the loss of talent and reinvestment to Berkshire as a place of quality worth remaining in and the possible need for strengthen place making in response.

Although, it is implicit in this chapter that the overarching purpose of the BLIS is to provide a joint plan to help guide economic growth by capitalising on the areas strength and addressing the imperatives a clear statement of overarching purpose would be useful.

WBC would seek to include a reference to holistic quality growth, planned across the spectrum with appropriate infrastructure, including superfast broadband. More weight needs to be given to ensuring that TVB LEP supports WBC in placing the right housing in the right places with more high-quality, affordable homes

The council would also like to see more emphasis on inclusive growth in the Framework Document including an emphasis on tackling climate change and developing the arts and culture offer in the borough.

2-2: Is this purpose addressed through the chapters that follow?

The purpose as set out in Chapter 2 is well addressed in the later chapters of the document. In particular, the evidence and analysis that underpin imperatives is well justified.

There is a good assessment of opportunities and risks in relation to the five 'Foundations of Productivity' set out by government, which aligns with the national industrial strategy process at a local level.

The Framework should build more on the big picture. Expanding on the higher-level infrastructure and vision for public transport. The quality of holistic place making embedded in practice and plan making. Need to emphasise joint working and the need to recognise local, Berkshire and sub- regional roles in the support of growth. i.e. MRT, Third Thames Crossing and the WRATH.

This document is described as an emerging response to the Governments requirements of a local industrial strategy. Wokingham Borough Council looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with TVB LEP and other partners in developing the next iteration of the BLIS and having the opportunity for further feedback on the final document.

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 4

Chapter 4 “boils down” a huge volume of evidence which we have gathered in earnest over the last year (and indeed before that). It seeks to probe the nature of the Berkshire economy, and to flush out both its strengths and weaknesses – and its distinctive characteristics. The strategy (presented in Chapter 6) really is founded on this assessment – so it is important.

4-1: Do the “Foundations of Productivity” help explain the nature of economic performance across Berkshire?

The Governments Industrial Strategy White Paper considers five Foundations of Productivity. These include ideas, business environment, people infrastructure and place. The foundations of productivity themes provide a good framework to effectively analyse the large amount of economic data collected. Recognisable key issues about economic productivity performance in Berkshire have been distilled and reinforced from the evidence. There is recognition and concern that Berkshire`s strong absolute performance is a result of economic endowment and accumulated past investment. That growth has slowed considerably so Berkshire is placed 34th amongst 38 LEP areas in England in terms of economic growth. It is noted that Berkshire`s economy needs to grow principally by increasing the output from jobs, not the overall number; in other words, the overarching objective is linked to productivity

Ideas

Wokingham Borough Council agrees that the University of Reading is a key institution in terms of generating ideas that have the potential to be commercialised. It is worth noting that the Thames Valley Science Park came about through a strong

partnership between the local planning authority, TVB LEP and the University of Reading. Suggesting that strong partnership working can help to encourage ideas but help make those ideas a reality.

Business environment

The Council agrees that there is a need for affordable flexible and managed workspace for very early stage businesses. This is a key element in encouraging businesses in Berkshire to grow and scale up along with access to finance and people with the right skills.

It is agreed that changes to the permitted development regime has resulted in the loss of employment floorspace to residential uses. This has reduced accessibility to land and premises, which in the past would have been suitable for evolving businesses.

People

Wokingham Borough Council welcomes the recognition that a trend exists where the work force is increasingly polarised between high and low paid employees. In part, this is because there are fewer mid ranging progression jobs. The council notes the suggestion that the high cost of businesses space is driving out the type of businesses that provide 'the middle' employment opportunities that supports in work progression.

WBC has been aware for some time that Berkshire is a challenging place to live for those in low paid employment - with house prices well above the UK average.

Infrastructure

The Council welcomes the recognition of congestion issues. Whilst the areas has benefited from major transport investments, further such investments are required to address issues and maintain the attractiveness of Berkshire to investors.

The council requests that the BLIS clearly recognises that addressing the challenge of congestion required coordinated decision making, with delivery alongside infrastructure solutions. The local authorities and partners must be granted the freedom from prescriptive Government planning rules to plan and deliver the necessary development of the right type, of the right quality and in the right places with the necessary infrastructure. Development in the wrong places should be capable of being resisted.

The council concurs that if the economic potential of Berkshire to be realised, there needs to be a good supply of affordable housing. There is a risk that the rate at which affordable housing is built may be hampered by a slowing of the economy and decreasing amount of developable land. The Council acknowledges that affordability issues cannot be simply addressed by building more and that other solutions need to be found. Building more new homes can actually worsen affordability issues as new homes have a market premium. Delivering more, less expensive than average homes, requires other ways of funding.

Affordable housing is essential to the economic wellbeing and prosperity of places. It is key to attracting and retaining a skills base that will encourage inward

investment. Those eligible for affordable housing include low income families and key workers, as well as lower income service sector workers such as baristas and shop workers, all of whom are essential for supporting the local economy. Housing in itself can be a powerful driver of local economic activity as it increases spending and employment in the surrounding economy.

The council agrees that the appetite for virtual and IT-enabled solutions is growing. This is supported an increasing amount of government funding available to support intelligent transport, for example the £4.75 million Adept fund awarded to Berkshire Earlier this year.

There is a need to recognise the joint costs of grant and bid work and the need to work collectively on applications.

The council would like to see more emphasis on climate change and environmental sustainability issues in the framework.

4-2: Are there other factors/issues that ought to be considered given the purposes of the BLIS?

The BLIS framework highlights that there are a number of higher education bodies in Berkshire (with University of Reading being the main one) that are aligned with the major themes from the white paper. The council suggests that there is a lack of excellent, graduate and postgraduate courses available in Berkshire in the key area of emerging technologies. Including computer science, data science, machine learning, artificial intelligence and robotics when compared with higher education providers in other parts of the country. Microsoft has is R&D facility based in Cambridge but operational functions based in Wokingham Borough. There is no mention of the impact of an aging population on the economy. In particular, this presents issues for public sector organisations.

The council would endorse encouraging strategic growth through collaboration in decision-making and plan making.

The council would like to see more emphasis on climate change and environmental sustainability issues in the framework.

A healthy natural environment is indispensable to current and future economic prosperity. Conserving the natural environment is the most efficient and effective way to deliver a huge range of benefits to society. In the past the debate about environmental policies still tends to be underpinned by a strong fear of the 'harm' that efforts to improve the natural environment can do to competitiveness and the economy. However recent research has shown that environmental degradation has the potential to undermine long-term prosperity (HM Treasury, 2007) and that for instance tackling climate change is actually a highly effective pro-growth strategy. The Focus of national policy on the environment is now on establishing an ecosystem services approach to development underpinned through Natural Capital accounting. The ecosystem approach puts people and the benefits they gain from the natural environment at the heart of decision making about land use and management practices. It underpins Government's policy, as set out in the 2011

Natural Environment White Paper The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (Stationery Office 2011). The ecosystem approach also places an emphasis upon understanding the value to society of benefits from ecosystem services the natural environment provides so that informed choices can be made. It also recognises the need to manage the environment as a dynamic ecological system, providing multiple benefits at any one locality. It is now widely accepted that healthy ecosystems and the services they provide have economic value. The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA 2011 & 2014) has further developed this conceptual framework, developed a range of methods for economic valuation and provided examples of how they can be applied. This topic is important as the Treasury Green Book (HM Treasury 2003) makes such valuation a requirement of public bodies.

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 5

Although short, Chapter 5 is important in moving from analysis towards strategy, and ensuring that the BLIS is future facing: it needs to anticipate major risks (upside and downside) for the economy of Berkshire as it looks ahead to 2030 and beyond.

5-1: Is the summary assessment a fair one? Does it capture the principal challenges that Berkshire is facing?

The council welcomes the recognition of the issues faced by town centres and in particular retail industries. Digital technologies have caused a modal shift in the way people shop. A creative response is required to keep our town centres vibrant. Wokingham Town centre has undergone a significant regeneration but there is a general lack of reference to this in the Framework Document.

The council also welcomes the acknowledgement that more work needs to be done to strengthen the Berkshire brands and raise the profile of the Berkshire with investors and businesses.

A stronger, targeted arts and culture offer could help to support both of the above issues as well as helping to retain young people, particularly recent graduates that are attracted to London.

Wokingham Borough Council is a partner with the Superfast Berkshire and the Smart Cities Project. Parts of Berkshire are poorly served by superfast broadband. Wokingham Borough Council seeks to support any initiatives that encourage the next stages of digital connectivity/infrastructure in the borough.

Wokingham Borough Council supports the need for more affordable housing and the need to reduce congestion. These are key priorities in the council's plan

The council also agrees that the employment land should be highlighted as an issue. We would suggest the future facing challenge is ensuring a range of floorspace is available that is in the right locations, is flexible to future business needs and supported by necessary infrastructure. Solutions to congestion issues will be important.

Reinforcing place through decisions and policy to manage to manage quality growth/congestion and infrastructure together. Ongoing work to jointly identify strategic schemes which address inter transport connectivity and congestion

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 6

Chapter 6 is the main statement of strategy, based on the evidence and analysis set out in preceding chapters and anticipating the implementation arrangements that are described later. The detail of Chapter 6 however remains to be developed and it is in this domain that we will focus particularly over the summer months. Comments and feedback in relation to Chapter 6 are therefore especially important.

6-1: Chapter 6 begins with a Vision. Do you support it?

Wokingham Borough Council supports the vision that 'Berkshire should grow with ambition and intent' becoming '*the best of both global and local*'. This is based on the intention to preserve the places (both urban and rural) that define Berkshire. Also, that the pace of economic growth is accelerated through increasing productivity by improving the value of jobs through creating smart, knowledge-intensive, inclusive and resilient employment. The council suggests that the vision is reviewed to emphasis the strength of the partnerships in Berkshire. Which reflects that we work, live and prosper together.

We would suggest that there is a reference to health and wellbeing amongst the priorities

6-2: Chapter 6 sets out a huge agenda for action under five distinct Priorities. Within this, what do you consider to be the most important Priority(ies) in seeking to achieve the Vision?

Wokingham Borough Council considers the following priorities to be most important in delivering the vision:

1. Priority 4: Vibrant places and a supportive infrastructure
2. Priority 5: Making Berkshire an inclusive area where aspirations can be realised

These priorities correspond with those set out in Wokingham Borough Council's Council Plan. It is in these areas that the council has strength in expertise and often a statutory requirement to deliver outcomes.

6-3: Moving down a layer, what do you consider to be the most important potential actions under each Priority, taking each in turn:

• Priority 1: Enhancing productivity within Berkshire's enterprises

1. Making sure that Berkshire business have best possible access to digital infrastructure
2. Build on the scale-up programme to encourage small businesses to grow to medium sized and beyond

3. Develop a more flexible approach to skills provision which responds to the increasing diversity of working practices

• **Priority 2: Ecosystems which are maturing and evolving and extend beyond Berkshire**

1. Develop flexible market-led workforce plans driven by the needs of major sectors using apprenticeships and other routes to make this happen and potentially develop an Institute of Technology
2. Develop the role of the University of Reading as an anchor institution building on the success of the Thames Valley Science Park

• **Priority 3: International trade, connections, collaborations and investments**

1. Continuing to promote Berkshire internationally and build stronger links similar places (Boston, Zurich)
2. Encourage smaller businesses to think globally and trade internationally
3. Involve the corporates in helping to brand Berkshire and contribute fully to economic life in Berkshire

• **Priority 4: Vibrant places and a supportive infrastructure**

1. Reducing congestion particularly through implementing smart technology
2. Improving housing affordability and providing more young people with a home
3. Supporting local towns and villages to flourish by re-establishing town centres as a place of enterprise with their cultural offer

• **Priority 5: Making Berkshire an inclusive area where aspirations can be realised**

1. Dialogue around the concept and process of progression and lifetime working patterns particularly for the most vulnerable in our society

6-4: Currently, actions under each Priority are set out in headline and indicative terms only. How might you/your organisation contribute to their development over the summer and their delivery thereafter?

The importance of the local authorities in supporting economic growth and regeneration cannot be underestimated.

Wokingham Borough Council are keen to be involved in developing the priorities over the summer. Council officers can be made available to attend workshops or focus groups. We can also speak to our partners and local businesses to help shape priorities.

In terms of delivery WBC are key partners with TVB LEP and the other Berkshire Authorities. Already engaged at a number of levels with TVB LEP and other partners. We currently work closely through our economic development, transport, planning, adult education, housing, energy and education departments to help deliver the

priorities in Berkshire Strategic Economic Plan and would expect that relationship to continue with the BLIS also

The council is keen to see more special planning to bring a greater sense of realism to this process and bidding jointly across Berkshire for major infrastructure schemes.

The council will be able to provide data, help bid for additional funds but where possible will seek to align strategies with the BLIS.

6-5: Currently, many people who live in Berkshire are not really benefitting from the area's economic vibrancy. What more should be done to help improve their life chances?

There are a number of reasons why many people are not benefiting from economic prosperity in Berkshire.

This might range from poor health, disability, mental health issues, drug or alcohol dependency, acting as a carer for relatives and so on. Resulting in unemployment or underemployment. Many of the young people who are unemployed are care leavers and have suffered a level of trauma in their lives. Poverty can become ingrained and passed on from generation to generation.

Issues such as poor academic performance or lack of work experience are relatively easily to correct. In a strong Berkshire economy where jobs are currently plentiful, unemployment or underemployment is usually a result of a combination of debilitating factors.

There are no easy solutions for those who are furthest away from the work place to secure sustainable employment and improve their life chances. It would help considerably if interventions happened at an earlier stage before patterns of failure become ingrained.

People's basic needs must be met before they are able start looking for employment. Starting with an affordable home, in the right place and of the right quality.

Certainly, better education and training, a stronger focus on health and wellbeing as well as community development would be helpful.

The Elevate employment and skills programme was successful in reaching out to a number of NEET young people. But in many cases a more long term and intensive approach was required for a successful outcome.

There are a large number of different agencies supporting unemployed people into employment. This fragmented market is not joined up and results in duplication and gaps in provision.

WBC have set up Optalis Supported Employment Service, which provides the intensive one to one support required by out most vulnerable job seekers but is also works closely with local employers.

WBC consider that Apprenticeship programmes should be supported as they provide alternative routes into employment. The council will continue to negotiate employment skills plans as part of the planning process, which also help unemployed young people get work experience and training.

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 7

This chapter needs to be developed once delivery priorities are more clearly specified, but it will be crucial in terms of giving the BLIS traction – both locally and nationally.

7-1: How will you/your organisation contribute to the delivery of the BLIS?

Wokingham Borough council will support the development of the next iteration of the BLIS over the summer. Once the action plan had been prepared and there is a better idea of what is required for delivery then the council will be able to give a more definitive response on how it can help deliver the BLIS. This will be within the bounds of WBC's expertise, finances and statutory obligations.

WBC will align the BLIS with our policies particularly the council's Corporate Plan, Planning policies, the Economic Development Strategy, the Housing and Homelessness Strategy, the Arts and Culture Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Managing congestion and controlled growth are existing priorities in our special strategies and these will continue. More member engagement work is encouraged to get a real understanding of cross cutting objectives.

Consultation Questions in relation to Chapter 8

This chapter will be developed once the rest of the BLIS is essentially in place, but comments in response to three questions would be helpful:

8-1: Is there any evidence linked to monitoring and evaluation – and an overall assessment of “what works” – that you might find especially useful?

The formation of the productivity group has been particularly insightful. Providing the much-needed voice of business in the process of developing the Framework Document. It would be beneficial to ensure that this group continues beyond the development of the BLIS.

8-2: What could you/your organisation contribute to generating that evidence?

The Berkshire unitary authorities will actively share evidence studies. To help inform future local plans, Bracknell, West Berks and Wokingham councils have commissioned an employment land needs study which incorporates a markets appraisal, sector space mapping and a jobs forecast. The study will be completed over the summer and will be available to inform the BLIS going forwards.

8-3: How much resource do you think should be devoted to M&E – and in what ways could your organisation contribute?

Wokingham Borough Council is prepared share as much non confidential, readily available information as is possible with the process.