

## Wokingham Borough Council

### Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Development Plan Decision Statement

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 Following an independent examination, Wokingham Borough Council now confirms that the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Development Plan will proceed to a Neighbourhood Planning referendum.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 On 1 August 2014, Wokingham Borough Council designated the area of Arborfield & Newland Parish and Barkham Parish for the purpose of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with Part Two of the Town and Country Planning (England), Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
- 2.2 Following the submission of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Development Plan to the Council, the plan was publicised and representations were invited for a 6 week period in accordance with the regulations. The publicity period ended on Monday 19 August 2019.
- 2.3 Wokingham Borough Council appointed an independent examiner, Ms Liz Beth, in September 2019 to review whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and to make recommendations regarding whether the plan should proceed to referendum.
- 2.4 The Examiner's Report concludes that, subject to making the modifications recommended therein, the Plan meets the basic conditions set out in the legislation and should proceed to a Neighbourhood Planning referendum. It concludes that the boundary for the purposes of the referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Area for the Plan.
- 2.5 The Executive of Wokingham Borough Council agreed on 28 November 2019 that the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Development Plan should proceed through referendum to take place on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020.
- 2.6 Having considered each of the recommendations made by the Examiner in their Report, and the reasons for them, the Council has decided to make the modifications to the draft plan set out in Table 1 below, to ensure that the draft plan meets the basic conditions set out in legislation.
- 2.7 In addition to the modifications recommended by the Examiner, the Local Planning Authority is also authorised to correct minor errors that may have been missed so far [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Schedule 4B section 12(6)]. Minor typographical corrections are set out in Table 2.

#### 3. Decision and Reasons

- 3.1 The Council has made the modifications, proposed by the examiner, to secure that the draft plan meets the basic conditions, for the reasons given. These are set out in Table 1 below.

**Bold, and underline** has been used to show added text and ~~striethrough~~ to show removed text.

**Table 1 – Examiner’s recommended modifications to the plan**

No.	Examiner Recommendation	Reason	Action Taken
1	<p>That Policy IRS1 be amended as follows:</p> <p><i>'In order to protect the separation of settlements, development outside development boundaries will generally not be acceptable. Development proposals outside of the development boundaries limits designated in the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 will be required to comply with Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and:</i></p> <p><i>a) Preserve the character and appearance of the countryside; and</i></p> <p><i>b) Not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements.'</i></p> <p>That a map detailing the development limits set in the MDD2014 be included in the text of the ABNP in relation to policy IRS1. That references to 'development boundaries' in the plan text be altered to 'development limits'.</p>	<p>Core Strategy Policy CP11 has exceptions to the general presumption against development, and as currently worded Policy IRS1 would indicate this strategic policy is over-ridden contrary to the Basic Conditions. Revisions necessary so that IRS1 does not restrict sustainable development and is in general conformity with strategic development plan policy.</p> <p>For greater clarity for users of the plan and for consistency with wording used in the MDD.</p>	<p>Changes made to Policy IRS1 as suggested</p> <p>Map included at paragraph 4.5 of the ABNP with the added text of <b>"The development limits are defined by policy CCo2 of the MDD. The development limits are show in Figure 2 below:"</b></p> <p>All references to 'development boundaries' altered to 'development limits'</p>
2	<p>That Policy IRS2 be amended as follows:</p> <p><i>"1. Development proposals must recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements, with regard to:</i></p> <p><i>a) Scale and form of the development;</i></p> <p><i>b) Density of the development;</i></p> <p><i>c) Materials used in the development to reflect local character;</i></p>	<p>The process for selecting the protected views is not adequate and particularly the selection criteria of 'emphasising the importance of maintaining a settlement separation' is not relevant for selecting</p>	<p>Changes made to Policy IRS2 as suggested</p>

	<p>d) <i>Tree and hedgerow planting that reinforces and reflects local biodiversity in the parishes and</i>  e) <i>The distinctive character of the varied landscapes of the area and outstanding views.</i>  f) <del>Landscape and Important Views identified (refer Annex V)</del></p> <p>2. <i>Applications should demonstrate how the design of new development complies with the guidance set out in the most recently adopted Village Design Statements for Arborfield and Barkham (Annexes I and II) or any document adopted by the LPA that updates them. (refer Annexes I and II)."</i></p> <p>Supporting text in the document could usefully be amended to include a definition of an 'outstanding view' on the following lines: "presenting an exceptional panorama of the landscape and including middle and distant features".</p>	<p>important views. The Policy cannot refer to Annex V in order to meet the Basic Conditions</p>	<p>Paragraph 4.16 amended to state: "<b>For the purposes of this policy, outstanding views are those considered as presenting an exceptional panorama of the landscape and including middle and distant features.</b>" 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.</p>
3	<p>That Policy IRS3 be amended as follows:</p> <p><i>"1. Development proposals should conserve and enhance the natural environment and green spaces of the area, specifically:</i>  a) <i>Ensure that there is minimum no loss of biodiversity and normally where possible to provide a net gain. Where there is likely to be a loss of biodiversity, development will only</i></p>	<p>To provide additional clarity that the policy does not seek to designate Local Green Space (as defined by NPPF paras 99-100); in order that the policy does not preclude development that would</p>	<p>Changes made to Policy IRS3 as suggested. NB <i>Hazelbrouck has been changed to Hazebrouck to correct this typo.</i></p>

	<p><b>acceptable if mitigation measures can <del>should</del> be put in place to ensure there is no net loss of biodiversity, through the creation of like-for-like habitats.</b></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>c) Conserve the environment for nocturnal species, through the avoidance of lighting and mitigating the impact of external lighting <b>likely to increase night time human presence.</b></i></p> <p><i>d) Contain measures that will help to mitigate the impacts of, and <b>promote</b> adaption to, climate change.</i></p> <p><b>2. Development on <del>designated</del> Public Open Spaces (see Map L) should enhance the use of the site for public open space or be consistent with paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework if loss of the space is proposed. <del>will not be permitted.</del> The following sites are designated as Public Open Space and shown on Map L: currently available for recreational purposes include:</b></p> <p><i>a) Arborfield Park</i></p> <p><i>b) Junipers Field</i></p> <p><b>c) All-SANGS Rooks Nest Wood</b></p> <p><b>d) Hazelbrouck Meadows</b></p> <p><b>e) Pound Copse</b></p> <p><i>f) The cricket and rugby pitches within the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location</i></p> <p><b>3. Locally valued natural assets have been identified within the plan as follows (see Map K) and development proposals should conserve and where possible enhance them:</b></p> <p><i>a) The Coombes woodland and adjacent areas</i></p> <p><i>b) The Holt woodland</i></p> <p><i>c) Rhododendron avenue along Bearwood Road"</i></p>	<p>enhance the spaces contrary to national policy; to reflect the strengthened requirement in the NPPF for net gain in biodiversity.</p>	
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	Map L to be amended to show Public Open Space and be included within the text of the plan	For additional clarity	Map included at paragraph 4.22 of the ABNP with the additional subheading and text:  <b>Public open space</b>  <b>The areas of Public Open Space referred to in policy IRS3 are shown on Map L which is reproduced below:</b>
4	That the first sentence of point 2 of Policy IRS4 be amended as follows:  <i>"2. Locally valued heritage assets have been identified in the plan as follows (see Map K) and development proposals should protect and enhance them where possible: a) 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"</i>	So that the policy states what the implications of the designation are, for clarity and accuracy; additional detail needed regarding designation 2a) for clarity; the removal of vague and potentially confusing detail from policy wording.	Changes made to Policy IRS4 as suggested
5	That point 2 of Policy AD1 is amended as follows:  <i>"2. Applicants should <del>tions that can</del> demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community particularly with regard to design issues and 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; and c) Incorporate a Statement of Community Consultation with</i>	To avoid conflict with the NPPF.	Changes made to Policy AD1 as suggested

	<b>into any an application where appropriate.”</b>		
6	<p>That Policy AD2 be amended as follows:</p> <p><i>“2. In all new housing developments providing affordable housing, the purchase of occupancy of all affordable homes for sale is encouraged to be will be prioritised for households with a local connection with the Parishes of Arborfield and Barkham and for key workers locally in the first instance, with the local connection proposed to be within the neighbourhood area firstly and then within the borough of Wokingham.</i></p> <p>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.”</p>	In order to have regard to government policy and guidance and comply with the Basic Conditions.	Changes made to Policy AD2 as suggested
7	That Policy AD3 is deleted.	In order that the AMNP meets the Basic Conditions with regard to having due regard to national policy on positive planning, policy clarity, non-repetition of policy and an adequate evidence base. Additionally Policy AD3 does not meet the Basic Condition requirement that it is in general conformity with the development plan.	Policy AD3 removed accordingly and all supporting text.
8	That Criteria d) of Policy AD4 is deleted and Policy AD4 to be renumbered as required.	Criteria d) is not appropriately evidence and is too prescriptive and therefore contrary to the Basic Conditions.	Changes made to Policy AD4 as suggested and supporting text altered as follows:  Given the increasing proportion of older people, as identified in the Housing Needs Analysis, <b>it would</b>

			<p><b>be desirable if the needs of elderly and disabled people were considered in house design there is a clear need to consider the requirement for lifetime homes.</b> 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). <del>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.</del></p>
9	<p>That first sentence of criteria a) of Policy AD5 be amended as follows:</p> <p><i>"a) <del>All elements</del> <b>The principles of flood risk management, including SuDS are fully addressed at the outline planning stage and, ideally, in pre-application discussions.</b>"</i></p>	Design and construction details too prescriptive and contrary to Basic Conditions.	Changes made to Policy AD5 as suggested
10	<p>That criteria 2 of Policy GA1 be amended as follows:</p> <p><i>"2. <b>Proposals should recognise and respond as appropriate to the fact that there are many narrow country lanes with no footway in the neighbourhood area, already under pressure from current traffic levels.</b>"</i></p>	To improve clarity of the policy	Changes made to Policy GA1 as suggested
11	<p>That criteria 2 of Policy GA3 be deleted:</p> <p><del>2. Proposals for new roads which are expected accommodate</del></p>	To ensure policy does not cover non-land use issues.	Changes made to Policy GA3 as suggested

	bus routes should be tracked for larger vehicles, acknowledging the likelihood of parked vehicles		
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**Table 2 – Examiner’s recommended changes to supporting documentation**

No.	Examiner Recommendation	Reason	Action Taken
1	That an updated, final version of the Consultation Statement be produced.	To correct the recording oversight that omitted an individual’s Reg 14 response.	Summary of individual’s response added to Appendix 5 of Consultation Statement
2	Bullet 2 on page 6 of Annex V should be corrected.	For clarity given it currently incorrectly implies that Green Belt status indicates high landscape quality, and this should be corrected.	Correction made

**Table 3 – Minor modifications**

Change proposed	Paragraph / section	Reason for change
Addition of policy AD <sub>4</sub> to contents list	Contents page	To correct an omission
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...	Policy TC <sub>2</sub>	To correct syntax
Best and <del>M</del> most <del>V</del> ersatile Agricultural Land’	Policy TC <sub>3</sub>	Incorrect capitalisation
Nine <u>Mile</u> Ride	Para 1.8	To correct an omission
In the longer term should it is an aspiration <u>The aim is</u> for these to receive formal protection within Wokingham’s Local Plan.	Para 4.22	For improved clarity

- 3.2 The Council has considered whether to extend the area in which the referendum is to take place. Like the examiner, the Council has decided that there is no reason to extend the Neighbourhood Plan area for the purpose of holding the referendum.
- 3.3 The examiner has concluded that with the modifications made the Plan meets the basic conditions and other relevant legal requirements. The Council concurs with this view.
- 3.4 Therefore, to meet the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 a referendum which poses the question 'Do you want Wokingham Borough Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Arborfield & Newland and Barkham parishes to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?' will be held in the parishes of Arborfield & Newland and Barkham.
- 3.5 The date on which the referendum will take place is agreed as 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

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