

Draft Local Plan Update Wokingham Borough Council

Version for Executive

FOREWORD

John Halsall, Leader of Wokingham Borough Council



Protecting our borough's environment and our residents' quality of life are the cornerstones of this draft Local Plan.

Many of our towns and villages have lived under the threat of mass development for some years now and this plan, should it be supported and approved, will remove that fear for the vast majority of the borough.

Housing developers have put forward more than 300 locations they would like to build on, but we are actually proposing very few of those because the majority of additional housing would be in a new sustainably developed Grazeley Garden Town. There would still need to be some smaller scale growth in towns and villages where agreed locally, but most of the potential sites put forward as part of the Local Plan process would be rejected.

This draft Local Plan also include:

- A lower housing target for the borough than would have been enforced by the Government's standard methodology.
- No house building on Green Belt.
- An enhanced commitment to resist random development outside of the few areas allocated for new communities.
- Protection of local green space
- A priority on genuinely affordable, key worker, self build and rural exception homes.

I am proud to be proposing a draft plan that is in line with our principles of enhancing our environment, providing the right homes in the right places and maintaining our high quality of life.

Wayne Smith, Executive member for Planning and Enforcement

The potential for a new garden town, designed and built for environmentally-aware 21st Century lifestyles is tremendously exciting.

If approved and funded as we are proposing, Grazeley Garden Town would provide environmentally-designed homes in a carbon neutral new community with great sustainable transport links and vast green spaces for its residents to enjoy.

Subject to a successful £252M funding bid, Grazeley Garden Town would have unprecedented upfront investment in infrastructure meaning the schools, transport systems, health hub and community and sporting facilities could be built ahead of the housing.

Grazeley Garden Town would also give us the opportunity to ensure homes that are genuinely affordable are built.

This would be a long-term project that could provide a large number of the additional housing that is needed across the borough in the years up to 2036 and potentially to the mid-2050s, the borough council would be better able to resist potential housing sites that have been put forward by developers elsewhere.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Wokingham Borough Council is preparing new planning policies to guide development in the borough to 2036. The plan containing our new policies will be called the Local Plan Update.

1.2 This Draft Plan consultation is a key stage in the preparation of the Local Plan Update. It follows on from the previous Issues and Options consultation (2016) and the Homes for the Future consultation (2018) where we asked for views on how development should be managed and invited comments on the suitability of land promoted by developers.

1.3 The Draft Plan is still an initial stage of process and therefore it's important that you let us know your thoughts on how we intend to manage development. Following this consultation we will carefully consider everyone's comments and prepare a further version of the Plan.

1.4 Further information on what a local plan is, how it is used and how you can comment is provided below.

What is the Local Plan Update?

1.5 Local plans are key documents through which local authorities set out a vision and framework for how future development in the area will be managed. In doing so, it sets out how much development is required and if what type, where it should go, and where it should not go.

1.6 The Local Plan Update is the document that will contain our policies for how development across Wokingham Borough will be managed in the period to 2036, which is the end date of the plan.

1.7 Once adopted, the Local Plan Update will have 'development plan' status. This means that, legally, it will be the main consideration in deciding planning applications in the borough. Planning law requires decisions to be in line with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.8 Once finalised, the Local Plan Update will replace all our policies with the exception of those relating specifically to minerals and waste. This means that the Core Strategy (adopted 2010) and the Managing Development Delivery plan (adopted 2014) will all cease to be used once Local Plan Update is adopted. With the exception of minerals and waste planning, which will be undertaken jointly with neighbouring authorities, it will mean that all planning policies are contained within a single document, which will make our approach simpler.

1.9 The Draft Plan is a key step in producing the Local Plan Update. It sets out a set of draft vision, objectives and policies for comment. We will take into account everyone's views as we refine our proposals.

1.10 It is important that the Draft Plan is read as a whole. Whilst there might, for instance, be a policy dealing with a specific type of development or site, other policies in the plan may also be relevant, for instance around amenity or design.

Why is the Local Plan Update being prepared now?

1.11 Our current policies are designed to manage development to 2026. This may feel a long way off, but government planning policy requires us to look 15 years ahead. It is therefore important that we roll our policies forward.

1.12 This ensures the needs of residents and local businesses are properly addressed and planned for in a coordinated way, and those important areas and features of the borough's environment we wish to conserve are protected. This is the best way to help deliver development that is sustainable.

1.13 Updating our policies provides greater certainty as to where development will occur (with the accompanying infrastructure) and where it won't. Without a new plan, there is less control over where development comes forward. It is also much harder to invest in improvements to infrastructure such as roads and schools if development is driven by developers in an ad-hoc and dispersed pattern.

What is the relationship with other plans and strategies?

1.14 The Local Plan Update, when adopted, will be the main planning document for the borough alongside any Neighbourhood Development Plans.

1.15 There will be specific policies or subjects that require more detailed consideration. To address this, we will produce a number of supporting Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and other guidance. These may include planning briefs for specific sites, or topic based SPDs on matters such as sustainable design, affordable housing, or parking.

1.16 Where supporting SPDs already exist, we will be updating these to fit better with our new policies.

Evidence and technical reports

1.17 There are a significant number of background papers and pieces of research that have informed this Draft Plan and provide the justification for the proposed policy approach. The full justification for each policy or proposal is not included in the plan in order to keep the document as brief as possible, although some key elements may be referenced where relevant.

1.18 Our full evidence base is available on the council's website. This includes documents looking at different types of development needs (housing types, economic needs), different environmental constraints (e.g. flooding, Green Belt), and infrastructure needs.

1.19 The Draft Plan is also supported by a Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment. These assess the environmental, social and economic effects of the policies and proposals in the plan, and are legal requirements.

How do I let you know my views?

1.20 The consultation on the Draft Plan will end by 20 March 2020. We welcome everyone's views.

1.21 You can find the Draft Plan and all the supporting documents on the council's website at the below web address. Paper copies of the Draft Plan are also available to view at the council's offices at Shute End, Wokingham.

INSERT WEB ADDRESS

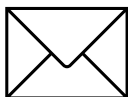
1.22 If you have access to the internet, you can send us your comments online without having to complete separate response forms – which will help us save paper and time. To do this please go to following web page

INSERT WEB LINK

1.23 If you don't have access to the internet, or you prefer to send a paper response, you can print out a response form(s) and send these to us, or simply write to us, at the below address.



LPU@wokingham.gov.uk



Growth and Delivery Team – Draft Local Plan Consultation,
Wokingham Borough Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham,
RG40 1BN.

2. SPATIAL PORTRAIT

Spatial portrait

2.1 Located in Western Berkshire, approximately 50 km west of London, Wokingham Borough covers an area of 17,892 hectares, divided into 17 parishes containing a number of settlements of varying size from towns to small villages and hamlets. Wokingham Borough adjoins a number of other local authorities with Wycombe District to the North; the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest Borough to the East; Hart District to the South; Basingstoke and Deane Borough to the South West; and West Berkshire District, Reading Borough and South Oxfordshire District to the West.

2.2 Wokingham Borough is semi-rural in nature with just 33% of the borough classified as urban and approximately 67% classed as rural in nature¹. The Metropolitan Green Belt covers approximately 14% of the Borough, primarily in the northern Parishes of Wargrave, Remenham and Ruscombe, along with small sections of the parish of Hurst.

Transport connections

2.3 Benefiting from a large number of desirable transport connections, Wokingham Borough is well connected at both a regional and national level. Train stations in the borough provide direct services to both London Waterloo and London Paddington via the Reading-Waterloo Line and the Great Western Main Line respectively. Twyford Station will also be a stop for Crossrail, with the Elizabeth Line further linking Wokingham Borough to central London and beyond. Gatwick Airport is also easily accessible via a direct train from Wokingham Station on the North Downs line, and Heathrow Airport is only a short distance away.

2.4 The M4 corridor, connecting London with Wales and South West England, runs the width of the Borough, the M3 lies to the south of the borough and can be reached via the A33, which itself connects Wokingham Borough to Basingstoke. The A4 runs through the borough connecting it to other centres, such as Reading, Newbury and Maidenhead. The A329M/A3290 also connects Wokingham with both Bracknell and Greater Reading.

2.5 As part of the existing developments strategy, the council has been actively investing in strategic infrastructure, including new roads. Infrastructure improvements across the borough will support development currently underway, or which is expected to be delivered over the longer term. The provision of new roads and transport links will add flexibility to the capacity of our transport network and improve our highways connectivity. Planned improvements to the transport network currently include:

- The Arborfield Cross Relief Road;
- Barkham Bridge Improvements
- Winnersh Relief Road Phase 2
- South Wokingham Distributor Road
- North Wokingham Distributor Road

2.6 Additionally the borough is traversed by a number of Public Rights of Way and both National and Local Cycle Routes furthering the opportunity for active travel, and providing wider health and wellbeing benefits.

¹ Rae, Alasdair (2017): A Land Cover Atlas of the United Kingdom (Document). Figshare. Journal contribution.

Environment and Ecology

2.7 The natural environment is a strategic asset and it is important those areas of greatest significance are protected and enhanced, so that their benefits are preserved for future generations. The borough contains 7 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, which have been identified as areas with the greatest opportunity for habitat creation and restoration.

2.8 Wokingham Borough has a range of landscapes, as outlined in the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), ranging from elevated chalk plateaus and open and settled clay farmlands, to coniferous plantations and heathland. Three notable watercourses flow through the borough with the River Thames defining the northern boundary and the River Blackwater the southern boundary. The Blackwater is a tributary of the River Loddon which flows through the borough to its confluence with the River Thames near Wargrave. During the medieval period much of the borough was part of the Windsor Forest, one of the great royal hunting grounds of England. The historically forested nature of the borough is reflected in the place names with many of the principle settlements names such as Woodley, Whistley Green and Riseley containing the 'leah' sound associated with woodland clearings in the Old English of the Anglo-Saxon period.

2.9 There are a wealth of wildlife interests including four nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI, Longmoor Bog SSSI, Heath Lake SSSI and the Lodge Wood & Sandford Mill SSSI. At a local level there are over 100 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) with a further 7 sites currently proposed for LWS status, 11 Local Nature Reserves and 5 Local Geological Sites. The borough is home to a large number of important species including European designated 'Notable and Protected' species such as Stag Beetles, European Otters, Noctule Bats and the Kingfisher.

Climate Change

2.10 Wokingham Borough Council declared a climate emergency on 18th July 2019, committing to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as through encouragement – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030. A corporate action plan is being prepared to set out recommendations to help achieve a carbon neutral borough.

Historic Environment

2.11 Wokingham Borough and its settlements have an expansive history dating back through the modern era into the ancient with settlements occupied for over a thousand years. The settlements of Barkham, Earley, Finchampstead, Hartley (Hartley Court Road), Remenham, Shinfield, Sonning, Swallowfield, Warfield, Wargrave and Whistley are all recorded in the Domesday Book.

2.12 There are currently 16 designated conservation areas spread across 12 of the borough's Parishes. These areas are of special historic or architectural interest where additional efforts are in place to preserve their unique characteristics.

2.13 The borough is peppered with listed buildings ranging in size and prominence, all of which have been given protection because of their special architectural or historic interest. Wokingham Borough also contains many nationally and locally designated registered parks and gardens.

Population

2.14 The 2011 census recorded a population of 154,380 people, with the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The population of the borough can be roughly split by fifths in terms of their location, with one fifth of the borough's population within Wokingham Town, the borough's administrative centre. A further fifth each in the towns of Woodley and Earley which adjoin the borough of Reading. The remaining two fifths of the population live in smaller settlements across the borough such as Twyford and Riseley.

2.15 Along with much of the United Kingdom, the borough has an ageing population, with the number of residents in an age cohort of 65+ predicted to increase. Alongside this increase, the number of working aged adults is set to fall. Although these changes will cause the average age of residents to rise, the average age will still be in the 40-44 years age cohort. A large decrease in population occurs in the 15-24 age groups, most likely due to 61% of young adults leaving the borough to study at universities and colleges².

Economy

2.16 There are approximately 87,900 people in employment within Wokingham Borough, including 1,600 business owners. The remaining 86,300 employees is broadly split with two thirds in full time employment (58,600) and a third in part time employment (27,700).

2.17 The employment rate in the borough is well above the UK average, with a lower unemployment rate of 2.5% compared with the rest of the South East (3.1%) and Great Britain (4.1%)³. Employment in Wokingham Borough is largely based around the service sector, located in the centre of the Thames Valley economy, dominated by the IT, communications and pharmaceutical sectors. Many major international companies, such as Microsoft, Oracle, Pepsico and Johnson & Johnson, are located within the borough. The various town, district, and local centres within the borough also play an important role providing both employment and acting as focal points for their local communities. In addition, a wide variety of micro, small and medium sized businesses form an important part of a diverse local economy.

2.18 Wokingham Borough's residents are highly skilled compared to other areas, with 53.7% holding a NVQ Level 4 or above⁴. The highly educated nature of the borough's workforce coupled with its exceptional digital and locational connectivity helps to attract and retain high profile companies working in a variety of sectors.

Housing

2.19 The 2011 census recorded Wokingham Borough as having 62,474 dwellings, with the predominant housing type detached or semi-detached. Since the 2011 census, the total number of dwellings is predicted to have risen to 67,1805 with the majority of this housing being delivered within the four strategic development locations (SDLs) located at North Wokingham, South Wokingham, South of the M4 and on the

² Department for Education - Local authority table LA13: Student destinations after 16 to 18 study by level of study (state-funded mainstream schools and colleges)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-ks4-and-16-to-18-ks5-students-2018>

³ Labour Supply Employment and unemployment (Jul 2018-Jun 2019) Source: ONS annual population survey
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157290/report.aspx?town=wokingham#tabempunemp>

⁴ Qualifications (Jan 2018-Dec 2018) Source: ONS annual population survey
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157290/report.aspx?town=wokingham#tabquals>

⁵ ONS Live tables on dwelling stock (14 November 2019) www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants

site of the former Arborfield Garrison. The New Homes Survey has demonstrated how over 80% of new residents are satisfied with their new homes in the borough.

2.20 The SDLs are key major development locations where, through focusing development, the council has been able to deliver new housing developments alongside the necessary infrastructure including new schools, community facilities and transport links, helping to reduce the impact of unplanned development on residents.

2.21 According to the Land Registry⁶, the average price of a home in the borough is £416,612, an annual increase of £19,934 or 4.9%. Average prices in our area remains substantially higher than the England average of £234,853. As a result, the affordability of housing remains an important issue, particularly for younger residents.

⁶ Reported figures in section 3 are from the Land Registry for January 2019 (latest available data).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/uk-house-price-index-data-downloads-june-2019>

3. OUR VISION & OBJECTIVES

3.1 The vision is the starting point for the Local Plan Update, in that it sets out the broad philosophy of what we are trying to achieve. To aid delivery of the vision, ten strategic objectives are suggested to help guide and shape the plan. The vision and objectives will also be used to influence a range of other strategies to ensure our efforts are effective.

3.2 Whilst this Draft Plan looks towards 2036, much of the vision and many of the objectives have a much longer-term view, for example responding to the challenge of climate change.

3.3 In writing the vision, we have considered the responses to earlier consultations on the local plan, and other views gathered by the council. This includes the preference for development needs to be met through larger scale development, where infrastructure can be planned, funded and provided alongside new homes, preferably early, to help create quality places from the outset and address traffic and congestion issues.

VISION

- A borough that focuses on the needs of our communities.
- A borough that will be sustainable for generations to come.
- A borough where people choose to live, learn and work because both the places we build and the places we protect are valued and enriching.

A vision for meeting the needs of our communities

3.4 We want Wokingham Borough to be a place where people of all ages feel they belong to inclusive and thriving communities.

3.5 The needs of our communities will be at the heart of the places that are built. This means that new homes will respond to the diverse needs of residents, including the local demographic need, as well as meeting our overall requirement for housing. Providing affordable housing and specialist homes which allow people to live independently will be at the heart of what we do, with housing also offered for people who require support. Meeting the needs of our communities also means taking account of the evolving needs of employers both in terms of providing an environment in which businesses can evolve with changing needs and workforce expectations, and in enabling people to work from home.

3.6 We want residents to feel connected with their community, with people of all ages and all abilities feeling safe and having a sense of belonging and enjoyment. The revitalisation of Wokingham town centre initiative is the first of a number of such projects across the borough that will ensure that town and local centres continue to act as social, cultural and economic hubs. We will continue to create similar opportunities within our planned strategic developments.

3.7 Our vision is not to simply build new homes and offices, it is to create communities where every consideration has been given to both existing residents in an area and those people that will live there in the future. Open green spaces should be easily accessible and walking and cycling should be the mode of choice for short journeys, allowing people to lead healthier lives. Whilst development places new demands on

infrastructure, it also brings the opportunities for investment. The Community Infrastructure Levy will be used in a targeted way to maximise the benefits as well as to manage growth pressures.

3.8 We want to give residents living in the borough the opportunity to live the safest, most secure, healthiest and happiest life possible.

A vision for sustainability

3.9 Climate change is challenging the way we do things. Every action we take must take us a step closer to being carbon neutral as a society, reduce the unnecessary use of resources, and help us to lead healthier lives.

3.10 We act to combat the effects of climate change. Key to that will be locating most of the new development in locations that reduce car dependency and provide opportunities to make walking, cycling and public transport a viable, attractive and easy option. We will also embrace high quality digital connectivity to limit the need to travel.

3.11 All new development should be designed and constructed to achieve sustainable building, to secure lower carbon emissions levels and reduce other environmental impacts. We will welcome innovation aimed at improving sustainability both for the construction and operation of the development. Renewable energy generation and adaptation of new homes will also be supported.

3.12 Measures will also be taken to adapt to the effects of climate change, including minimising the risk of flooding, and reducing the demand for water, as well as supporting the adaptation of buildings so they remain comfortable in extremes of heat and cold.

3.13 The move away from petrol and diesel cars towards cleaner means of transport, such as electric cars, will help achieve improvements in our air quality and reduce carbon emissions. Embracing and planning for smart and innovative technologies will make it easier to adopt new opportunities as they arise. Where the direct provision of infrastructure is not possible now, future provision will be enabled.

3.14 Our vision is that the places of our borough should enrich lives. We want to protect our valued, green environment and waterways, and expand and improve them by integrating soft landscaping and habitat creation into the design of developments. This will support biodiversity and nature, bring wildlife into our built environment and spaces, helping to mitigate some of the impacts of climate change and the impacts of new building. Conserving the countryside, in particular valued landscape and habitats, plays a key role in maintaining biodiversity and providing places where people of all ages can visit and enjoy, as part of healthier and active lifestyles.

3.15 We want the borough to feel like a healthier place, because it will be a healthier place.

A vision for the right kind of growth

3.16 We want our towns and villages to be rewarding places to live, learn, work or visit.

3.17 The places we build should respect and add to our heritage and local character, whilst allowing for innovation, creating a welcoming environment which everyone finds enjoyable and safe.

3.18 By promoting healthier lifestyles and reducing the dominance of private cars including traffic and congestion, we will support a sustainable pattern of development which maximises opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport.

3.19 Our vision is that most of the development will be directed to places where people of all ages are able, or will be able, to access a wide range of local services and facilities. The use of appropriate higher development densities will help secure the ongoing viability of services and facilities. Notwithstanding this aim, this needs to be balanced with the needs of smaller villages which have comparably less access to services and facilities. We want to balance these competing needs by identifying suitable opportunities for villages to grow, allowing both existing residents to stay where they grew up and new residents to support the community. Such opportunities are limited in scale and number and could include rural exception developments. Additional development beyond what we identify will not be supported unless there are exceptional circumstances.

3.20 We want our town centres to be the place to go for leisure and culture, because they offer everything; a place where people of all ages can shop, socialise and be entertained, providing experiences with which online retailing simply cannot compete with. This is an increasingly important aspects of creating thriving communities in today's world.

3.21 To sustain successful economic growth, it is not enough just to sit back. We have to nurture new and evolving businesses and provide an environment that allows businesses to adapt to changes in practice and technology. Our emphasis will be on sustainable economic development, of the right type and in the right place to meet employment needs both within settlements and in rural areas.

3.22 Our sense of place comes from the vibrancy and diversity of our towns and villages, and how they are interspersed with countryside, woodland and waterways. The places we plan for must take that sense of place as its starting point, providing bespoke quality responses for each place to achieve sustainable, quality designed development and public realm.

3.23 We want the borough to continue to be a place where people want to live, learn, work and achieve.

OBJECTIVES

1. Make the fullest contribution possible to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change and the transition to a low-carbon economy.
2. Reduce the need to travel and widen travel choice, by providing local opportunities to access learning and employment, services and facilities, through ensuring that options for walking, cycling and public transport are attractive, accessible for all, convenient and safe, and by enabling digital connectivity.
3. Improve strategic transport connectivity by walking, cycling, public transport and road, both between places within and outside of the borough.
4. Maintain and strengthen the sense of place by securing quality designed development through protecting and enhancing the distinctive historic environment, landscape character, townscape character and biodiversity value, assisting vibrancy, and by keeping settlements separate.
5. Champion thriving town and local centres to provide the focus of their communities both in social and economic activity, ensuring they can adapt to the challenges they face.
6. Enable conditions to allow the economy to creatively grow by being adaptable to structural and technological change, ensuring the economic benefits are felt by all.

7. Improve health and wellbeing by enabling independence, encouraging healthy lifestyles, facilitating social interaction and creating inclusive and safe communities.
8. Contribute our fair share towards meeting the need for more housing, ensuring that a range of suitable housing options are available across both towns and villages which cater for and adapt to a variety of needs including affordable housing and the growing ageing and vulnerable groups in the population.
9. Promote quality and innovation in the design of buildings and public spaces, ensuring they are attractive, accessible, welcoming and meet needs of all groups in the community.
10. Facilitate timely provision of new and improved infrastructure by working with providers to achieve focused investment and by securing appropriate benefits from new development.

4. SPATIAL STRATEGY

4.1 Government planning policy includes a number of aspects which act to influence the spatial strategy such as the protection of the Green Belt, directing development away from areas that flood and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. However, this needs to be balanced against the protection of local character and identity of our built up areas, and it is acknowledged that the supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development. Development can also only be planned where land is made available by the landowner.

4.2 Following earlier consultation on the Local Plan Update, residents expressed several clear preferences for how development should best be managed. These include:

- Preference for development needs to be met through large scale developments, where infrastructure can be planned, funded and provided alongside.
- Preference for large developments to be located where there is good accessibility to transport links, they are adjacent to existing settlements and ensures the delivery of new infrastructure.
- Recognition that a range of approaches are required to meet development needs, including size of site and location across the borough.
- Preference for infrastructure to be provided early, and where possible ahead of development, to limit limits.
- Acknowledgement of the need to understand changes in the employment and retail markets, and allowing areas to adapt positively to future requirements.
- The need to protect the identity of places, and the role of the countryside and Green Belt in achieving this.

4.3 The spatial strategy for the Local Plan Update responds to these clear preferences, and in doing so defines what sustainable development means in the context of Wokingham Borough.

Policy SS1: Spatial Strategy

New growth will be balanced by ensuring that Wokingham Borough's identified development needs can be met with adequate provision of infrastructure, in a manner that enables improvements to quality of life, reduces the need to travel, adapts to and mitigates against the impacts of climate change to achieve a 'carbon neutral' future, and maintains and strengthens the sense of place, including the role and separate identity of settlements.

The following actions will help to achieve this:

- a) Manage development so that it is consistent with the character, accessibility and provision of infrastructure and services within that settlement.
- b) Ensure sufficient supporting infrastructure is delivered to facilitate the growth in new homes and jobs.
- c) Deliver a minimum of 13,901 dwellings over the plan period 2018-2036, of which 35% of development proposals providing 5 or more dwellings will be affordable housing.
- d) Protect existing employment locations, supporting their evolution and adaptation to changes in technology and market demands.
- e) Support town centres and high streets to evolve and adapt as social and economic hubs.

- f) Promote quality and innovation in the design of buildings and public spaces, ensuring they are attractive, accessible, welcoming and meet needs of all groups in the community.
- g) Prioritise sustainable travel and embrace innovative technologies.
- h) Protect and enhance the borough's heritage assets and townscape value.
- i) Secure enhancements to the natural environment (including achieving a minimum 10% net gain) and public realm.
- j) Promote healthy lifestyles and wellbeing.
- k) Enable a 'carbon neutral' future, by ensuring that new development minimises carbon and other emissions, and champions initiatives and solutions to improve energy efficiency in existing buildings and new developments.
- l) Support the efficient use of land and buildings.
- m) Limit development on area of best and most versatile agricultural land.
- n) Limit development on sites that would unacceptably reduce the perceived physical and visual separation of settlements.

The primary focus of growth will be delivered through the creation of a new self-contained garden town at Grazeley, located on the boundary with Wokingham Borough Council, West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council. The new garden town will be strategic in scale and will be planned and developed drawing on garden city/town principles, with essential infrastructure and facilities provided, and designed to a high quality to achieve successful place-making. Large scale development will not be supported in the wider area around Grazeley garden town to avoid the over-concentration of development.

Growth will also be delivered elsewhere as follows:

Housing development:

- Continued delivery and completion of the four existing Strategic Development Locations:
 1. Arborfield Garrison
 2. South of the M4
 3. North Wokingham
 4. South Wokingham
- The delivery and completion of non-strategic site allocations across the borough consistent with the character, accessibility and provision of infrastructure and services within that settlement.

Employment development:

- Continued evolution and intensification of businesses and premises, in particular Core Employment Areas and town centres.
- Small scale development within the countryside consistent with the character, accessibility.

Retail development:

- Continued protection, and evolution of town, district and local centres.

4.4 In line with the vision and objectives, growth within Wokingham Borough will be managed to focus on the needs of residents, and in ways that will make the fullest contribution possible to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. Development should make the most efficient use of land while protecting and respecting the borough's natural and built environment. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) will set out the key infrastructure needed to support growth. It will identify key infrastructure projects, their location, timescale for delivery and funding sources.

Housing

4.5 It is important that development is directed to settlements where there is better access to facilities and services, or where there is opportunity for those necessary facilities and services to be provided alongside development. This also helps reduce the need to travel and to use more sustainable modes of transport.

4.6 The strategy established by our existing local plans – the Core Strategy and MDD focus the majority of development in the four Strategic Development Locations (SDL) (North and South Wokingham, Arborfield Garrison and Shinfield/Spencers Wood/Three Mile Cross), with a lesser level of development supported within towns and villages subject to consideration of accessibility and impacts. This approach has enabled significant new infrastructure to be delivered alongside new homes so helping to mitigate impacts and allowing us opportunity to retain the character of our towns and villages through actions such as the retention of gardens. The four SDLs will continue to make a significant contribution to meeting housing needs in the LPU.

4.7 In line with the expressed preference of residents, the majority of the additional need for development will be met through the creation of a garden town at Grazeley. A development of this scale and magnitude helps to reduce the need for larger-scale development on the edge of other towns and villages across the borough, helping to protect their character and allowing new communities established in the current Strategic Development Locations (SDLs) to continue to form and mature. In addition, the Grazeley garden town provides a significant supply of housing beyond the plan period of 2036, into the 2050s.

4.8 The Grazeley area is situated where excellent transport links can be created into Reading both by dedicated public transport routes and by train, reducing the need to travel by private car for everyday journeys. This presents a unique and exciting opportunity to deliver a highly sustainable mixed-use development.

4.9 The creation of the garden town has been investigated jointly with West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council. It has the potential to deliver 10,000 dwellings within Wokingham Borough and 5,000 dwellings in West Berkshire District over an extended period. To achieve the upfront delivery of key infrastructure, a joint bid to the government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) has been made for £252m. A successful outcome will enable the upfront delivery of a wide package of infrastructure including measures designed to mitigate traffic effects.

Town centres and high streets

4.10 The evolution of town centres and high streets will be supported to ensure they can respond to the challenges posed by online retailing and to make certain that they remain vibrant hubs of social and economic activity.

Infrastructure

4.11 Development will be supported by investment in supporting infrastructure. This will include physical infrastructure such as the transport network, and social and community uses that help support good growth. Developer contributions, secured through the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 planning obligations, will be combined with council resources and other public funding streams such as grants, in order to maximise delivery of the objectives set out in this plan.

4.12 Elsewhere across the borough, development is expected to occur in line with the character, accessibility and provision of infrastructure and services within that settlement.

4.13 Land outside settlement boundaries in the countryside or Green Belt is generally not suitable for development and should predominantly be used for agricultural, woodland and outdoor recreational uses. Nevertheless, it may be appropriate to allow opportunities for some forms of sustainable development to support traditional land based activities and other aspects of the rural economy, and meet specific local housing needs.

4.14 The council is satisfied that development needs can be met sustainably through land outside of the Green Belt, and as such no exceptional circumstances exist to necessitate amending the extent of the Green Belt.

Place-making

4.15 New development will achieve successful place-making, through promoting high-quality and innovative design of buildings and public spaces to create attractive, accessible and welcoming places which meet the diverse needs of our communities. The council will actively engage and work with the local community and other stakeholders in the planning, design and management of our public spaces and buildings, to ensure a sense of place is maintained and strengthened in our communities to improve their economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

4.16. To achieve this, new development should respond positively to the borough's local character, context and distinctiveness by securing high-quality design which protects and enhances the historic, natural and built environment and landscape and townscape which are essential components that make up the identity of our places.

KEY DIAGRAM TO BE INSERTED

4.17 To inform where new development should take place, it is helpful to set out a hierarchy of settlements. The hierarchy takes account of local sustainability credentials such as access to a variety of services and facilities (including schools, shops and public transport links) and is based on existing provision.

Policy SS2: Settlement Hierarchy and scale and location of development proposals

The scale of development proposals must reflect the existing or proposed level of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility. Development proposals within development limits will be acceptable in:

The major development locations at Tier 1 settlements: Arborfield Garrison, Earley, Grazeley Garden Town, Green Park, Shinfield (north of M4), Twyford, Winnersh, Wokingham and Woodley.

The modest development locations at Tier 2 settlements: Pinewood (Crowthorne), Finchampstead North, Ruscombe, Shinfield (south of M4, Three Mile Cross and Spencers Wood) and Wargrave.

The limited development locations at Tier 3 settlements: Arborfield Cross, Barkham Hill, Charvil, Finchampstead, Hurst, Riseley, Sindlesham, Sonning and Swallowfield.

Major economic activity will be accepted within the boundary of the Thames Valley Science Park where consistent with [Policy ER2](#) (Core Employment Areas).

4.18 One of the primary aims of establishing a settlement hierarchy is to promote sustainable communities by bringing housing, jobs and services closer together to maintain and promote the viability of local facilities and reduce the need for outward travel and commuting. A settlement hierarchy policy can help to achieve this by concentrating growth in those settlements that already have a range of services and facilities (as long as there is capacity for growth).

4.19 This policy is supported by a Settlement Hierarchy Assessment (2018) which identifies the range of services and facilities available, and the accessibility of public transport and areas of employment.

4.20 The settlement hierarchy defines the settlements across the borough into three tiers, whilst considering other factors including the functional relationship with the surrounding area. Each tier of settlement has a different role:

- A) Major development locations consist of towns and larger settlements with the greatest range of services and facilities, including key and high-order services, which also allow residents the greatest choice in modes to access them. It is within the development limits of these settlements where major development (including urban extensions within these limits) would be acceptable.
- B) Modest development locations consist of settlements with access to almost all of the key services, as well as some other services and facilities, either within them or through good public transport services to major development locations or centres in neighbouring areas e.g. Bracknell, Crowthorne and Reading. Within the development limits of these settlements, modest development would be considered acceptable.
- C) Limited development locations consist of settlements that are physically and socially cohesive, which have most of the key services and facilities, but are less well-served by other services and employment opportunities. Within the development limits of these settlements, limited development would be considered acceptable, such as affordable housing to meet identified local needs.

4.21 Very small settlements not included in the settlement hierarchy will be considered as open countryside where development will be restricted (in relation [Policy SS13](#)).

4.22 The settlement hierarchy provides a framework for considering the levels of new development to be directed through the Development Management process. It will also help to set the context for decisions on individual planning applications. When making decisions on planning applications, the sustainability of the settlement will be judged on a case-by-case basis and should reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility. The scale of development proposals will be considered in accordance with this policy and have regard to the cumulative impact of all proposals during the Plan period with regard to development limits. This is to ensure balanced communities and sustainable development is achieved which reflects the social fabric of the borough.

4.23 The development limits for the settlements identified in this hierarchy, including Thames Valley Science Park are defined on the Policies Map.

Policy SS3: Grazeley garden town

A new garden town that delivers a minimum of 15,000 dwellings (a minimum of 10,000 dwellings within Wokingham Borough and 5,000 dwellings within West Berkshire District) is allocated on the border of Wokingham Borough Council, West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough, at Grazeley. The delivery of Grazeley garden town is subject to the support of timely and early delivery of commensurate levels of essential infrastructure, identified in the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Bid (Table 1 below) to accelerate delivery. The opportunity for this forward funding will continue to be jointly monitored and pursued by the councils.

The garden town will be a holistically and comprehensively planned, self-contained new community with a distinct identity that is of a special character within its context. Development will secure high quality and innovative sustainable design and construction that promotes sustainable, attractive places to live for its new residents and champions climate resilience and adaptation to achieve a 'carbon neutral' garden town. The garden town will be of a sufficient scale to incorporate a proportionately sized town centre with proportionate retail and service components, a range of homes, employment, education and community facilities, civic and green spaces and other uses to enable residents to meet the majority of their day-to-day needs, reducing the need for outward travel and commuting.

The garden town is not located within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone around AWE Burghfield. In the event this changes, the council will work with partners to update emergency planning to ensure that emergency planning is kept up-to-date and that an adequate off-site emergency plan is in place.

A Masterplan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan SPD will be prepared and coordinated jointly between the councils, working in collaboration with key stakeholders and infrastructure / service providers.

Development Principles:

The SPD will provide the framework for the subsequent development of more detailed masterplans and other design and planning guidance for the Grazeley garden town and will

ensure any new development is considered in the context of a comprehensive, strategic and holistic approach including:

- i. Plan the new community around a step change in integrated and sustainable transport systems for Grazeley / edge of Reading area. Walking, cycling, rail and rapid public transit networks and connections will be at the heart of growth in the area by establishing a highly legible, attractive and accessible movement network to encourage and incentivise more sustainable active travel patterns both within the development and to the surrounding area, particularly Reading. The garden town will also identify measures to mitigate the transport impacts (including longer term) of the proposed development on the strategic and local road network.
- ii. Structure the new community to create sociable, vibrant and walkable neighbourhoods around a vibrant town centre, and district and local centres. This includes access for all to a range of local employment opportunities and community services and facilities, including health/wellbeing, education, retail, culture, civic spaces, multi-functional open space, sports and leisure facilities that are well integrated and connected to public transport to support well-being and social cohesion.
- iii. Provide and promote appropriate opportunities for local and small-scale employment for new and existing residents, both within and outside the new garden community, to support and enhance the overall economic viability of Grazeley garden town.
- iv. Enhance the natural environment, through a comprehensive strategic landscape, drainage and connectivity strategy and comprehensive network of multi-functional green and blue infrastructure by creating ecological networks and habitats to support a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity, including high levels of connectivity to existing local and long-distance corridors and networks and supporting opportunities for formal / informal recreation.
- v. Secure a comprehensively planned smart and sustainable approach that champions climate resilience and adaptation through design and construction methods that secure 'carbon neutral' homes. Grazeley garden town will deliver high standards of energy efficiency and water efficiency (with the aim of being water neutral in areas of serious water stress), sustainable waste and mineral management and innovations in technology to ensure the new garden community is resilient to climate change and champions 'carbon neutral' development.
- vi. Consider any potential on-site mineral resources through the submission of a Minerals Resource Assessment to the Minerals Planning Authority.

Place-shaping Principles

The SPD and any future planning applications will address the following principles and requirements in the design of the new garden town:

- A. Place-making and design quality

A.1 The development of a new garden community to high standards of design, championing Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) garden city principles⁷ which draw on its context and the considerable assets within its boundaries such as hedgerows, trees, woodland, water and changes in topography. The development should encourage pioneering and innovative architecture, the careful design of continuous civic spaces and high-quality public realm to create a new garden town that is distinctive, innovative, contemporary and technologically enabled, set within a strong green and blue infrastructure framework with a new 'destination' town centre and local centres at its heart. Streets will be designed with a high proportion of active frontages to ensure a consistent design language, a sense of place and activity. It will be designed and developed to have its own identity and be as self-sustaining as possible, recognising its location close to the edge of Reading. It will be sympathetically integrated with the existing settlement of Grazeley and the surrounding area through the provision of suitable walking and cycling links, rapid public transport systems and connections to enable convenient access to town centre services and facilities at the new garden community, as well as Reading Town Centre. Grazeley garden town will establish a distinct and unique identity and gravity as a town centre destination, by incorporating measures to protect and retain the permanent physical and visual sense of separation between settlements, including Shinfield, Spencer's Wood and Three Mile Cross to maintain their existing identity and setting in the longer-term

A.2 Detailed and comprehensive SPD masterplans and design guidance will be put in place to inform and guide development proposals and planning applications. Planning applications for the garden community will be expected to be consistent with the SPD and subsequent masterplans and design and planning guidance.

B. Housing

B.1 A mix of housing sizes, types and tenures to ensure balanced, inclusive and accessible communities, including the provision of self-and custom-build, specialist accommodation, starter homes, key worker housing, and Gypsy and Travelers on the site to assist the councils in meeting its evidenced housing needs within the plan period. A minimum of 35% affordable housing should be provided on site and be phased through the development.

B.2 Higher storey heights and development densities will be expected around the town centre, district centres and local centres, public transport interchanges and key routes. Residential development in these areas should achieve typical average densities ranging from 80 dwellings per hectare to 100 dwellings or more per hectare. Elsewhere a typical average of 60 dwellings per hectare will be encouraged and considered in the context of place-making aspirations for the garden town's vision and concept and the needs of a diverse community.

C. Vibrant town centre and neighbourhoods

C.1 The town centre should be of an appropriate scale, providing for a mix of community services, facilities and employment opportunities at the heart of the garden settlement. The town centre shall be planned where it is easily legible and accessible by walking, cycling and public transit and located within an area of higher density housing to increase its vitality and viability. Higher density mixed-use development with several storeys of residential use above commercial premises will be appropriate in the town centre.

⁷ See paragraph 4.29 of supporting text

C.2 Food shopping (convenience and comparison retail) shall be phased to grow with the settlement and be provided and/or reserved within the town centre to allow choice and variety as well as reducing the need to travel for day-to-day needs. A retail impact assessment shall be undertaken to demonstrate that there would be no unacceptable detrimental impacts on the vitality and viability of nearby town centres or village centres including Reading Town Centre and existing Strategic Development Location South of the M4, by the scale and/or phasing of town centre development.

C.3 The town centre shall be closely integrated with walkable village neighbourhoods, championing garden town principles, providing high quality walking and cycling links between neighbourhoods and to the town centre.

C.4 Neighbourhoods and the town centre shall be connected by a high quality, legible and integrated network of streets, footways, cycle ways and open spaces.

C.5 Each neighbourhood should be designed to be consistent with the vision of Grazeley overall but also have its own distinct identity and special character.

D. Employment and Jobs

D.1 A wide range of job, skills and training opportunities will be created in the garden town, associated with town, district and local centre uses, subject to their alignment to the design and wider garden settlement principles of self-containment. The settlement's location near the gateway to the Thames Valley Corridor provides an opportunity to deliver employment uses associated with the Central Thames Valley Growth Hub and other employment in the area around Junction 11 of the M4. This should include proportionately scaled and designed B1 and/or non B class employment generating uses.

D.2 All residential, business, community and town centre buildings and public spaces shall be enabled for high speed and reliable broadband and 5G coverage (and their technological successors). Homes will also be designed to include specific and adaptable spaces suitable for home-working.

E. Transportation

E.1 A comprehensive package of measures will be introduced to facilitate and enable smarter transport choices to meet the needs of the new community and maximise opportunities for sustainable travel. Grazeley garden town will be a highly sustainable, self-contained, new settlement supported by a comprehensive and integrated transport system including: the provision of an appropriately lit network of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways to enhance permeability within the site to connect to the borough's existing Greenways network and/or National Cycle Network routes and to access essential community services and facilities at the new garden community, as well as neighbouring settlements in the area; a new railway station on site; the extension and integration of a high-quality rapid public transit and public transport network to facilitate an attractive and accessible link to Reading and railway stations at Mortimer and Green Park; Park and Ride facilities; upgrades to the A33 and Junction 11, and other effective integrated measures to mitigate the transport impacts of the proposed development on the strategic and local road network.

E.2 Comprehensively planned, designed and legible foot and cycle ways shall be provided throughout the development, integrating with the Greenways network and connecting with the

surrounding areas and countryside, including seamlessly linking key development areas including Green Park, Shinfield, Three Mile Cross, Spencer's Wood, Swallowfield, Grazeley Green, Mortimer and Reading Town Centre.

E.3 Support and not prejudice the provision of a new railway station to facilitate longer-term growth at the new garden community. The councils will continue to support a railway station at Grazeley garden town and will work with Network Rail, railway operators and other partners to develop and implement a strategy for its future delivery and ensure opportunities to do so are fully explored and maximised.

E.4 Other specific transport-related infrastructure requirements identified through the Masterplan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan SPD and masterplans for this garden community will be delivered in a phased manner.

F. Community Infrastructure

F.1 Town, district and local centres of an appropriate scale will be provided to serve the proposed development. The town centre shall accommodate a mix of uses including comparison and convenience retail, employment and community uses. The centres will be located where they will be easily legible and accessible by walking, cycling and public transit to most residents in the garden community.

F.2 High quality public realm and civic spaces will be provided within the town, district and local centres.

F.3 Healthcare hub facility will be provided to serve the new community.

F.4 Two secondary schools and seven primary schools will be provided to serve the new community.

F.5. Indoor leisure and sports facilities will be provided within the new community, or contributions made, where appropriate, to the improvement of off-site leisure facilities to serve the new development.

G. A landscape-led approach

G.1 A comprehensive network of multi-functional green and blue infrastructure and walking and cycling routes will be provided within the garden community incorporating key elements of the existing green assets within the site, including Foudry Brook corridor. It will include Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) as part of mitigating impacts upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, community parks, allotments and a new country park (easily accessible from the town centre and beyond). Sustainable drainage methods will be required throughout the site, in accordance with the SuDS Strategy, to mitigate flood risk and provide biodiversity enhancements to achieve an overall minimum net gain of 10%.

G.2 The delivery of permanent and protected multi-functional open spaces, green spaces and routes should make for distinct areas of separation between the new development and the urban edge of Reading, Grazeley garden town and existing settlements, including Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross.

G.3 Sports provision and play areas with associated facilities, informal open spaces, allotments and community parks located to maximise use and meet the leisure and recreational needs of the new garden community, informed by the council's local standards for open space, sport, recreation and play facilities.

H. Defence and Security

H.1 The development of a new garden community is not located within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone around AWE Burghfield. In the event this changes, the council will work with West Berkshire District Council (as the lead local authority for emergency planning for AWE Burghfield) and partners to mitigate risk and ensure that an adequate off-site emergency plan is in place.

H.2 The Masterplan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan SPD will be prepared in consultation with AWE and the Office for Nuclear Regulation. Any development proposals located within, or in proximity to, the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) will require consultation with the ONR in accordance with [Policy HC10](#) (Development in the vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield)

Delivery and Implementation Principles

The design, delivery and implementation of the new garden community will conform with the following principles:

- i. Community and stakeholder empowerment in the design and delivery of the garden town from the outset and a long-term community engagement strategy.
- ii. The public sector will take a lead working pro-actively and collaboratively with the private sector to design, and bring forward the garden town, using an appropriate delivery model, sharing risk and reward and ensuring the cost of achieving the following is borne by landowners and those promoting the developments:
 - (a) securing a high-quality of place-making,
 - (b) ensuring the early delivery of both on and off-site infrastructure required to address the impact of the new community, and
 - (c) establish at an early stage in the development of the garden town, appropriate, asset backed and sustainable long-term governance and stewardship arrangements for community assets including green space, sustainable drainage systems, community buildings, sports and leisure facilities, public realm and community development and cohesion and other relevant facilities. These arrangements should be funded by development and include community representation to ensure residents have a stake in the long-term development, stewardship and management of their community
- iii. Given the scale of and time period for development of the new garden town, the appropriate model of delivery will secure a comprehensive approach to the delivery of the new community in order to achieve the outcomes outlined above, avoid a piecemeal approach to development, provide the funding and phasing of both development and infrastructure, and be sustainable and accountable in the long term.
- iv. Exemplar planning, design and management of the built and natural environment will ensure Grazeley garden town is a destination of gravity, characterised as a distinctive place that capitalises on local assets and establishes an environment that promotes health and well-being. This will involve developing detailed design guidance including concept frameworks, detailed masterplans and design codes and other guidance to

inform and guide development proposals and planning applications. Planning applications and any local development orders or other consenting mechanisms for the garden town will be expected to be consistent, and clearly demonstrate their compliance with all guidance and demonstrate that each proposal/phase pays its own fair share of infrastructure and enables and does not block delivery of the whole town.

- v. Sequencing of development and infrastructure provision (both on-site and off-site) to ensure infrastructure is available for use ahead of, or in tandem with, the development it supports, to address the impacts of the new garden town, meet the needs of residents and establishes sustainable travel patterns.
- vi. Ensure that the costs and benefits of developing the new garden town clearly evidenced, shared by all landowners / developers, with appropriate and transparent measures put in place to equalise the costs and land contributions.

The new garden town will conform to the SPD which will set out the nature, form and boundary of the new community and will be informed by a landscape led approach to master planning of the Grazeley garden town. The SPD will be produced in consultation with stakeholders and be supported by a phasing and implementation strategy, which sets out how the rate of development will be linked to the provision of the necessary social, physical and environmental infrastructure to ensure that the respective phases of the development come forward with the necessary infrastructure in place.

Table 1: Essential Early Enabling Infrastructure Projects included in the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Bid

Infrastructure type	HIF scheme / project
Highways and Transportation	Upgrades to access to Green Park and Mortimer railway stations
	New railway bridges
	M4 works
	Park and Rides
	Fast Track Routes
	New Bus Services
	Key roads and pedestrian/cycle infrastructure
	Travel planning
	Car Park
	A33 Works
Facilities	Primary schools
	Phase one of the health hub
Utilities	Utilities (to be managed with suppliers)

The Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019

Under the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019, a review of the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) around all licenced nuclear sites is being undertaken. The review does not reflective of changed activity or change in risk.

The development proposal for the new garden town at Grazeley are not located within the DEPZ for AWE Burghfield as currently defined. If the review amends the DEPZ, the council will work with its partners to ensure that emergency planning is kept up-to-date and that an adequate off-site emergency plan is in place.

4.24 National policy is clear that local authorities should deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, which can often best be achieved by planning for larger scale developments, such as new settlements.

Consistent with this aim, proposals for a new garden town at Grazeley have been established, based upon a common set of values, objectives and commitments to secure the delivery of transformational growth across the area. This reflects cross-boundary working between Wokingham Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, Reading Borough Council, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership, landowners and promoters. The new garden town lies on the southern edge of Reading Borough, south of the M4 and west of the A33 and is within proximity to key employment areas including Green Park.

4.25 The creation of the Grazeley garden town is a key element of the local plan's spatial strategy for Wokingham Borough. Notwithstanding the principle concept of the new Garden Town as a self-contained settlement, the council recognises that the new garden town's location is in proximity to Reading Borough. The presence of Reading Town Centre offers a functional role for accessing higher-order services and facilities, such as the Oracle Shopping Centre. It will therefore be important that the new garden community delivers a high-quality, integrated transport network that establishes a functional relationship between Grazeley garden town and Reading for new residents to access other essential services and facilities. Transport links across the site east west, and south towards Basingstoke can also be enhanced.

4.26 Garden communities were amongst a range of options considered by the council to help meet future development needs. Several areas of land of sufficient scale to accommodate a garden community were promoted through a Call for Sites, which were subsequently considered through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) and wider evidence gathering, including the Growth Scenarios Report. All of these options were evaluated and the assessments are considered as part of the Sustainability Appraisal.

4.27 A new garden community was considered the most deliverable and sustainable strategic option, providing a long-term supply of new homes to meet most of the borough's housing needs and deliver substantial new infrastructure, provided they could be delivered to the right standards at the right time.

4.28 The new garden community will accommodate a substantial amount of housing and employment growth planned for Wokingham Borough within the plan period and beyond, in a sustainable way that meets the vision and strategic objectives, and provides a quality of development and community that would not occur in the absence of a holistic approach to planning and delivery. A coordinated, strategic approach to the master planning and delivery of the new garden town will be required to deliver the necessary infrastructure, facilities and services to meet the needs of the new garden community.

4.29 Grazeley garden town will be an exemplar, innovative, planned and sustainable new settlement with a unique and distinctive identity. Development will champion the following garden city principles specifically for the Wokingham Borough context:

- Development in the right place
- Finding purpose for the place
- Integrating blue and green infrastructure
- Encouraging culture and innovation
- Understanding who is going to live there
- Facilitating mix
- Exploring and understanding identity
- Encouraging diverse employment
- Community and governance
- Gravity and pull of infrastructure

4.30 The new garden community will establish a green buffer (an integral feature to the garden town concept), to provide a sense of physical and visual separation between the new garden town and the

existing settlements of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross. Development at the new garden town will be supported by a cohesive strategic landscape and drainage strategy and a comprehensive network of multi-functional green infrastructure to provide an ecological resource for habitat management, restoration and enhancement, and a recreational and amenity resource for the new communities established at Grazeley garden town.

4.31 Grazeley garden town will be supported by a highly legible, attractive and accessible movement framework to maximise opportunities for walking and cycling through the site to access essential community services and facilities, including the town and neighbourhood centres. The new garden town will also establish a high degree of connectivity by walking and cycling to the surrounding villages, open countryside and Reading town centre. Grazeley garden town will be supported by a comprehensive package of infrastructure to encourage and incentivise more sustainable forms of travel. Land is safeguarded for the extension of the rapid public transport network that will facilitate access and connectivity to railway stations at Green Park and Mortimer, for accessing Reading Town Centre and other key towns and settlements.

4.32 Grazeley garden town also provides opportunity to deliver a new railway station on site to provide rail linkages to Reading, and from there to other major destinations across the region including London, as well as to the major employment destination at Green Park.

4.33 An integral feature of Grazeley garden town is to create a highly sustainable, self-contained, new settlement which has a unique identity and is distinctive to the surrounding towns and villages. To create sustainable and vibrant neighbourhoods, the new garden town will be supported by a strong town centre offer of retail, cultural, recreational and commercial services and facilities at the heart of the development to maintain and sustain the vitality and viability of new communities and support well-being and social cohesion for residents, workers and visitors. Further details relating to the design and development of the town centre, including its size and content will be set out in the Grazeley Masterplan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan SPD.

4.34 Grazeley garden town will deliver at least 3,750 dwellings within Wokingham Borough in the period to 2036, with the capacity to deliver over 10,000 homes overall in Wokingham Borough beyond 2036. Given the scale and time period for development of the new garden town, it will be essential that an appropriate model of delivery is identified to secure a comprehensive approach or approaches (bearing in mind the different land uses) to the delivery of the new community and essential infrastructure. An appropriate approach to the phasing and delivery of development and infrastructure and services will avoid a piecemeal approach at the new garden town and ensure it is holistically and comprehensively planned, sustainable and accountable in the longer term.

4.35 Proposals for the garden town are not located within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for AWE Burghfield. In the event that this changes, the council will work with partners to ensure that emergency planning is kept up-to-date and that an adequate off-site emergency plan is in place.

4.36 Under the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019, local authorities are required to produce detailed off-site emergency planning arrangements. The off-site plan for AWE Burghfield is produced by West Berkshire District Council as the Emergency Planning Authority. The plan puts in place measures to minimise and mitigate health consequences associated with any release of radiation that might occur as a result of a future incident at the nuclear site.

4.37 Future proposals within the new Grazeley garden town should therefore be consistent with West Berkshire Council's off-site emergency plan and should refer to [Policy HC10](#) (Development in the vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield).

4.38 The new garden town crosses the Wokingham Borough, West Berkshire District and Reading Borough borders, and continued close joint working between the authorities and other key stakeholders involved will be required to secure its successful delivery. All authorities are committed to ensuring the new garden community is highly sustainable, self-sufficient and of high quality, supported by a comprehensive package of infrastructure, in the form of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, to ensure it is delivered at the right time. Further master planning will set out the design, development and delivery and implementation principles set out in [Policy SS3](#).

Policy SS4: Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location

As included in the Core Strategy (adopted 2010), land at Arborfield Garrison, as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated for a sustainable, well designed mixed-use development with associated housing, employment and social and physical infrastructure, to be delivered in accordance with the requirements set out below and the key principles contained in [Appendix 1](#).

- 1) Phased delivery of 3,329* dwellings, including affordable homes, in accordance with [Policy H5](#);
- 2) New employment floor space adjacent to Hogwood Industrial Estate for up to 12,000 sqm;
- 3) Subject to viability, provide a new district centre comprising a foodstore and a mix of retail, leisure, residential and service components;
- 4) Social and physical infrastructure (including provision of an additional form of entry within the planned Arborfield Green Primary School to meet the demand of new residents),
- 5) Measures to maintain separation from Arborfield Cross, Barkham Hill and Finchampstead North;
- 6) Necessary measures to avoid and mitigate the impact of development upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area in line with [Policy NE2](#) to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations and in accordance with Natural England's latest standards. This will include sufficient Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (subject to monitoring of the quality and quantity standards);
- 7) Improvements to transport capacity along Barkham Road, Commonfield Lane and Barkham Street the A327 (to both the M3 and Reading) and routes towards Bracknell and Wokingham (including the extension of Nine Mile Ride to the A327); and completion of the Nine Mile Ride Extension connecting the Arborfield Garrison development to the Nine Mile Ride and the Arborfield Cross Relief Road.
- 8) Measures to further improve accessibility by non-car transport modes, including: improvements to the quality and frequency of public transport services along the network, such as A327, B3030, B3349 and B3430 corridor routes to Bracknell, Reading, Winnersh and Wokingham; prioritisation of cycle and pedestrian movements through the site, supported by an internal network of Greenways to connect to existing and new communities at Arborfield Garrison SDL, at Finchampstead North and Crowthorne and local employment opportunities; prioritisation of cycle and pedestrian movements through the SDL to maximise connectivity and accessibility to Bohunt School and the new district centre to be located at the SDL; and prioritisation of

pedestrian movements to maximise connectivity to the Hazebrook Meadows Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG).

The development will be guided by the Arborfield Garrison Supplementary Planning Document produced as part of the Core Strategy (2010) (and any subsequent revisions) and any extant planning permissions within the SDL pursuant to the Core Strategy.

A co-ordinated approach to development of the Strategic Development Location will be required to deliver the necessary additional infrastructure, facilities and services to meet the needs of the expanded community.

* The Core Strategy allocation for the Arborfield Garrison SDL in Policy CP18 was for around 3,500 dwellings. However, this figure is updated in the Local Plan Update to reflect recent completions as at April 2018.

4.39 The Core Strategy local plan identified a Strategic Development Location on the former Arborfield Garrison (Policy CP20) to deliver a sustainable, well-designed mixed-use development for around 3,500 homes in the plan period to 2026. The policy is updated to take account of completions as at April 2018.

4.40 At January 2020, early phases of the development have been completed and almost half of permitted capacity is currently under construction. The secondary school (Bohunt School) is open with planning permission in place for the first of the planned primary schools.

4.41 The Nine Mile Ride Extension has been partly completed with agreement in place to deliver the remaining section. Work has started on the Arborfield Cross Relief Road (ACRR) which will reduce congestion and create more opportunities to promote sustainable travel, by providing traffic relief in Arborfield and Arborfield Cross. The ACRR will link the A327 Reading Road and A327 Eversley Road and provide a green bridge to facilitate safe access for pedestrians and cyclists.

4.42 Further guidance is set out in the concept plan (Appendix 1). This is supported by the Arborfield Garrison SDL SPD (incorporating a masterplan). The need to maintain the separation of settlements reflects the recommendations set out in the borough-wide Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) which has identified key features that contribute towards the rural quality of the landscape and the physical and visual separation of the SDL from other settlements, in particular Arborfield Cross, Barkham and Finchampstead North.

Policy SS5: South of the M4 Strategic Development Location

As included in the Core Strategy (adopted 2010), land South of the M4 motorway as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated for a sustainable, well designed mixed use development, with associated housing, employment and social and physical infrastructure, to be delivered in accordance with the requirements set out below and the key principles contained in [Appendix 2](#)

1) Phased delivery of around 2,310* dwellings including affordable homes in accordance with [Policy H5](#);

2) Appropriate employment, including the expansion of Thames Valley Science Park for approximately 18,500 sqm of floorspace;

3) Appropriate retail facilities;

4) Social and physical infrastructure (including provision for a new primary school** and the likely expansion of existing primary provision together with existing community centre);

5) Measures to maintain separation of these settlements from each other, the new garden settlement at Grazeley, Green Park Business Park (Reading) and settlements within the administrative Borough of Reading, Shinfield (North of M4) and Swallowfield;

6) Necessary measures to avoid and mitigate the impact of development upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area in line with [Policy NE2](#) to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations and in accordance with Natural England's latest standards. This will include sufficient Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (subject to monitoring of the quality and quantity standards);

7) Improvements to highway capacity along the A327 (on routes to Reading and the M3), the A33 (route to Reading) and any other necessary improvements identified through a Transport Assessment and/or Transport Statement; and

8) Measures to improve accessibility by non-car transport modes along the A327 and A33 corridors and routes to the stations at Green Park and Winnersh Triangle.

The development will be guided by the South of M4 Supplementary Planning Document produced as part of the Core Strategy (2010) (and any subsequent revisions), and any extant planning permissions granted within the SDL pursuant to the Core Strategy.

A co-ordinated approach to the development of the Strategic Development Location will be required to deliver the necessary infrastructure, facilities and services to meet the needs of the expanded community.

* The Core Strategy allocation for the South of the M4 SDL in Policy CP19 was for around 2,500 dwellings. However, this figure is updated in the Local Plan Update to reflect the proposed allocation of Lane End House for 5 dwellings extant planning permissions and completions on the South of the M4 SDL as at April 2018.

** A new 2-Form Entry primary school (Shinfield Meadows Primary School) has been delivered on the site

4.43 The Core Strategy local plan identified a Strategic Development Location to the south of the M4 motorway (Policy CP19) to deliver a sustainable, well-designed mixed use development for around 2,500 dwellings to be delivered by 2026. This policy updates this to take account of the proposed allocation of Lane End House for 5 dwellings and extant planning permissions and completions. The allocation figure for the SDL, based on the start date for the plan period (1 April 2018) is 2,310 dwellings.

4.44 The council acknowledges that locating strategic development at the settlements of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross presents a potential opportunity to access Reading through improved public transport services along the A33 and A327 corridors. It will be necessary to ensure that the distinct identity and separation of these settlements continues to be retained, in association with future development on the SDL, to ensure compliance with the development principles set out in [Policy SS5](#) and the South of the M4 SDL SPD. As part of development in this SDL, it is important that land for adequate services is provided within the development together with appropriate safeguarding for high quality public transport services to link the area with facilities and services in Reading. The council will continue to work with the infrastructure and service providers and Reading Borough Council to ensure the integration of improvements with those along the A33 and A327 corridors.

4.45 Enhanced facilities and services should primarily be concentrated at a new local centre on the SDL to serve all the communities in the parish, providing a range of service components including retail, commercial and residential uses. The first of the planned primary schools has been constructed and is ready to be opened. The Eastern Relief Road has been completed and is open to traffic.

4.46 Further guidance is set out in the concept plan (Appendix 2). This is supported by the South of the M4 SDL SPD (incorporating a masterplan). The need to maintain the separation of settlements reflects the recommendations in the borough-wide Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) which has identified key landscape features that contribute to the physical and visual separation between settlements, in particular the new Grazeley garden town, settlements within the administrative borough of Reading and the settlements of Shinfield and Swallowfield.

Policy SS6: North Wokingham Strategic Development Location

As included in the Core Strategy (adopted 2010), North Wokingham as shown on the Policies Map is allocated for a sustainable, well designed mixed-use development, with associated housing, employment and social and physical infrastructure to be delivered in accordance with the requirements set out below and the key principles contained in [Appendix 3](#):

- 1) Phased delivery of around 1,487* dwellings including affordable homes in accordance with [Policy H5](#);
- 2) Appropriate retail facilities;
- 3) Appropriate employment located west of Twyford Road and north of Matthewsgreen Farm and retention of employment at Toutley Industrial Estate;
- 4) Social and physical infrastructure**;
- 5) Measures to maintain separation from Binfield/Bracknell and Winnersh;
- 6) Necessary measures to avoid and mitigate the impact of development upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area in line with [Policy NE2](#) to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations and in accordance with Natural England's latest standards. This will include sufficient Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (subject to monitoring of the quality and quantity standards);
- 7) Improvements to transport capacity along the A321 and A329 including the provision of a Northern Distributor Road (NDR) from the A329 (near the M4 over-bridge) to the Coppid Beech roundabout;
- 8) Measures to improve accessibility by non-car transport modes along the A321 and A329 corridors; and
- 9) Measures to improve access by non-car modes to Wokingham town centre (including the station interchange). Cycle and pedestrian movements should be prioritised through the site and supported by an internal network of Greenways to connect to Wokingham town centre, existing and new communities (e.g. SDLs) and local employment opportunities such as Toutley Industrial Estate.

The development will be guided by the North Wokingham Supplementary Planning Document produced as part of the Core Strategy (2010) (and any subsequent revisions), and any extant planning permissions granted within the SDL pursuant to the Core Strategy.

A co-ordinated approach to the development of the Strategic Development Location will be required to deliver the necessary infrastructure, facilities and services to meet the needs of the expanded community.

*The Core Strategy allocation for the North Wokingham SDL in Policy CP20 was for around 1,500 dwellings. However, this figure is updated in the Local Plan Update to reflect the proposed allocations to the east of Toutley Industrial Estate for 100 dwellings and at Ashridge Farm for 150 dwellings, and any extant planning permissions and completions on the North Wokingham SDL as at April 2018

** A reserved matters application (172331) was approved by the Council on 14 February 2018 for a new 1 Form Entry primary school (with the potential to expand to a 2 Form Entry primary school), nursery provision and associated playing pitch provision and play space on site at Matthewsgreen Road, Wokingham.

4.47 The Wokingham Core Strategy identified a Strategic Development Location to the north of Wokingham (Policy CP20) to deliver a sustainable, well designed, mixed-use development for around 1,500 dwellings to be delivered by 2026. This policy is updated to reflect proposed site allocations at Ashridge Farm for 150 dwellings, and Land east of Toutley Depot for 100 dwellings, and any known completions on the SDL as at April 2018. The total allocation figure for the SDL, based on the start date for the plan period (1 April 2018), is therefore reduced to 1,487 dwellings to be delivered up to 2036.

4.48 As at January 2020, significant progress has been made in contributing to the overall delivery of the North Wokingham SDL. The early phases of the North Wokingham SDL have delivered almost half the allocation and a significant proportion of the remainder of the site is under construction. As a result, the vast majority of dwellings are already completed, or under construction. A Northern Distributor Road (NDR) has been delivered which facilitates access through the SDL to connect to the strategic transport network to the west and east of the town via the A329. The Winnersh Relief Road (Phase 2) from the B3030 King Street Lane to the A329 Reading Road will further increase connectivity from North Wokingham across the borough. It will be necessary for any future development on the SDL to improve links by non-car transport modes to the town centre (including the station interchange), existing and new communities and local employment opportunities, by supporting an internal Greenways network to continue to support the vitality and viability of the centre and reduce overall private car trips in the surrounding area.

4.49 The existing Core Employment Area at Toutley Industrial Estate is located to the north of the SDL which should continue to be retained in line with [Policy ER1](#). This site can accommodate further employment floorspace through the reconfiguration of the site within its existing boundaries. It will be important for future development at the SDL to establish walking and cycling connections within the site and to the proposed site allocation to the east of Toutley Industrial Estate to provide connectivity to local employment opportunities.

4.50 In order to ensure the continued sustainability of development at North Wokingham, it will be necessary to ensure adequate provision of facilities, including retail, are within walking and cycle distance of residents. A new local centre will be delivered at the heart of the SDL at Matthewsgreen Farm, situated along the Northern Distributor Road (NDR). The local centre will provide ground floor retail units, incorporating a large food store and two smaller retail units to meet day-to-day needs, whilst being proportionate in scale to ensure the vitality and viability of the existing smaller local centres at Ashridge Road and Clifton Road are maintained. It will be important to ensure safe pedestrian, cycle and mobility aid access to the local facilities at the new local centre as well as to Wokingham town centre.

4.51 Within the early phases of development for the SDL, a reserved matters application was approved by the Council on 14 February 2018 to deliver a new 1-Form Entry primary school, nursery provision and associated playing pitches and play space. Further guidance is set out in the concept plan (in Appendix 3), which is amplified in the North Wokingham SDL SPD (incorporating a masterplan) and has been used by the council to make decisions on planning applications for development coming forward on the SDL.

4.52 The need to maintain separation between key settlements reflects the recommendations in the borough-wide Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) which has identified landscape features that contribute towards the physical and visual separation from Wokingham to Binfield/Bracknell and Winnersh.

Policy SS7: South Wokingham Strategic Development Location

As included in the Core Strategy (adopted 2010), South Wokingham as shown on the Policies Map is allocated for a sustainable, well designed mixed-use development, with associated housing, employment and social and physical infrastructure, to be delivered in accordance with the requirements set out below and the key principles contained in [Appendix 4](#):

- 1) Phased delivery of around 2,012* dwellings including affordable in accordance with [Policy H5](#);
- 2) Appropriate retail facilities providing up to 830 sqm of floorspace;
- 3) Social and physical infrastructure (including the provision for a new primary school on site** and a neighbourhood centre to provide at least 700 sqm of community space);
- 4) Measures to maintain separation from Binfield/Bracknell, Crowthorne/Pinewood (Crowthorne) and Finchampstead North;
- 5) Measures to protect and enhance pedestrian (including using mobility aids) access to the countryside from Wokingham town centre in accordance with [Policy C8](#) and taking into account the Council's Greenways Strategy;
- 6) Necessary measures to avoid and mitigate the impact of development upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area in line with [Policy NE2](#) to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations and in accordance with Natural England's latest standards. This will include sufficient Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (subject to monitoring of the quality and quantity standards);
- 7) Continued improvements to transport capacity along the A321 and A329 including the provision of the South Wokingham relief road from the vicinity of the Coppid Beech roundabout to the Finchampstead Road;
- 8) Measures to continue to improve accessibility by non-car transport modes along the A321 and A329 corridors; and
- 9) Measures to continue to improve access by non-car modes to Wokingham town centre.

The development will be guided by the South Wokingham SDL Supplementary Planning Document produced as part of the Core Strategy (2010) (and any subsequent revisions), and any extant planning permissions granted within the SDL pursuant to the Core Strategy.

A co-ordinated approach to further development of the Strategic Development Location will be required to deliver the necessary infrastructure, facilities and services to meet the needs of the expanded community.

* The Core Strategy allocation for the South Wokingham SDL in Policy CP21 was for around 2,500 dwellings. However, this figure is updated in the Local Plan Update to reflect extant planning permissions and completions on the South Wokingham SDL as at April 2018, and the proposed allocation of 17 dwellings at land south of Gipsy Lane

** One new 2-Form Entry Primary School (Floreat Montague Park Primary School) has been delivered on site following a Reserved Matters approval (RM/2014/0979) on 26 June 2014.

4.53 The Wokingham Borough Core Strategy local plan identified a Strategic Development Location to the south of Wokingham (Policy CP21) to deliver a sustainable, well-designed mixed-use development of around 2,500 dwellings to be delivered by 2026. This policy is updated to reflect a proposed allocation for 17 dwellings at land south of Gipsy Lane, and updates this to take account of extant planning permissions and completions.

4.54 The planned development around Wokingham will help to continue to support the rejuvenation of the town through increasing its catchment population and removing traffic from the centre leading to an improved environment. At January 2020, a number of phases of development have been delivered, with further phases being considered through the planning application process.

4.55 It will be necessary to ensure that further development improves links by non-car transport modes to the town centre (including the station interchange), new and existing communities and local employment opportunities, by supporting an internal Greenways network to both support the vitality and viability of the centre and reduce overall private car trips in the surrounding area.

4.56 The boundaries of the development shown in the concept plan (Appendix 4) have had regard to the landscape features, topography and the potential pressure for further development south of the town. Development further south and east of this location would encroach into the gaps separating Wokingham from Binfield/Bracknell, Finchampstead North and Pinewood (Crowthorne) contrary to the recommendations in the Borough-wide Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Policy LP18 of the emerging Draft Bracknell Forest Local Plan Part 1 – Strategic Revised Growth Strategy (2019).

4.57 To ensure the continued sustainability of development at South Wokingham, a new neighbourhood centre will be delivered at Montague Park to provide community services and facilities, including a mix of retail and community uses. Future development within the SDL will need to demonstrate that they do not prejudice the achievement of a sustainable solution to development, particularly regarding development in Wokingham town centre.

4.58 The first of the planned primary schools (Floreat Montague Park Primary School) has been completed and opened.

4.59 Further guidance is set out in the concept plan (Appendix 4). This is supported by the South Wokingham SDL SPD (incorporating a masterplan).

The challenge of mitigating and adapting to climate change will be responded to through the following actions:

- a) Implementing a spatial strategy which secures a pattern of development which allows more people to live and work where journeys can be undertaken by walking, cycling and public transport.
- b) Support the provision of local learning and employment, and services and facilities which reduces the need to travel and the distance.
- c) Encourage the use of walking, cycling and public transport through ensuring that options are central to the design and layout of new development.
- d) Supporting a network of attractive, convenient and safe walking and cycling routes.
- e) Facilitate and encourage the use of electric vehicles through the provision of charging infrastructure.
- f) Support retrofitting existing buildings with measures to improve their energy efficiency and generate onsite renewable energy.
- g) Encourage the use of passive design and innovation to reduce the energy efficiency of new buildings.
- h) Champion low carbon and renewable energy generation both as part of residential and non-residential development proposals, and as standalone energy generation schemes.
- i) Requiring all new major residential developments to be carbon neutral.
- j) Maximising carbon capture through effective habitat management, promoting new appropriate green infrastructure, and encouraging tree planting and landscaping as key components of well-designed development.
- k) Establishing a Carbon Offset Fund to support a range projects and schemes across the borough to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.
- l) Locating and designing development to reduce the risk of flooding, minimise water consumption, and minimise urban heat island effect.
- m) Regular monitoring and reporting on performance against the Climate Change Act.

4.60 Under the Paris Agreement 2015, the UK is committed to following a decarbonisation pathway that aims to limit the global average temperature change. In June, the UK passed legislation to revise the Climate Change Act target to an emissions reduction of at least 100% by 2050 ('net zero'). National policy lists adapting and mitigating to climate change as a core principle of sustainable development and recognises climate change as a strategic priority to be addressed by local plans.

4.61 A motion Declaring a Climate Emergency for Wokingham Borough Council with a target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 was approved at Council on 18th July 2019. An action plan setting out the types of activities that will be embarked on to achieve these targets is being developed.

4.62 The future growth of Wokingham Borough through new development has the potential to impose a large environmental footprint in terms of consumption of resources and materials, the use of energy and the associated emission of greenhouse gases that contribute towards climate change.

4.63 It is essential that development proposals utilise every opportunity to reduce carbon emissions now to limit the extent of future climate change. Our priority is to minimise the need to travel by private car and to improve the energy efficiency of buildings. This reflects the two largest areas of carbon emissions for the borough.

4.64 As part of implementing a sustainable pattern of development, it is recognised that optimising the development density in locations which are well served by public transport and have access to jobs, services and facilities, can positively contribute to the priority of minimising the need for car based travel.

4.65 A central aim is for new development proposals to be carbon neutral in terms of all regulated uses (i.e. space heating, lighting, hot water and ventilation) and explore routes towards zero carbon across the development life-cycle, to avoid a legacy of emissions to be addressed in the future.

4.66 Recognising that a large portion of carbon emissions are produced by existing buildings, proposals to sensitively refurbish or retrospectively improve the performance to reduce their energy use and improve comfort will be supported. Interventions to upgrade historic buildings should be undertaken sensitively in recognition of their heritage value.

4.67 Development proposals that are unable to achieve the carbon targets set out in policy onsite will need to offset their shortfall via a cash in lieu payment reflecting the local cost of carbon. A Carbon Offset Funding will then be allocated to projects that will reduce carbon emissions elsewhere in the borough.

4.68 Incorporating low energy and passive design measures that manage the risk of a building overheating is central to adapting to future climate changes. Proposals for major developments should be supported by internal temperature modelling as part of the cooling strategy and prioritise low-energy measures to mitigate overheating e.g. orientation, solar shading and use of green infrastructure.

Policy SS9: Adaptation to Climate Change

1. Development proposals will be supported where they have been designed to incorporate the following measures to adapt to climate change:
 - a) Wherever possible, new buildings should be orientated to maximise the opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements;
 - b) Proposals involving both new and existing buildings should demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change, for example by including measures such as solar shading, thermal mass, heating and ventilation of the building and appropriately coloured materials in areas exposed to direct sunlight, green and brown roofs, green walls, etc;
 - c) Use of trees and other planting, where appropriate as part of a landscape scheme, to provide shading of amenity areas, buildings and streets and to help to connect habitat, designed with native plants that are carefully selected, managed and adaptable to meet the predicted change in climatic conditions; and
 - d) All development proposals should minimise the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system, and where possible incorporate mitigation and resilience measures for any increases in river flooding levels as a result of climate change.

4.69 Adaptation is about making sure future communities can live, work, rest and play in a comfortable and secure environment in the face of inevitable climate change. Taking action now to help successfully

achieve adaptation measures would help to reduce vulnerability for people, businesses, services and infrastructure to climate change. Adaptation measures need to be built into all new developments to ensure the sustainable development of housing, businesses and the economy.

4.70 The impacts of climate change are predicted to increase over time, with winters getting warmer and wetter, while summers become hotter and drier. It is expected that there will be more extreme weather leading to impacts including intense rainfall and floods, heatwaves, droughts and increased risk of subsidence. These impacts will affect people's lives, homes and businesses as well as essential services and supplies such as transport, hospitals, water supply and energy. There will also be significant impacts on biodiversity and the natural environment.

4.71 Given the anticipated level of growth of the Wokingham Borough over the coming years, it is imperative that this growth takes place in a sustainable manner incorporating climate change adaptation technologies. Buildings, services and infrastructure need to be able to easily cope with the impacts of climate change. Part of this ability to cope relates to ensuring that new development is designed to adapt to more intense rainfall, the possibility of flooding, plus heat waves and droughts. The design of developments, including the use of materials, therefore needs to more carefully consider matters such as shading, insulation and ventilation, surface water runoff and storage and the use of appropriate tree and other planting.

Policy SS10: Supporting Infrastructure

1. Development proposals will not be supported unless infrastructure, services, resources and amenities or other assets lost or impacted on as a result of development or made necessary by the development will be improved or provided through direct provision or financial contributions at an appropriate time.
2. Arrangements for improvement or provision to the required standard, and their ongoing maintenance, will be secured by planning obligations or condition if appropriate.

4.72 Development is required to play a role in delivering sustainable development. Development should minimise damage, loss and impact upon existing infrastructure and environmental assets. Should loss or damage occur, developers should compensate for or mitigate any impact caused by a development. Development proposals will be expected to mitigate all relevant impacts in accordance with the criteria and rate of contribution and/or levy as set out in relevant documentation, taking account of levels of development that have already been accepted, and mitigation measures that have already been agreed or implemented.

4.73 This policy should be read in conjunction with the council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan, CIL charging schedule and other documents governing planning obligations. Where appropriate, the council will permit developers to provide the necessary infrastructure and facilities themselves as part of development proposals, rather than by making financial contributions, provided that these include funded proposals for long term management and maintenance.

4.74 In accordance with national policy as set out in the government planning policy, requirements must consider their effects on the viability of development. Paragraph 56 says that 'Planning obligations must only be sought where they meet all of the following tests:

- a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- b) directly related to the development; and
- c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.'

4.75 The planning practice guidance is clear that the price paid for land is not a relevant justification for failing to accord with relevant policies in the plan. Landowners and site purchasers should consider this when agreeing land transactions and future infrastructure requirements.

Policy SS11: Safeguarded Routes

1. Land is safeguarded to support the delivery of strategic transport infrastructure as listed below and shown on the Policies Map. Proposals for development which would prejudice the delivery of these schemes or their effective operation will not be supported.
 - a) Provision of a Park and Ride near the Coppid Beech roundabout on the A329 in Wokingham
 - b) Winnersh relief road
 - c) High quality express bus services or dedicated public transport route along the A4 and A329 corridors. This project is dependent on Reading Borough Council's 'Cross-town Link'
 - d) Improvements listed in Policies [SS4](#), [SS5](#), [SS6](#) and [SS7](#):
 - i. Improvements to highway capacity along A327 (including Eversley Bypass, subject to review by Hampshire County Council as lead authority)
 - ii. Arborfield Cross Relief Road
 - iii. Extension of Nine Mile Ride to the A327
 - iv. Improvements to highway capacity along the A33
 - v. South Wokingham Distributor Road (junctions at both Finchampstead Road and London Road) and associated improvements to the railway bridges on the A321 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham
 - vi. Northern Distributor Road
 - e) Third Thames Crossing from Thames Valley Park Drive/A3290 to South Oxfordshire.

4.76 In order to widen travel choice and mitigate the impacts of new development, land required to deliver strategic transport projects will be safeguarded. Many of these schemes are integral to achieving the broader sustainable development set out in this plan. Others relate to schemes which are less well defined, but land nevertheless needs to be safeguarded so that future opportunities to deliver improvements is not lost.

4.77 The council has been successful in securing funds to deliver major transport improvements, including the delivery of upgrades to Wokingham train station with associated bus interchange; a new bridge crossing over the M4; a relief road around Shinfield, to name a few.

4.78 Where applications for development within the safeguarded areas comes forward an assessment will be undertaken on whether the proposals would prejudice the construction, delivery and effective operation of the schemes listed above. Any development proposal that may reasonably be considered to impact upon the delivery of an identified scheme(s) must demonstrate how it will avoid any adverse impact on its delivery. Careful consideration will need to be given to the relationship between the proposed scheme in terms of design, and with regard to matters such as building layout, noise insulation, landscaping,

the historic environment and means of access. Where adverse impacts cannot be avoided, the development proposal will not be supported.

4.79 The transport infrastructure necessary for the borough will be kept under review, having regard to matters crossing local authority boundaries and in consultation with Highway Authorities.

Policy SS12: Improvements to Transport Routes

1. The council will work with appropriate partners, stakeholders, and bodies to deliver the following schemes where suitable and viable:
 - a) Improvements at Grazeley listed in [Policy SS3](#)
 - i. Park and Rides (including Mere oak expansion)
 - ii. East – West pedestrian and cycle links to villages of Three Mile Cross and Spencers Wood
 - iii. New train station
 - iv. M4 works
 - v. Upgrades to access to Green Park and Mortimer railway stations
 - vi. New Railway bridges
 - vii. Fast Track Routes
 - viii. New bus services
 - ix. Key roads and pedestrian/cycle infrastructure
 - x. A33 works
 - b) Delivery of Greenways to link the Strategic Development Locations to the existing settlements and points of interest
 - c) Pedestrian and cycle linkages between Arborfield Cross Relief Road and Eastern Relief Road
 - d) Longer term improvements to the A33 corridor
 - e) Twyford Eastern Relief Road
 - f) High quality express bus services between Green Park and Twyford stations via the Park & Rides in the vicinity of M4, J11 and Loddon Bridge and Winnersh Triangle railway station
 - g) Great Western Mainline improvements
 - h) Measures to maintain the operation of the road and rail network during times of flooding
 - i) Improvements to the quality and frequency of public transport services along any part of the network
 - j) Improvements to increase the use of bicycles, including cycle paths
 - k) Enhancements to footpath and cycle networks to improve access to services and facilities
 - l) Improvements to M4 Junction 10
 - m) Support for western rail access to Heathrow.
 - n) Extension to southern distributor road
 - o) Capacity improvements to roundabout at Reading Road, B3270, and A3290 (Winnersh)
 - p) Improvements to Thames Path cycle route
 - q) Improved pedestrian access from Wokingham town centre to south of the railway
 - r) Potential for widening of A329M and A3290
 - s) A33 bus crossing
 - t) Lower Earley Way capacity improvements
 - u) Park and Ride(s) at Twyford

4.80 [Policy SS12](#) covers transport schemes which are less well developed in their nature or geographic location or which have an impact on the borough but are either located outside the borough's boundary (e.g. Western Rail Link to Heathrow) or which do not require specific development upgrades within the borough to accommodate. To enable delivery of transport network improvements required to bring forward new development, there will be a need for on-going positive engagement with infrastructure providers throughout the plan period. The schemes listed in this policy are either reflected in the council's current Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) or will be included within LTP4 which will be produced alongside the LPU. There will be scope for this list of schemes to evolve as evidence for the LPU and LTP4 progresses.

Policy SS13: Development in the Countryside

1. The countryside, as defined on the policies map, will continue to be recognised for its intrinsic character and beauty in accordance with national policy.
2. Development proposals will generally not be permitted except for the types of development set out below:
 - a) Rural exception housing in accordance with [Policy H6](#); or
 - b) Development in accordance with a made Neighbourhood Plan; or
 - c) Housing for Gypsies and Travellers or Travelling Showpeople in accordance with [Policy H12](#); or
 - d) Rural workers' accommodation in accordance with [Policy H7](#); or
 - e) Small scale development which contributes to a diverse and sustainable rural economy in accordance with [Policy ER4](#); or
 - f) Low carbon and renewable energy generation schemes in accordance with [Policy DH10](#); or
 - g) Residential extensions which do not lead to inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building; or
 - h) Replacement buildings which would bring about environmental improvement; or
 - i) Development for agriculture and forestry; or
 - j) Development for outdoor sports and recreation; or
 - k) The provision of essential community facilities which cannot be located within settlement limits; or
 - l) The redevelopment of brownfield land provided this respects the rural character of the surroundings and would not lead to a proliferation of development into the countryside; or
 - m) Essential utilities including development for transport infrastructure, waste and cemeteries; or
 - n) Minerals development in accordance with relevant policies in the Minerals and Waste Plan; or
 - o) Waste development in accordance with relevant policies in the Minerals and Waste Plan.
3. All development proposals within the countryside will be required to:
 - a) Recognise and respect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and
 - b) Not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements; and
 - c) Not lead to isolated development of dwellings; and
 - d) Maximise any opportunities to make the location more sustainable; and
 - e) Have no unacceptable adverse impacts on highway safety; and

- f) Maximise opportunities to improve public access to the countryside; and
- g) Achieve net biodiversity gains (through providing new habitats where possible) in accordance with [Policy NE1](#), where appropriate.

4.81 The council has reviewed and defined settlement areas, and where necessary expanded these to accommodate land to provide for future development needs. Land outside of the defined settlement areas fall within the Metropolitan Green Belt surrounding London or are designated as countryside.

4.82 Restricting general development in the countryside recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystems. It also helps protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the landscape character of the borough.

4.83 Preventing the proliferation of development in areas away from settlements is important, as countryside areas are generally not well located for facilities and services. This results in a greater reliance on private car use for travel.

4.84 It is recognised that in certain circumstances, development in the countryside is appropriate. Defining the types of development that are acceptable in countryside locations has the benefit of delivering certainty and consistency to residents, developers, and decision makers. Consistency and certainty are fundamentally important principles of the plan-led system.

4.85 The re-use of buildings provides opportunities for the diversification of the rural economy and contributes to the economic growth of the area. It can also contribute towards the reduction in demand for new buildings in the Green Belt and can be a means of conserving traditional buildings which are locally distinctive features within the borough's rural landscape. Where a development proposal relates to the re-use of an agricultural building, it must not result in the need to construct additional agricultural buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that the building to be re-used is no longer suitable/needed for an agricultural use.

4.86 Where buildings are to be converted, they should be of permanent and substantial construction. Buildings can often be converted without causing material harm to the open character of the Green Belt and surrounding area, however it is recognised that uses or levels of use can either directly or indirectly have an adverse effect. A structural survey should be submitted as part of any planning application to demonstrate that the proposal is of permanent and substantial construction.

4.87 When considering proposals for re-use, it is important to ensure the form of the proposed use is in keeping with the character of the surrounding area and does not require re-construction or a material change in size or scale. Locally distinctive features such as ventilation openings, large cart doors and stable joinery should be retained in proposals to maintain an appropriate character for the building and its setting within the surrounding area.

4.88 It may be necessary to locate essential utility provision in the countryside. This may relate to provisions of statutory undertakers such as water supply, waste water, gas, electricity, telecommunications infrastructure, and transportation improvements. Where proposals are required to be located in the countryside, they must be designed to minimise any harm to the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Regard will be given to the location and scale of proposals.

4.89 Due to the benefits low carbon and renewable energy generation brings to tackling climate change, development proposals will be supported unless there are unacceptable impacts that outweigh the benefits.

Policy SS14: Development in the Green Belt

The Metropolitan Green Belt, as defined on the Policies Map, will continue to be protected against inappropriate development in accordance with national policy.

Development proposals will only be permitted for the limited types of appropriate development set out below, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated*.

1. The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt are considered appropriate development where:

- a. buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b. the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c. the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d. the replacement of a building, building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e. limited infilling in villages;
- f. limited affordable housing for local community needs;
- g. limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - i. – not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
 - ii. – not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

2. The following other forms of development are also considered not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it:

- a. mineral extraction;
- b. engineering operations;
- c. local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
- d. the re-use or conversion of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
- e. material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and
- f. development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

All development proposals should be carefully managed to minimise visual impact and openness of the Green Belt and, where relevant, also meet the following criteria:

Agriculture and forestry dwellings:

- a. There is a demonstrable essential and permanent need for the new dwelling based on the functional requirements of the enterprise it is intended to serve that cannot be met elsewhere
- b. The dwelling is proportionate in scale and size to the needs of the holding it is intended to serve

Replacement buildings:

- a. The replacement building would be sited on or close to the position of the existing building, except where an alternative siting within the curtilage does not adversely affect the character of the area and demonstrably improves the openness of the Green Belt

Extensions and alterations to existing buildings:

- a. The existing building is of permanent and substantial construction and would not require extensive reconstruction
- b. The scale, form and footprint of the proposed use would not have an adverse impact on the character of the area or openness of the Green Belt

Re-use of buildings:

- a. The existing building is of permanent and substantial construction and its form is in keeping with its surroundings and would not require extensive reconstruction or a material change in size or scale
- b. The proposal would not result in the need to construct additional agricultural or other buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that the building to be re-used is no longer suitable for use
- c. The proposed use is low employment or low traffic generating activity, suitable to its location and level of accessibility

Development proposals outside the Green Belt, but conspicuous when viewed from it, should minimise any detrimental impacts to the visual amenity and openness of the Green Belt.

* 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations (NPPF, paragraph 144)

4.90 The area extending to the east and north of Twyford forms part of the Metropolitan Green Belt which surrounds London. The main aim of Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, but like all countryside, it also provides opportunities for people to access a rural environment, protects land for agriculture, forestry and similar land uses, and for nature conservation.

4.91 Government planning policy restricts the types of development allowed in the Green Belt to a number of appropriate forms. Inappropriate development is considered by definition to be harmful to the Green Belt and will not be approved, except in very special circumstances. A very special circumstances case to justify development will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Agriculture and forestry workers dwellings

4.92 Agriculture and forestry are the traditional activities in the countryside. In most cases, agricultural and forestry workers will be expected to live in nearby towns and villages.

4.93 Proposals for new agricultural and workers dwellings in the Green Belt will be judged on a case-by-case basis. Any such dwelling should be:

- Responding to an essential and permanent agricultural/forestry need on a holding that cannot be met elsewhere
- Proportionate to the holding or other enterprise it is intended to serve, not the personal preference of the occupier.

4.94 Consideration may be given to the removal of some permitted development rights for the extension of dwellings so approved to ensure that the dwelling remains proportionate and available to the agricultural holding in the long term. Temporary planning permissions will be considered where a new agricultural or forestry enterprise is being established and viability is not yet proven.

4.95 Development proposals covered by this policy should also accord with [Policy H7: Rural Worker's Dwellings](#).

Replacement buildings

4.96 Replacement buildings are expected to be sited on or close to the position of the existing or original building, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that an alternative position within its curtilage would reduce the overall impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

4.97 When considering proposals for replacement buildings, the starting point will be the size of the existing building. When assessing whether a replacement building is materially larger than the one it replaces, volume calculations for this type of development proposal to be submitted as part of any planning application to identify the size of the building in accordance with the council's Design Guide and Local Validation List requirements. This being volume as a measurement of external structure, inclusive of roof voids and basement areas.

4.98 Where there are substantial, permanent outbuildings, it may be possible to replace them, together with the existing building, provided that the impact upon the openness of the Green Belt is more appropriate than the existing form of development.

Extensions and alterations to existing buildings

4.99 The extension or alteration of buildings in the Green Belt is not considered to constitute inappropriate development, provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The starting point for consideration of proposals for extensions to existing buildings in the Green Belt will be the siting, scale, form and footprint of the original building. This means the building that existed on 1 July 1948 or, if there was no building on 1 July 1948, the building as it was originally built.

4.100 When assessing whether a proposed extension represents a disproportionate addition, comparison will be made between the size of the original building with the proposed extension, taking account of its siting, scale, form and footprint, and effect of the proposals on the openness and character of the area. Volume calculations should be submitted as part of any planning application to identify the size of the building in accordance with the council's Design Guide and Local Validation List requirements. Volumes for any subsequent extensions should be calculated, together with the volume of the proposed extensions. This being volume as a measurement of external structure, inclusive of roof voids and basement areas.

Re-use or conversion of buildings

4.101 The re-use of buildings provides opportunities for the diversification of the rural economy and contributes to the economic growth of the area. It can also contribute towards the reduction in demand for

new buildings in the Green Belt and can be a means of conserving traditional buildings which are locally distinctive features within the borough's rural landscape. Where a development proposal relates to the re-use of an agricultural building, it must not result in the need to construct additional agricultural buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that the building to be re-used is no longer suitable/needed for an agricultural use.

4.102 Where buildings are to be converted, they should be of permanent and substantial construction. Buildings can often be converted without causing material harm to the open character of the Green Belt and surrounding area, however it is recognised that uses or levels of use can either directly or indirectly have an adverse effect. A structural survey should be submitted as part of any planning application to demonstrate that the proposal is of permanent and substantial construction.

4.103 When considering proposals for re-use, it is important to ensure the form of the proposed use is in keeping with the character of the surrounding area and does not require re-construction or a material change in size or scale. Locally distinctive features such as ventilation openings, large cart doors and stable joinery should be retained in proposals to maintain an appropriate character for the building and its setting within the surrounding area.

4.104 The council is fully supportive of the production and use of renewable energy to help meet the energy needs of homes and non-residential buildings. Such development proposals are not deemed appropriate in the Green Belt under government planning policy. As such, development proposals will only be permitted in very special circumstances and will be expected to be consistent with [Policy DH7](#).

5. CONNECTIONS

5.1 A growing population puts growing pressure on our transport system, which in turn presents us with a greater environmental challenge.

5.2 To promote healthier lifestyles and to reduce the dominance of private cars in terms of traffic and congestion, we will support a sustainable pattern of development which maximises opportunities for undertaking trips by walking, cycling and public transport.

5.3 Embracing and planning for smart and innovative technologies will make it easier to adopt new opportunities as they arise to further reduce the impact of travel.

Policy C1: Active and Sustainable Transport and Accessibility

1. The use of active and sustainable transport modes is promoted. Development proposals should contribute to the delivery of an integrated transport system that is safe and accessible to all by implementing the following measures:
 - a) Locating the majority of development to places where people of all ages are able, or will be able, to access a wider range of local services and facilities;
 - b) Include measures to make walking and cycling the mode of choice for shorter journeys, both within and through the site, including links to facilities, services, bus stops and train stations;
 - c) Include measures to reduce reliance on single occupancy car trips and to prioritise and increase the use of sustainable transport modes;
 - d) Positively contribute towards the achievement of a legible and permeable environment for all ages and the improvement and delivery of walking and cycling routes that serve the site and wider area;
 - e) Optimise accessibility and connectivity both within development and in the surrounding area;
 - f) Maximise opportunities to provide improved self-sustaining public and community transport services and routes, including through active engagement with public transport service providers as appropriate;
 - g) Maximise integration of and interchange between transport modes;
 - h) Facilitate transport innovations and solutions which reduce greenhouse gases and improve air quality.
2. Proposals for new development should show how they have met the above listed criteria, where appropriate, and demonstrate how they support the objectives and policies of the most up to date Local Transport Plan (and its supporting documents) or any successor strategy.

5.4 To achieve sustainable development it is important that opportunities exist to undertake a higher proportion of travel in ways which have less impact on the environment. The council's Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) contains the transport policy for the borough which reflects the overarching principles of national policy and guidance as well as local priorities. Further work is underway to update the LTP. It is anticipated that LTP4 will be adopted alongside the LPU.

5.5 [Policy C1](#) and the spatial strategy set out in this plan, are predicated on locating the majority of development where people of all ages can access a wide range of services and facilities by walking and cycling. This approach to sustainable developments is reflected in the proposals for Grazeley Garden Town and the Strategic Development Locations where the scale allows the provision of infrastructure alongside the new community and the provision of an integrated high-quality network of walk and cycle ways, and transport interventions.

5.6 *Manual for Streets* (DfT, 2007c) and *Manual for Streets 2* (CIHT, 2010) and the *Living Streets: A Highways Guide for Developers in Wokingham* describe walking neighbourhoods of a maximum of 10 min walk being sustainable and those that would encourage people to walk and cycle. In addition to the consideration of distance to services, the quality of the route to these services is equally important. Walking and cycling routes should be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive routes otherwise residents will be deterred from walking to these facilities. More detailed guidance on the core design considerations of routes is contained within the Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) guidance and will be further refined as the LTP4 is developed.

5.7 Wokingham Borough has one of the highest car ownership rates in England. Delivering developments which offer a range of high quality and easily accessible transport choices is essential to facilitate modal shift and reduce reliance on private cars and associated congestion and environmental impacts. The layout of proposed development should prioritise pedestrians and cyclists and enable them to move easily between places both within and beyond the site. Particular regard should be had to links to train stations and bus stops, local shops and community facilities, and leisure and education facilities.

5.8 Enhancement of public transport provision could include increased frequencies and improved integration between bus and rail routes together with the provision of new stops or routes. The council will look towards proposals contributing towards solutions which enhance the sustainability of the site together with the location generally.

5.9 For the purpose of this plan, good public transport services are those that meet the following requirements:

- a) At least a thirty-minute service frequency during the period 7:00 to 19:00 Monday to Saturday; and
- b) At least an hourly service frequency, but ideally a thirty-minute frequency, on Sundays and outside the above hours.

5.10 Developers will also be expected to consider the reliability of services and where appropriate provide infrastructure which will improve journey times and reliability.

5.11 The council is committed to promoting transport innovations, encompassing varied initiatives and interventions, like autonomous vehicles, electric vehicles and associated charging infrastructure, delivery hubs, bike or car sharing, etc. There will be advances in technology over the course of the plan period and development proposals are encouraged to explore and evidence how new technologies and ideas can contribute to the sustainability of schemes.



Policy C2: Mitigation of Transport Impacts and Highways Safety and Design

1. Development proposals must fully assess the transport impacts of the development and provide for appropriate mitigation to minimise the adverse effects. Specifically, development proposals are required to:
 - a) Ensure that any material adverse impacts on existing and forecast traffic conditions are mitigated;
 - b) Provide, or make reasonable contributions towards providing, the transport infrastructure necessary to address the needs arising from the proposal, including the cumulative impacts of development, secured either as a requirement of planning conditions or by the payment of financial contributions through planning obligations, and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy;
 - c) Prepare and submit Transport Assessments and Statements alongside development proposals in accordance with the council's Local Validation requirements.
 - d) Implement measures to promote and improve sustainable travel through agreed travel plans or through making an appropriate contribution to the borough wide My Journey initiative or any successor scheme. Travel plans should include appropriate monitoring to ensure targets are met.
2. With regards to highways safety and design, all development proposals must:
 - a) Achieve safe and suitable access to the site for all users;
 - b) Contribute towards a high quality public realm designed in accordance with Living Streets (or any successor document), user access hierarchy and demonstrate how the principles of Healthy Streets have been incorporated;
 - c) Prioritise pedestrian, cycling and sustainable transport in accordance with [Policy C1](#);
 - d) Design roads to optimise traffic flows to avoid adverse environmental impacts;
 - e) Provide effective, convenient and safe delivery, collection, servicing and refuse and recycling collection arrangements;
 - f) Ensure that utilities are thoughtfully planned and designed into developments from the outset to minimise disruption when upgrades/repairs are required, for example by running in off-carriageway service corridors located in footways or verges and minimising the crossing of the roads;
 - g) Proposals for new roads which will accommodate bus routes should be tracked for larger vehicles and accommodate bus stop infrastructure to an agreed standard with the local highways authority.

5.12 The predicted level of development in Wokingham Borough can only be accommodated through major investment in transport, particularly sustainable modes. New development should make appropriate provision for works that contribute to the programmes developed as part of this plan and the Local Transport Plan strategy, either directly or through making appropriate contributions.

5.13 All developments will be assessed for their impact upon the transport network, including the local and trunk road and motorway networks and, where relevant, the rail network. Development should provide mitigation measures in line with their impacts on these networks, taking account of levels of development that have already been accepted, and mitigation measures that have already been agreed or implemented.

5.14 Planning permission will not be granted unless all transport improvements considered necessary to overcome any adverse impacts of the development can be secured by planning agreement, planning

conditions or an undertaking given by the developer that they will be implemented as part of the development.

5.15 Travel Plans must be submitted for all major development proposals and any schemes likely to impact on the local highway network. The content and scope for the Travel Plan will be negotiated between the council and the developer on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the specific location and nature of the proposed development. Travel Plans should include robust measures to ensure that the proposals in them are implemented, monitored and reviewed as necessary. The council may pursue further mitigation via Section 106, if targets are not met or plans are not carried out as agreed in the Travel Plan.

5.16 The council's My Journey initiative is a borough-wide sustainable travel awareness initiative which encourages residents and employees to consider and make use of the various travel by options available to them for local journeys. The initiative works closely with community groups, businesses and schools to provide advice and guidance to tailor programmes to match the needs to the organisation. In lieu of a site-specific travel plan, financial contributions towards the My Journey initiative, or any successor scheme, is acceptable as an alternative way of ensuring the travel; impact from a proposed development is minimised as they can then focus on that development.

5.17 The highway layout of all new developments is expected to follow the key principles to highways design set out in the *Living Streets: A Highways Guide for Developers in Wokingham* or any successor document. These layouts should be compliant with the philosophy of *Manual for Streets* (DfT, 2007c) and *Manual for Streets 2* (CIHT, 2010) by creating quality places that are fully accessible by all modes of transport.

5.18 All development proposals should follow the user access hierarchy, whatever the size of the development. This hierarchy essentially prioritises the needs of pedestrians and cyclists first, then public transport, and then motor traffic. The hierarchy is as follows:

- 1st Pedestrians
- 2nd Cyclists
- 3rd Public Transport
- 4th Specialist service vehicles (emergency services and waste collection)
- 5th Other motor traffic.

5.19 The council endorses the [Healthy Streets approach](#), developed by Transport for London, which is based on 10 key indicators. Developments proposals must demonstrate how street layouts and public realm satisfy the indicators. Schemes that perform well against these indicators are considered by definition to have streets that are well designed. The indicators are as follows:

- Pedestrians from all walks of life
- People choose to walk, cycle and use public transport
- Clean air
- People feel safe
- Not too noisy
- Easy to cross
- Places to stop and rest
- Shade and shelter
- People feel relaxed
- Things to see and do

5.20 To ensure the free flow of traffic, roads should be designed to avoid queuing and congestion as much as is practicable. This includes locating underground infrastructure outside the main carriage way, allowing it to be served without closing part of the road, and minimising the number of crossing points.

Policy C3: Cycling and Walking

Development proposals must promote sustainable transport by prioritising walking and cycling.

Walking

Development proposals should:

- a) Prioritise and improve the pedestrian environment and contribute towards achieving a high-quality public realm, including the provision of facilities for pedestrians to rest and relax (including seating) and high-quality and safe road environments and crossings, where needed.
- b) Contribute towards improved legibility and wayfinding including signage to key infrastructure, transport nodes, green spaces.
- c) Be permeable, easy and safe to walk through, and enhance existing routes which are adequately lit, create step-free legible access and entrance points whilst providing direct links to other pedestrian movement corridors and desire lines.
- d) Make an appropriate contribution towards improved wayfinding, including signposted links to key infrastructure, public transport hubs, green spaces and Green Routes and Greenways networks, where appropriate.

Cycling

Development proposals should:

- e) Contribute to improvements to deliver a high quality public realm which supports cycling by improvements and provision of signage, provision of access and facilities that do not conflict with the needs of pedestrians or compromise safety and addresses risks posed to cyclists from other transport modes.
- f) Maintain and enhance cycle routes identified in the most up-to-date cycling strategy, adding to or extending these where appropriate including the provision of connecting routes, and/or cycling facilities.
- g) Provide supporting facilities including wayfinding, pick-up points, secure cycle parking (for both occupiers and visitors), electric bike charging facilities, and shower and changing facilities as appropriate.
- h) Make an appropriate contributions towards improved wayfinding, including signposted links to key infrastructure, public transport hubs, green spaces and Green Routes and Greenways networks, where appropriate.

5.21 The council will continue to improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists through a variety of measures including the development of the cycle network, upgrading public realm, reducing severance and improvements to junctions and the introduction of traffic calming. My Journey Wokingham is a borough-wide sustainable travel campaign that aims to help and inspire residents, employees and students to travel by walking, cycling and public transport.

5.22 Pedestrians, particularly those with mobility, visual and/or auditory difficulties, are the most vulnerable of all users of the highway and their personal safety can be compromised by poorly designed developments. Prioritising pedestrians has multiple benefits, including easing the pressure on the public transport and road networks, encouraging healthier lifestyles, and making places feel safer through increased natural surveillance

5.23 New development can facilitate change to people's walking habits by providing permeable spaces with direct, safe and attractive walking routes. These spaces should both minimise the conflict between pedestrians and competing uses such as servicing or car parking and ensure movement and the quality of the public realm is not impeded by street clutter whilst catering for the specific needs of pedestrians with mobility issues.

5.24 Similarly to walking, cycling has multiple benefits. It enables people to lead healthier, more active lives, can help to reduce the pressure on highway capacity and public transport, facilitate improvements to the public realm and enable greater numbers of people to use the existing road space.

5.25 Through coordinated efforts to improve the environment for cyclists, cycling can become a more attractive transport option resulting in an increased shift from the motor car. This will contribute towards a reduction in congestion and harmful emissions leading to better air quality, as well as improving health by enabling an active lifestyle.

5.26 Provision of secure cycle parking and storage facilities are essential in order to encourage this mode of transport. Therefore, the needs of cyclists should be given careful consideration during the design of new developments as provision of parking and storage space is intrinsically linked to the quality of the public realm.

5.27 Proposals to deliver new connected, convenient, safe and signed pedestrian and cycle networks across the borough, and proposals to improve and link to existing networks, are actively encouraged. In order to enhance the convenience and attractiveness of walking and cycling, routes need to be continuous and direct to facilities, places of work and interchanges.

Policy C4: Car and Cycle Parking

1. Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of the location.
2. Development proposals must:
 - a) Provide and retain appropriate levels of vehicle parking (including parking for people with disabilities, visitors, and electric charging facilities) in accordance with adopted standards; and

- b) Provide and retain appropriate levels of secure and covered cycle storage / cycle parking facilities for the occupants of, and visitors to, the development.

5.28 The council is keen to promote sustainable modes of transport but recognises that car ownership levels are currently high in the borough and that cars and other vehicles will in the short term continue to play a vital role in many people's lives in certain locations around the borough.

5.29 It is important that appropriate vehicle parking is delivered as a component of any proposed development. This requires a careful balance to be struck. On the one hand, it is important that enough parking is provided to reduce adverse impacts on the safety and function of the highway and public transport network through on-street parking, as well as the visual impact from parking on non-designated parking areas such as grass verges. But on the other, there is a need to use land efficiently and encourage the increased use of sustainable modes of transport.

5.30 Where robust evidence is provided and more sustainable transport modes are both available and accessible, parking provision can be considered more flexibly, but there should always be disabled parking provision and well designed, secure parking for cycles.

5.31 Commercial development should also make adequate provision for lorry parking, turning, servicing and facilities for deliveries etc. Institutions such as schools and care homes need to provide parking for staff and visitors, but again consideration of limiting this where appropriate should be given.

5.32 Improved cycle storage, parking facilities and associated infrastructure (such as bike pumps as recently installed at the Peach Place redevelopment) at public transport hubs, businesses, schools and essential services and facilities can contribute towards promoting walking and cycling as a health enhancing physical activity.

Policy C5: Technology and innovation in transport

1. Technology and innovation in transport which is designed to improve mobility, reduce congestion and improve emissions and air quality will be supported providing it does not compromise highway safety and other amenity and environmental concerns.

Electric vehicle charging

- a) New developments must provide and retain electric vehicle charging facilities in accordance with adopted standards.
- b) Proposals to retrofit charging points into existing areas will be encouraged providing this would not result in any adverse impact on highway or pedestrian safety.
- c) Major development proposals will be required to submit an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy to demonstrate that the provision of electric vehicle charging facilities in developments are in a safe, convenient and accessible location.

Refuelling

- a) Refuelling stations should be protected, unless it can be demonstrated that they are operationally unviable. Opportunities to incorporate new technologies into existing refuelling stations, (such as

hydrogen refuelling, electric vehicle charging facilities) are encouraged and should be fully explored before a change to an alternative use is considered for the site.

- b) New or replacement refuelling facilities will be directed to accessible locations on the highway network and should incorporate the latest technologies from the outset. The layout and design of new or replacement facilities should be as flexible as possible to allow incorporation of, and adaptation to, future technological innovations.

5.33 Technology and innovation is an increasingly important consideration, for example, the UK is already a leader in Europe in terms of electric vehicle manufacture and uptake with 1 in every 8 zero emission cars bought in Europe in 2017 being built in the UK (Road to Zero Strategy (2018).

5.34 Government planning policy sets out that policies for parking standards should, amongst other things, take account of the need to ensure an adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.

5.35 Electric and hybrid vehicle ownership is increasing, and likely to become more prevalent over the plan period. One of the principal barriers to increased use of low-emissions vehicles is the lack of supporting infrastructure and in particular, charging facilities at residential properties. It is therefore important that provision of adequate electric vehicle charging facilities is designed into development proposals from the outset, especially residential developments. A number of electric vehicle charging facilities have been installed across the borough, notably following the regeneration of Wokingham Town Centre. In addition, the proposed Grazeley Garden Town provides an excellent opportunity to deliver a self-contained new settlement that champions innovative sustainable transport interventions, which can promote smarter choices for active travel and reduce carbon emissions.

5.36 Where developments propose new car parking, provision of charging facilities will be provided in accordance with the latest standards. The council's Local Validation List requires proposals for all major development to submit an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy. This should include details relating to on-site infrastructure, installation of charging points and consider the future proofing of the site. This will be considered on a case-by-cases basis, with agreement from the council prior to commencement of development. The provision of facilities above that required by the council's standards will be supported providing it does not conflict with other policies. This approach is consistent with the government's Road to Zero Strategy (2018) which sets out the expectation for every new home to have a charge point, where appropriate. It is much more cost effective if provision is made from the outset of new development, thereby avoiding retrofitting which would be contrary to the broader principles of sustainability.

5.37 The level of off-street electric vehicle charging facilities are expanding rapidly around the borough. The increased use of low-emissions vehicles would make a significant contribution to tackling local air quality issues linked to traffic and congestion, in addition to reducing carbon emissions. This is recognised in the council's Air Quality Action Plan as well as previous development plan policy promoting walking, cycling and sustainable modes of transport. The council welcomes proposals or initiatives which will contribute to reduced emissions from its road network.

5.38 Additionally, as new eco-friendly forms of vehicle become more prevalent, it is important that an appropriate refuelling network is in place across the borough to cater for them. Development proposals should therefore retain and provide appropriate refuelling infrastructure to meet future demand. Though the council will strongly encourage non fossil-fuelled vehicles, it is recognised that take up will not be immediate and existing fuelling stations will remain important. They should be retained in order to prevent unnecessarily long journeys to fill up vehicles.

Policy C6: Digital infrastructure and communications technology

1. Development proposals for digital infrastructure or communications technology will be supported provided that:
 - a) It is not detrimental to local character, amenity, heritage assets, or the quality of the public realm;
 - b) It will be sited and designed to minimise its visual impact, including the use of innovative design solutions such as lamp column swap-out or concealment/camouflage options;
 - c) Proposals for new telecommunications apparatus should demonstrate that opportunities to share existing facilities have been exhausted. Proposals on the highway should also demonstrate that it is not feasible to locate on existing buildings or other structures;
 - d) Alternative sites and site-sharing options have been fully investigated and it has been demonstrated that no preferable alternative sites are potentially available which would result in a development that would be less visually intrusive.
2. Major new developments and infrastructure projects should be designed to enable the installation of the most up-to-date standards of digital connectivity and communications technology to ensure easy maintenance and future upgrading as technologies and standards improve.
3. Major commercial developments should provide a communal chamber on-site for digital infrastructure and telecommunications equipment, or make an appropriate contribution to the cost of providing one nearby.

5.39 The last twenty years have seen huge technological advances resulting in a shift in ways of working, and significant growth in technology based sectors of employment. Access to high quality digital infrastructure and communications technology are increasingly viewed as a vital component of modern life, by residents, visitors, and a wide range of businesses. The continued growth and success of the local economy is dependent on securing access to digital infrastructure and communications services of the highest specification available, that is futureproofed to enable upgrades as technologies and standards improve. To ensure end users can exercise choice regarding technologies and suppliers, applicants are encouraged to engage with a range of providers in the design of major developments.

5.40 Though future investment in digital infrastructure and communications technology is vital, it will need to be provided and coordinated in a manner that respects the borough's environment and heritage, and in a way that minimises disruption to the free flow of traffic.

5.41 New apparatus to support the roll out of 5G is expected to require infill coverage within established residential areas. New apparatus should be sited away from listed buildings and other local landmarks wherever possible, but also seek to minimise unnecessary and visually obtrusive clutter of the public realm. To minimise disruptive street works, major commercial development should provide or enable the quick and easy installation of new communications services to meet occupier's needs. Proposals for new

telecommunications apparatus will only be supported where all reasonable options for sharing existing facilities, or the use of less obtrusive locations, have been ruled out as impracticable.

5.42 Equipment that is no longer required should also be removed in accordance with Ofcom's Electronic Code of Practice, to reduce clutter and improve the experience of pedestrians and other highway uses and the quality of the urban realm.

Policy C7: Utilities

1. Development proposals should ensure that there is adequate water supply, and wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure to serve all new development.
2. Developers are encouraged to contact the relevant water supply/waste water company as early as possible in the planning process (preferably prior to the submission of a detailed / full planning application), to assist with the identification of any potential water and wastewater network reinforcement requirements.
3. Where there is an identified constraint on the existing capacity of the network, the Council will expect the developer to submit a strategy detailing the works to be provided or, where appropriate, apply a phasing condition to any approved planning permission to ensure that any necessary upgrades are coordinated with new development and are delivered ahead of their occupation.
4. Planning permission for development which results in the need for off-site upgrades to the existing network should ensure the occupation of the development is aligned with the delivery of the necessary infrastructure. The Council will apply planning conditions to ensure this is achieved.
5. Development proposals should be carefully designed and located to ensure that new, and existing utilities infrastructure is planned from the outset, and will be supported provided that:
 - a) disruption to existing residents and properties in the surrounding area is minimised with service margins/corridors being provided, and
 - b) Where new connections, upgrades and/or repairs are necessary, they seek to maximise the flow of traffic by avoiding the crossing of roads and by locating the infrastructure away from the main carriageway.

5.43 New development planned for the borough will have a potential impact on existing infrastructure, such as utilities. For developments and communities to be sustainable, they must be supported by adequate and appropriate utilities infrastructure. It is important that new and upgraded infrastructure is required at the right time in the right place. Adequate water and wastewater infrastructure is needed in order to support sustainable development, and this is made clear in national policy and guidance. Development proposals will need to demonstrate that there is either enough infrastructure capacity or that this can be readily provided as part of any scheme. Additionally, utility infrastructure should be appropriately designed into schemes at the earliest stage to ensure future upgrade / repair works have minimal impact on the area and highway network.

5.44 National policy is clear that planning policies and decisions should support making effective use of land, considering the availability and capacity of existing and proposed infrastructure and services, including water supply and wastewater. This policy sets out how water supply and wastewater capacity is expected to be delivered and upgraded over the plan-period. Developers are encouraged to undertake engagement with the relevant water supply /waste water company and the Environment Agency (where appropriate), early in the planning application process to identify any potential infrastructure requirements for the existing water and wastewater network. The Water Cycle – Phase 1 Scoping Study (2019) provides a high-level assessment of future development on water supply, wastewater collection and waste water treatment.

5.45 This policy also ensures that development is appropriately phased through condition, to ensure any necessary upgrades to the network are delivered ahead of occupation. This is to ensure that such infrastructure is operational, and avoids unacceptable impacts on existing or new properties, and on the environment through for example the pollution of land and watercourses.

5.46 The development or expansion of existing water supply or wastewater facilities will generally be supported where it is needed to serve existing or proposed development, or in the interests of long-term water supply and wastewater management, provided any potential adverse impacts on the land-use or environment are minimised.

5.47 The specific provision of digital infrastructure and communications technology is set out in [Policy C6](#).

Green and Blue Infrastructure

5.48 National policy is clear that local plans should maintain and enhance networks of habitats and green and blue infrastructure, including where this can enable and support healthy lifestyles. Existing networks of green and blue infrastructure are valued by residents, and are important for recreation, leisure, community use, townscape and landscape quality and visual amenity.

Policy C8: Green and Blue Infrastructure and Public Rights of Way

1. The existing areas of green and blue infrastructure of Wokingham Borough will be protected and enhanced for the biodiversity, recreational, amenity, health and townscape and landscape value, and contribution towards mitigating and adapting to climate change. Development proposals should contribute to enhancing the network of habitats, open spaces and waterscapes.
2. The provision and enhancement of a network of publicly accessible green and blue infrastructure should be considered by developers from the outset and form an integral component of the planning and design of development proposals.
3. Development proposals should:
 - a) Avoid the loss, fragmentation, isolation or other adverse impacts on existing green and blue infrastructure (including green routes and long distance riverside paths as shown on the Policies Map), unless replacement provision can be provided which will improve the green and blue infrastructure network in terms of its quantity, quality and accessibility.
 - b) Provide opportunities for, or contribute towards, improvements and enhancements to the quality and quantity of the wider multi-functional green and blue infrastructure

network and other open spaces (for example extending spaces and connections and/or better management), in particular by integrating existing green infrastructure assets into development through high-quality design.

- c) Promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors (including river corridors), for people and wildlife by strengthening ecological networks and connecting settlements to the countryside via a network of Greenways, green routes, public open spaces, footpaths, riverside paths, bridleways and cycle routes. This includes connections to local services and facilities, public transport and green spaces.
 - d) Provide clear arrangements for the long-term maintenance and management and/or enhancement of the green and blue infrastructure assets.
- 4. Development proposals that include, or are adjacent to, an existing Public Right of Way should not have an adverse impact on the Public Rights of Way network and must avoid creating routes that result in dead ends or are extinguished without suitable alternative provision.
 - 5. New Public Rights of Way will be supported where consistent with the prioritised routes identified in the council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).
 - 6. Development proposals should improve or contribute towards:
 - a) The establishment of a Loddon/ Blackwater riverside footpath and bridleway, as defined on the Policies Map, to accommodate dual use for all users
 - b) The establishment of a riverside footpath and cycleway to accommodate dual use for all users along the Emm Brook
 - c) The establishment of a linear 'canal corridor' at Grazeley garden town to integrate the existing Foudry Brook with development to provide informal recreation for all users and to facilitate access to Reading and Green Park
 - d) Opportunities for improvements for green infrastructure to minimise flood risk and urban heat island effect.
 - 7. Development proposals for new, extended or enhanced green routes will be supported. The location of green routes are set out on the Policies Map.

5.49 Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space and other green features, both urban and rural, which are essential for providing quality of life, wellbeing and environmental benefits for communities. It also plays an active role by facilitating biodiversity net gain, managing landscapes and flood risk and mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Green infrastructure networks include the natural, planned and managed green areas in urban and rural settings.

5.50 Green infrastructure networks include, but are not limited to: countryside; open spaces; river valleys, corridors and wetlands; Sites of Urban Landscape Value (SULVs); Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS); landscape features; 'green' corridors, including ecological corridors; Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG); allotments; amenity areas within developments; informal recreation areas; green routes and green route enhancement areas; country parks and public rights of way. Blue infrastructure is more specifically linked to water, including main rivers, pools, ponds, ordinary watercourses and sustainable drainage systems (SuDs), which often work in tandem with green infrastructure.

5.51 The borough has a wide variety of green corridors, mainly associated with the three low land river valleys in the borough: Thames Valley, Loddon Valley and the Blackwater Valley. They make a significant contribution to the character of the landscape and form an important part of the borough's network of green and blue infrastructure, connected by a series of Greenways and Green Routes. In addition, the borough also contains a wealth of parks and gardens, riverside paths, woodlands, allotments, common land and designated sites of nature importance, which provide vital ecosystem services and provide green spaces for informal / formal recreation.

5.52 Improving accessibility and connectivity to existing green infrastructure assets and the wider green infrastructure network must be integral to the layout of development proposals, which will help promote and support healthy and active communities. For instance, development proposals should create attractive, safe and accessible routes within and across the site(s) to connect to public transport, existing areas of green space and community services and facilities, such as schools and town, district or local centres.

5.53 Development proposals should be consistent with the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) 2020-2030, which sets out the council's strategy and priorities for the management and improvement of the rights of way network to 2030. Development proposals that include or are adjacent to an existing Public Rights of Way are required to submit a Rights of Way Impact Assessment in line with the council's Local Validation List requirements to demonstrate that development will not have an adverse impact on the existing network.

5.54 In addition to green corridors, opportunities to positively integrate and enhance river corridors in development will be sought by the council, such as maintaining and enhancing access for riverside walking and cycling (including Greenways and Green Routes). Therefore, this policy should be read and be implemented alongside [Policy NE10](#) where development proposals include or are adjacent to a watercourse.

5.55 The council's Greenways Strategy sets out the network of traffic free commuting and leisure routes connecting existing and new settlements, with a particular focus on the four existing Strategic Development Locations. Wherever possible, Greenways will have a hard, permeable surface which ensures accessibility for all users, including people with visual and physical impairments. A number of these routes have been delivered, which consist of existing public footpaths, byways and bridleways, with the aim of creating a network of connected traffic-free routes across the borough.

5.56 This network of routes will be further expanded to ensure future development is well integrated and connected across the borough. The establishment of the River Loddon Long Distance Path (LDP) will provide informal recreation links in the form of a footpath and bridleway to link the Thames Valley Path at Wargrave to the Blackwater Valley Path at Swallowfield. The River Loddon LDP will also link between many Greenway routes, in particular those greenways connecting to the SDLs at Arborfield Garrison and South of the M4. The establishment of the riverside footpath and cycleway along the Emm Brook will also provide for informal recreation links to connect in with Wokingham Town and Dinton Pastures Country Park at Winnersh.

5.57 The council supports the continued need to protect and further enhance these long-distance recreational paths, and the integration of public rights of way, greenways and other routes, with wider networks, including the National Cycle Network and the Thames Path to provide a holistic approach.

5.58 The starting point for green and blue infrastructure should be the existing provision across the site and beyond. A landscape led approach to development schemes, that takes into account the Landscape Character Assessment and other relevant policies of this Plan would form an important part setting out a vision for delivering green and blue infrastructure.

5.59 The networks of green and blue infrastructure are an important element of providing a robust habitat network that connects sites recognised for their high wildlife value. Green and blue infrastructure is most effective where it enhances the habitat recovery network, providing connectivity between wildlife sites and contributing to the objectives of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas. Policies [NE1](#) and [NE3](#) further set out how these networks can be enhanced.

5.60 To ensure the benefits of green and blue infrastructure are delivered, it must be well planned, designed and maintained. Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is used as part of mitigating impacts on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA) and provides alternative open space that has added to the borough's green infrastructure assets.

5.61 Significant new green and blue infrastructure will be provided by delivery of the garden settlement at Grazeley, including through the site, and into surrounding areas. This is set out in detail in [Policy SS3](#).

6. ECONOMY: JOBS & RETAIL

A thriving borough creates a thriving economy

6.1 Wokingham Borough is in the heart of the Thames Valley, recognised as the UK's most productive sub-region. Wokingham plays an important role in the continued economic success of the Thames Valley, and is home to many multinational corporations with expertise across the key sectors of digital technology, life sciences and healthcare, and energy and environment, alongside a highly skilled workforce. Thousands of smaller businesses together ensure the Wokingham economy remains buoyant and attractive to investors.

6.2 For this economic success to continue in the decades to come, it is important to respond to the changing needs of the labour market. This includes the need for affordable, quality housing, flexible workspaces and an integrated and connected borough that allows businesses to adapt. A borough where people want to be and stay.

6.3 The Thames Valley Berkshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) (2015/16 – 2020/21) sets out the prospectus for growth across the sub region, by prioritising access to talented people and bright ideas. A wide range of implementation mechanisms will help to achieve this priority, alongside six main objectives in the SEP.

6.4 In addition, The Thames Valley Berkshire LEP, alongside partners, consulted in 2019 on the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS), to build on the government's vision to drive productivity improvements. The BLIS sets out the commitment to become the best of global and local, and to capitalise on the locational advantages of the Thames Valley by accelerating the pace of economic growth. This aspiration can be supported by enhancing productivity, forging stronger alliances across all geographies, and building relationships with investors. To better understand the functional economic geography of the area, the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVBLEP) and the six Berkshire authorities commissioned a study to look investigate economic relationships, linkages and flows which characterise the sub-regional economy. The Berkshire Functional Economic Market Area Study (FEMA) (2016) defined three core functional economic market areas, based on a 'best fit' to local authority boundaries due to their consistently strong inter-relationships. Wokingham Borough is in the Central Berkshire Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) along with the Boroughs of Bracknell Forest, Reading, and part of Windsor and Maidenhead.

6.5 A further report was commissioned to consider the objectively assessed economic development needs of the Central Berkshire FEMA. The Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) (2016) considered the quantitative and qualitative floorspace requirements over the period 2013-2036.

6.6 To take account of more recent data, an additional study has been undertaken to assess the future employment land and floorspace requirements in Wokingham Borough, based on jobs forecasts and a specific scenario that relates to the calculation of Local Housing Need. The assessment aligns future jobs forecasts with population growth. The study considers net and gross demand, gross supply and the floorspace requirements across office and industrial uses needed to support economic growth in the borough over the plan period. 'Industrial' refers to both warehousing and industrial (B1(c), B2 and B8) uses because in practice these activities are interchangeable and routinely require/occupy the same type of space. Given the more recent data this study analyses, the outputs from the EDNA (2016) is not being relied upon to inform the Local Plan Update.

6.7 When considering the balance between demand and supply, including future commitments, the study found that there is no quantitative requirement for additional office or industrial land/floorspace as gross supply exceeds gross demand.

Policy ER1: Meeting employment needs

Employment needs in the borough will be supported and met by:

1. Safeguarding the Core Employment Areas shown on the policies map and listed below, and encouraging and facilitating their ongoing regeneration and evolution in accordance with economic needs:
 - a. Green Park Business Park, Reading;
 - b. Headley Road East Industrial Estate, Woodley;
 - c. Hogwood Industrial Estate, Finchampstead;
 - d. Molly Millars Industrial Estate, Wokingham;
 - e. Ruscombe Business Park, Ruscombe;
 - f. Sutton's Industrial Estate, Earley;
 - g. Thames Valley Business Park, Earley;
 - h. Thames Valley Science and Innovation Park, Shinfield;
 - i. Toutley Industrial Estate, Wokingham; and
 - j. Winnersh Triangle Business Park, Winnersh.
2. Supporting new employment uses within town centres, at an appropriate scale to those centres.
3. Facilitating rural enterprise and diversification in accordance with [Policy ER4](#).
4. Allocating new employment land as part of a sustainable development at Grazeley Garden Town.

6.8 The approach set out in this policy directs development to Core Employment Areas and town centres, whilst allowing flexibility and a diversification of uses to ensure continued attractiveness to the market.

6.9 The jobs provided by businesses located in Core Employment Areas play a vital role in the economy of the borough and the wider Thames Valley. International, national and local businesses together provide a range of employment opportunities across these areas across a number of sectors. This role must be protected and enhanced for the benefit of the economy and the reputation of the Thames Valley as a place to establish and grow business.

6.10 Town centres are recognised as being well connected places at the heart of communities. Businesses play a vital role in the vitality and viability of town centres and provide a key complimentary use supporting the wider role of the centres. They can also provide opportunities for a wider variety of employment types than larger business and industrial parks.

6.11 The allocation of additional employment land as part of Grazeley Garden Town is a separate consideration given the scale of the proposal, that supports the long term delivery of a sustainable community where the need to travel is reduced by providing jobs that are easily accessible. The quantity, type and location of employment floor space at Grazeley will be subject to further master planning work.

Policy ER2: Core Employment Areas

1. Within the Core Employment Areas, the overall level of employment land should be maintained.
2. Expansion and intensification of employment uses will be supported where:
 - a. It is appropriate to the character of the area; and
 - b. It does not have an unacceptable impact on nearby residential uses, other employment uses and other uses, including impacts caused by traffic movements, noise, emissions, hours of operation and lighting.
3. Development proposals involving the loss of land to non-employment uses will only be acceptable in the following exceptional circumstances:
 - a. Non-employment uses that would support the character and economic function of the Core Employment Area and not lead to a significant reduction in employment land;
 - b. It is evidenced that there is no market interest in the site for employment purposes following genuine, active and effective marketing; and
 - c. The replacement use does not undermine the continued economic function of the wider Core Employment Area.
4. Core Employment Areas should include a range of type and size of units, including flexible business space to meet current and future employment needs. Development proposals will be supported where they provide a range of types and sizes of units, allow buildings to be easily adaptable for changing needs and encourage start-ups and grow-on space.

6.12 Major employment development will be directed primarily to Core Employment Areas. These areas are successful employment locations which play an important role in supporting the wider economy and provide local employment opportunities. It is important that the integrity of these areas is protected, so the overall level of employment land within each Core Employment Area should be maintained.

6.13 Some flexibility with existing employment land will allow an appropriate balance of uses to develop in the right locations. For this reason, it is not appropriate to simply apply a blanket protection to all land currently used for employment across the borough. Core Employment Areas have been identified as those areas of greatest economic significance, providing space that is required to ensure that the local economy is balanced and that those activities which support higher value businesses are in proximity. As a result, an overall loss of employment land in these core areas would risk undermining the local economy, and should not be permitted. It is worth emphasising that this policy does not primarily aim to protect a specific number of jobs (which could be replaced in a non-employment use), but is rather about the balance of the economy.

6.14 'Employment land' in the context of this policy is land which is primarily in B1, B2 or B8 use, or is a use not in the above use classes for which an employment area is the only realistic location. This is a judgement that will need to be made on a case-by-case basis, but relevant considerations will include the effects of noise and disturbance, odours etc., HGV movements and whether the use requires a building that would detract from the character of other areas, e.g. with high, blank, featureless frontages and very large building footprints.

6.15 Technological advances are changing working practices. A growth in hot-desking, remote working, less regimented working hours, freelancing and small businesses are all increasing demand for more flexible

workspaces that facilitate collaboration and provide supporting facilities on-site for workers to help improve their work-life balance. To ensure Core Employment areas continue to meet the ongoing needs of businesses, complementary uses will be allowed where these support the continued economic function and attractiveness of the area, for example through the provision of services and facilities that support workers and customers where none are currently within walking distance.

6.16 To ensure a healthy and balanced economy, it is important that a variety of sizes and types of premises is available. Development proposals which widened the range of premises available, including flexible employment space that can easily be subdivided to meet the needs of small and growing businesses will be supported.

6.17 To retain existing buildings in employment use, and allocated employment land, evidence will be required to show how the property or land cannot be used for its existing or designated employment use. In general marketing of a property should be for at least 18 months and at a realistic price, including supporting details of any valuations undertaken as part of the marketing process. A statement should be submitted as part of any planning application demonstrating that an existing use is no longer viable, alongside evidence that shows genuine and sustained efforts to promote, improve and market the property at a reasonable value have been undertaken. The extent of marketing required will be proportionate to the type relevant unit(s) (for example an international headquarters style unit would require wider marketing than the UK). The responses received from interested parties and their justification for not pursuing the property should also be included.

Policy ER3: Employment Uses Outside Core Employment Areas

1. Development proposals involving the loss of employment land outside of Core Employment Areas will only be acceptable where:
 - a. It is beneficial to the local economy and community; and
 - b. It is appropriate to the character of the area; and
 - c. It does not have unacceptable impact on nearby uses; and
 - d. There is strong evidence that there is no market interest for employment purposes, following genuine, active and effective marketing; and
 - e. It would not lead to an unacceptable piecemeal change.
2. Development proposals for small employment uses or a mix of uses within development limits but outside Core Employment Areas will be supported provided:
 - a. It is appropriate to the character of the area; and
 - b. It does not have an unacceptable impact on nearby residential uses, other employment uses and other uses, including impacts caused by traffic movements, noise, emissions, hours of operation and lighting.
3. Major development proposals within development limits but outside Core Employment Areas, will also be required to demonstrate:
 - a. Compliance with a sequential approach to location;
 - b. How it is appropriate in nature and scale to its location;
 - c. The transport implications of the proposal and how they will be mitigated;
 - d. The number and type of jobs likely to be created, including how they are to be sourced; and
 - e. How any unacceptable adverse impacts will be mitigated.

6.18 The economy of the borough is supported by several smaller scale rural and semi-rural employment sites that provide opportunities for small and medium sized businesses which form an important part of a diverse local economy. Although these sites have not been specifically protected through the Core Employment Area designation, such employment locations should be protected and enhanced where appropriate.

6.19 Loss of existing employment land outside the Core Employment Areas may be acceptable, with consideration given to the needs of the local economy and community that it serves. Evidence will be required to show how the property or land cannot be used for its existing or designated employment use. In general marketing of a property should be for at least 12 months and at a realistic price, including supporting details of any valuations undertaken as part of the marketing process. A statement should be submitted as part of any planning application demonstrating that an existing use is no longer viable, alongside evidence that shows genuine and sustained efforts to promote, improve and market the property at a reasonable value have been undertaken. Supporting evidence demonstrating how the proposal would be beneficial to the local community may also be beneficial for appropriate new uses.

6.20 The intensification of existing employment sites will generally be supported because further employment opportunities can be provided on previously developed sites. Such proposals will need to be in keeping with existing development and provide clear justification for the need to intensify the site. Given that expansion of existing sites would likely be onto adjacent greenfield land, detailed information and strong justification will be required as part of any application.

6.21 Whilst Core Employment Areas are the focus of employment use, proposals for new development may come forward on sites outside of these and that are not currently allocated for employment uses. Where a site is not already in employment use, an assessment will be made of the benefits arising from the proposal. Each case will need to be considered based on its merits and the local circumstances.

6.22 Major office development will generally not be suitable outside of core employment areas and town centres.

Policy ER4: Supporting the rural economy

1. The rural economy will be supported by small scale development within the countryside, where it is demonstrated that the proposal:
 - a. Is required to support an existing or new rural business or enterprise; or
 - b. Enables suitable diversification of an agricultural or other land based rural business; or
 - c. Encourages rural leisure and tourism which builds on the unique assets and character of the borough's countryside; or
 - d. Promotes the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, which meet the day to day needs of rural communities; or
 - e. Facilitates the introduction of, or improvement to, electronic communications networks and digital infrastructure to help support local businesses, including the expansion of high-speed broadband.
2. All development must be contained within appropriately converted existing buildings or in well-designed new buildings which are proportionate to the use and respect the character of the rural setting. Proposals for live-work units within the countryside will be supported where they allow buildings to be appropriately converted and where they would not result in isolated dwellings.

3. Small scale retail development associated with farm shops and horticultural nurseries will be supported where proposals are ancillary to the main use of the farm/nursery and do not cause significant harm to the vitality and viability of local centres.
4. Proposals for farm diversification must be accompanied by a comprehensive whole farm diversification plan, which establishes how the proposed changes will assist in retaining the viability of a farm and its agricultural enterprise.

6.23 In accordance with the NPPF, this policy approach supports the suitable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas in order to help create a sustainable and prosperous rural economy, while also respecting the character of the countryside. It is recognised that in some circumstances business and community uses to meet specific local needs may have to be located adjacent to or beyond existing settlements.

6.24 All proposals covered by this policy should also accord with [Policy SS13](#).

6.25 For the purpose of this policy, a rural business is defined as any type of business which is suitable for a rural location. Typically businesses suited to rural locations will be those that generate low employment and low traffic movements. Larger scale, more intense employment development would negatively impact on the character of the countryside and adversely affect the rural road network. Such larger scale employment development is better located within settlements, where there is associated access to public transport, services and facilities, in accordance with the approach to employment development set out in [Policy ER2](#).

6.26 In order to support the rural economy, national policy is clear that the sequential test should not be applied to applications for small scale rural offices or other small scale rural development. For the purposes of this policy, small-scale rural development is considered to be proposals which fall below the 500sqm threshold.

Policy ER5: Employment and Skills Plan

1. Major development will contribute to employment, education and skills initiatives.
2. Development proposals for 10 or more dwellings or 1,000m² of non-residential floorspace will be accompanied by an Employment and Skills Plan to show how the proposal provides opportunities for training, apprenticeships or other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills required by developers, contractors or end users of the proposal.
3. Where it is demonstrated that an Employment and Skills Plan either cannot be implemented, or is inappropriate for the proposal, an in lieu financial contribution will be sought in place of delivering an Employment and Skills Plan. This will be used to fund relevant employment, skills and training initiatives.

6.27 While employment rates in Wokingham Borough are historically very high, there are pockets of long-term unemployment and residents that require additional support. The council's Economic Development Strategy (2016) aspires for all residents to share the benefits of a strong economy, with reduced levels of

deprivation and increased labour market participation. This helps to deliver the Local Plan objective of ensuring economic benefits are experienced by all. A suitably skilled local workforce will in turn reduce reliance on labour from outside the borough, and therefore contribute to a reduction in congestion and lower carbon emissions.

6.28 Major development schemes must submit a site specific Employment and Skills Plan, and accompanying method statement, to ensure residents have the skills businesses need, and the ability to compete in the market.

6.29 The Employment Skills Plan should be undertaken in line with the council's guidance or any subsequent revision, and secured through a legal agreement. All reasonable steps should be explored to provide an Employment and Skills Plan. Where it is demonstrated that this is not possible, an in lieu financial contribution in line with the council's guidance will be required to support other related initiatives.

RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRES

6.30 National policy encourages local planning authorities to pursue policies which support the vitality and viability of town centres. This recognises that town centres are at the heart of communities, with policies seeking to manage and facilitate growth. However, the retail sector and the role of town centres is changing and facing challenges more recently. Successful town centres are places which are activity based places where the community can gather; places, where not only shops but complementary uses draw people into the centre. As a result, there is reduced emphasis on protecting all A1 retail uses and a shift towards providing complementary mixed use centres. This has been reflected in the removal of primary and secondary frontages.

6.31 To better understand the retail and commercial needs of western Berkshire, the four authorities of Reading, Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham commissioned a study to look into the specific needs of each authority. The Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Assessment (2016) sets out the need for comparison and convenience floorspace over the period 2016 – 2036 across the four authorities. The assessment was based on qualitative and quantitative methods, including telephone surveys and the impact of recent development. The assessment calculated the 'need' for 5,000m² of comparison goods (non-food stores such as clothing and electronics) and 12,000 m² of convenience goods (food stores) by 2036.

6.32 Since the publication of the assessment, there has been significant progress in the rejuvenation of Wokingham Town Centre, which has provided additional floorspace for retail, leisure and entertainment uses. This has diversified the type of uses available in Wokingham Town Centre, and has increased footfall.

6.33 The delivery of Grazeley Garden Town will provide significant opportunities for new retail, leisure and entertainment uses, as part of a sustainable new community. Further detail regarding the type, amount and scope of such uses at Grazeley will be set out in more detailed masterplanning work.

Policy ER6: The hierarchy of centres

1. All retail centres will be supported and strengthened to ensure they continue to be the focus of local communities. Development proposals that protect and enhance their role and function will be supported.
2. The hierarchy of centres in the borough is defined as follows:

- a. Major town centre: Wokingham
- b. Small town and district centres:
 - Arborfield Garrison district centre (being delivered through the SDL),
 - Lower Earley district centre,
 - Grazeley Garden Town (several)
 - Shinfield Road district centre,
 - Twyford village centre,
 - Winnersh centre,
 - Woodley
- c. Local Centres:
 - Crowthorne Station, Dukes Ride, Crowthorne (Pinewood)
 - Grazeley Garden Town (several)
 - Greenwood Road, Crowthorne (Pinewood)
 - Maiden Place, Earley
 - Silverdale Road, Earley
 - Shepherd's Hill, Earley and Woodley
 - California Crossroads, Finchampstead North
 - Basingstoke Road near the junction for Beech Hill Road, Spencers Wood
 - School Green, Shinfield (to be extended into the SDL),
 - Three Mile Cross
 - Wargrave High Street, Wargrave
 - Ashridge Road, Wokingham
 - Clifton Road / Emmbrook Road (to be extended into the SDL), Wokingham
 - Beanoak Road, Wokingham
 - Rances Lanes, Wokingham
 - Woosehill Centre, Woosehill
 - Woosehill Lane, Woosehill
 - Brecon Road, Woodley
 - Coppice Road, Woodley
 - Loddon Vale, Woodley

- 3. Primary Shopping Areas are designated in Wokingham, Woodley, Lower Earley, Winnersh and Twyford.
- 4. Town centre boundaries and primary shopping areas are defined on the Policies Map.
- 5. Development proposals for main town centre uses will be supported in accordance with the hierarchy, where they are suitable in terms of scale and design.

6.34 Town, district, and local centres play an important role as the focal point of local communities by providing a variety of shops, services and facilities. It is vital that planning decisions support and enhance the role of these centres in an appropriate way. National policy and guidance requires local planning authorities to take a positive approach to the growth of town centres in a 'town centre first' approach.

6.35 The hierarchy of retail centres recognises the important role of different parts of the borough in providing retail and associated services. Wokingham Town Centre acts as the major retail location in the borough and provides a mixture of convenience and comparison retail, alongside other services and facilities including leisure and entertainment, constituting main town centre uses set out in national policy. This mix of uses ensures a lively and varied centre that helps to fulfil the needs of different groups throughout the day and as part of the night time economy. The importance of Wokingham Town Centre is further recognised in [Policy ER9](#).

6.36 District Centres have often been delivered as part of large scale housing schemes, both historically, and as part of the Strategic Development Locations. These centres are also suitable for town centre style uses which play an important and active part of meeting retail needs.. A number of District Centres include anchor tenants in the form of supermarkets that attract those outside of the local area, providing services that are wider than the local, including comparison goods. In particular, Woodley Town Centre provides a wider variety of services including banks, clothing stores and cafes amongst other uses, which demonstrate its importance within the hierarchy, and ability to attract and retain town centre uses.

6.37 Local centres provide the day to day retail needs for local communities, such as convenience stores. They play an essential role in local communities by promoting social interaction and providing places to meet and socialise, whilst reducing the need to travel by car to town or district centres.

6.38 New district and/or local centres will be delivered as part of the new Grazeley Garden Town. Further detail will be included in the Grazeley SPD. Once delivered, these centres will form part of the hierarchy of centres and any further development proposals will need to be considered in light of the retail policies in this chapter.

6.39 Town centre boundaries and primary shopping areas identify where the main uses of each centre are expected to be located. This maintains the functions of centres, by providing a compact, walkable and easily accessible area.

Policy ER7: Town, district & local centres and shopping parades

1. Development proposals in town, district and local centres, and shopping parades must:
 - a. Maintain or enhance the vitality and viability of the centres as places to shop, work and spend leisure time; and
 - b. Be of a scale, type and format that reflects and enhances the character of the centre including its role and function within the hierarchy; and
 - c. Enhance the provision of day-to-day shopping facilities; and
 - d. Maximise opportunities to improve accessibility for all users.
2. Development proposals for the following uses will be supported:
 - a. Retail uses, particularly in primary shopping areas;
 - b. Non retail uses and services, providing they support the overall function of the centre;
 - c. Office and residential development on the upper floors of units located within existing centres.
3. Development proposals in all centres for the change of use of an A1 retail unit must:
 - a. Provide an alternative use that enhances the vitality and viability of the centre;
 - b. Maintain an active frontage;
 - c. Not result in, or further contribute towards a high proportion of non-A1 uses in a frontage;
 - d. Provide evidence that there is no reasonable prospect of its continued use for A1 purposes.
4. The loss of day-to-day shopping facilities in local centres will only be permitted where:
 - a. Alternative day-to-day shopping facilities are available within reasonable walking distance from the existing retail use; or
 - b. The existing retail use is demonstrated to be no longer be viable through evidence that genuine sustained efforts to promote, improve and market the facility at a reasonable value have been undertaken.

5. Where a change of use outside a centre is proposed, an assessment will be made of its value to the local community.
6. Development proposals for community function of shops and parades outside centres defined in the hierarchy will be supported.

6.40 The long term viability and vitality of all retail centres ensures residents, businesses and visitors have easy access to services and facilities. The primary focus of retail centres has traditionally been on A1 retail uses, however over recent years there has been a well-documented shift to a greater mix of retail, leisure and entertainment uses in centres, which can at least partially be attributed to the growth in online retailing. The Western Berkshire Retail and Leisure Study (2016) further highlights this growth in commercial leisure spending, and how it is anticipated to continue.

6.41 Town centres are not only a shopping destination, but an experience destination with multiple reasons to visit at different times of the day and evening. As a welcoming place with activities and events, town centres are also easy to access and navigate. A wider mix of uses including homes and businesses, supports retail and leisure and ensures the longevity of town centres as places live and spend time.

6.42 This policy seeks to retain a level of focus on A1 retail units in all centres, whilst recognising that in some circumstances the continued operation of a retail unit may not be possible or appropriate. This may be due to various market constraints, or an evolution of the role of the centre and the community it serves. In such cases, marketing evidence will be scrutinised in detail to ensure the wider variation and mix of uses in each centre remains balanced. A statement should be submitted as part of any planning application to demonstrate why an existing use is no longer viable, alongside evidence that shows genuine and sustained efforts to promote, improve and market the property at a reasonable value have been undertaken. This statement should also include work undertaken to demonstrate how the proposed use would be appropriate and beneficial to the local community and the role of the centre. Residential development on the upper floors of existing retail units will be supported as part of providing homes in an accessible location. However, the conversion of ground floor units to residential use must be supported by robust evidence justifying its viability and appeal to the market.

Policy ER8: Strengthening the role of centres

1. Town centre uses must be located within the centres defined in the hierarchy where sites are suitable, available and viable.
2. Development proposals must assess in-centre sites in the order of preference of the hierarchy of centres, unless a development proposal is intended to meet a particular local need in a specific area.
3. Development proposals for 500m² (gross) or above of town centre uses on sites located outside of the designated centres or allocated future centres are required to pass the sequential test set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
4. Development proposals for 500m² (gross) or more of town centre uses on site located outside of the designated centres or allocated future centres must submit a Retail Impact Assessment.

6.43 Town Centres play an important role as the centre of local communities, and it is therefore critical that town centre uses are directed towards Wokingham Town Centre, and small town and district centres in the first instance.

6.44 The sequential test will be applied to ensure development is located in the most appropriate location, with preference given to those higher up in the hierarchy, to ensure that proposals do not have a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of centres. Any development proposals outside of a centre must be clearly justified and explained. A sequential test is not required for office development within the Core Employment Areas.

6.45 National policy allows local authorities to set a threshold for retail impact assessments at a local level. Impact assessments help to understand the implications of proposals on the town centre, and can inform decisions regarding the pattern of development. Where impact assessments indicate significant adverse impacts on the existing vitality and viability of a centre, development will not be supported. The level of adverse impact will be based on individual cases.

Policy ER9: Wokingham Town Centre

1. The Wokingham town centre boundary and primary shopping area are defined on the Policies Map.
2. Development proposals within or in nearby Wokingham town centre should promote and enhance its role, vitality and viability. Development proposals should retain and enhance the historic market town character of Wokingham Town Centre and support its role as a retail centre by:
 - a. Protecting, enhancing or diversifying retail activity, and retaining prominent shopfronts within the primary shopping area;
 - b. Ensuring development provides and maintains complementary town centre uses (including offices and residential) within the defined town centre boundary;
 - c. Supporting development which expands the food, entertainment and leisure, and cultural offer within the Wokingham town centre boundary;
 - d. Supporting the regeneration of sites for main town centre uses;
 - e. Supporting the appropriate development of upper floors within the town centre, where possible access should be on the street frontage;
 - f. Supporting higher density development where appropriate;
 - g. Conserving and enhancing historic quality and interest;
 - h. Improving the attractiveness and usability of the existing public realm;
 - i. Providing an environment that encourages people to easily move around by walking and cycling;
 - j. Ensuring appropriate car parking to facilitate a viable and sustainable town centre;
 - k. Maintaining and enhancing important identified local green spaces in the town centre (as stated in [Policy HC4](#));
 - l. Ensuring quality spaces for outdoor events.
3. Development proposals will be supported where they are appropriate to the character of the centre, including the conservation area, and its role in the hierarchy of retail centres.
4. All proposals within Wokingham Town Centre shall be consistent with the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD or any successor document.

6.46 Over the past 10 years Wokingham Town Centre has undergone significant rejuvenation. The vision is to revitalise the town centre for the borough's residents and visitors, meeting the needs of the future, whilst enhancing and celebrating the market town heritage. This in turn will help to prevent the decline of the town centre from loss of spending following the redevelopments in other areas.

6.47 This rejuvenation has been largely steered by the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD (June 2010). Recent schemes have enhanced access to Wokingham train station, redesigned the station link road; improved the public realm in Market Place; provided new retail and residential development at Peach Place, redeveloped Elms Field and implemented Phase I of the Carnival Pool re-development. The delivery of these schemes, some of which are higher density, provides wider entertainment and leisure facilities including a new cinema and hotel, underlining commitment to the town centre. Further regeneration is planned for Phase II of the Carnival Pool site, which will continue to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre.

6.48 These improvements focus on the centre as a destination for retail and leisure, somewhere to live and work, and visit and stay for daytime and evening activities, in an environment that is safe, legible and accessible.

6.49 All proposals within Wokingham Town Centre should continue the positive momentum of regeneration created by completed and committed development schemes and must be consistent with the on-going objectives set out in the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD or any successor document.

Policy ER10: Whiteknights Campus

The University of Reading is a national and international educational establishment of strategic importance, which will continue to adapt and expand over the plan period. The Whiteknights Campus as shown on the Policies Map will continue to be a focus for development associated with the University of Reading. Such development may include additional student, staff, teaching, research and enterprise accommodation, infrastructure and services, and sports and leisure facilities, among other uses. Access to and within the site will be improved where necessary.

Wokingham Borough Council will continue to work proactively with the University of Reading and Reading Borough Council to support the continued development of Whiteknights Campus as a focus for the University of Reading, to meet the University's longer-term business needs for educational and academic uses as set out in their Whiteknights Campus Development Plan, Accommodation Strategy and Campus Capacity Study.

Provision of new student accommodation on the Whiteknights Campus, or as a reconfiguration or extension of nearby dedicated accommodation, will therefore be acceptable subject to other policies in the Plan.

Development proposals will accord with the following criteria:

- a) The historic landscape, open areas and listed buildings and their settings and the character of the area are respected, taking into account their location, scale and height
- b) Areas of wildlife significance (including Local Wildlife Sites) and current or potential green infrastructure networks will be retained and enhanced, and will not be detrimentally affected by development, including through light effects

- c) The safety of those using the campus (including pedestrian and highway safety issues and designing out crime) will be maintained or enhanced
- d) No significant detrimental impacts on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties from the development, including from noise or parking; and
- e) The loss of undeveloped areas on the site will be weighed against the benefits of development to the wider community.

6.50 The University of Reading is a national and international educational establishment of strategic importance, with its Whiteknights and London Road campuses located in Reading and Wokingham. The University of Reading will continue to adapt and evolve over the plan period.

6.51 As acknowledged by the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS), 2026 will mark the University of Reading's centenary as an independent University. Consistent with the BLIS vision, the University of Reading is home to five Interdisciplinary Research Institutes which are well aligned to the key themes established in the BLIS, in particular the four Grand Challenges (artificial intelligence and data, future of mobility, clean growth, ageing society).

6.52 The University currently operates from a number of sites within Wokingham Borough, including at Whiteknights Campus (circa 120 hectares) of which approximately one third lies within Reading Borough. The Whiteknights Campus as defined on the Policies Map will continue to be the main focus for future development associated with the University of Reading. Such development may include additional student, staff, teaching, research and enterprise accommodation, infrastructure and services, and sports and leisure facilities, among other uses. [Policy ER10](#) aims to ensure that Whiteknights Campus continues to develop as the focus for the University of Reading and positively contributes to the area as a whole and the wider national interest.

6.53 The Whiteknights Campus has a number of issues which distinguish it from other parts of the borough, and therefore necessitates a distinct approach. The University has currently around 17,500 students and over 4,000 staff. It is anticipated that the University is likely to grow to more than 20,000 students by the end of the next decade (2030)⁸. Whiteknights is the hub of university activity and students, staff and visitors need to be supported by appropriate services, facilities and infrastructure. A separate policy ([Policy ER10](#)) is therefore required for the part of the Whiteknights Campus that lies within the borough.

6.54 The Whiteknights Campus is located on the 19th century Whiteknights Park and contains significant ecologically important assets such as a Local Wildlife Site, parkland, woodland and lakes. The site also provides links to existing assets of green infrastructure. The area is located within the Woodley-Earley Settlement and Farmed Clay Landscape Character Area, which contains a network of recreational spaces, associated with areas of remnant historic parkland, such as Whiteknights Park. The area is also a prominent part of the local landscape as it adjoins part of the East Reading wooded ridgeline, with large tracts of open space, which is designated as a Major Landscape Feature in Policy EN13 of Reading Borough's Local Plan. A number of listed buildings are also located on the site, and university uses can have a potential effect on the surrounding residential areas.

6.55 In addition, approximately one third of Whiteknights Campus is located within Reading Borough. It is therefore important that a consistent approach is required⁹. Development proposals located at Whiteknights Campus will be considered jointly by Wokingham Borough Council and Reading Borough Council.

⁸ Reference UoR Campus Capacity Study (2018)

⁹ Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), Policy ER2: Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading

6.56 In 2008, the University produced a Whiteknights Campus Development Plan, which set out the University's principles for future development of the site, including providing 1,297 additional bedspaces, waste and catering facilities and changes to the access and internal circulation. The Development Plan does not form part of the Council's strategy, but it outlines the changes that are proposed to occur on the site in the coming years, and has informed this policy. Much of the physical development proposed in the plan has been completed, and it is therefore important that the policy looks beyond the current Whiteknights Campus Development Plan and is flexible to take account of other development proposals as they come forward, including student accommodation, associated with any additional growth over the plan period.

6.57 The University has produced an Accommodation Strategy and Campus Capacity Study in September 2018. The Capacity Study draws on the information contained in the University's Development Plan, and provides a high-level quantitative assessment of the potential capacity of the University's existing sites to accommodate additional academic and residential development on both campuses and adjacent landholdings. The Campus Capacity Study and Accommodation Strategy should be used to inform any future development proposals on the Whiteknights Campus.

6.58 Many of the main planning issues on the site, for example parking, access, biodiversity and landscape, are dealt with elsewhere within the local plan. Any future development proposals on the Whiteknights Campus site will be assessed in accordance with this policy ([Policy ER10](#)), other relevant policies in the Development Plan and national policy as a whole.

7. HOUSING

7.1 Providing sufficient homes of the right type and quality, without compromising the quality of the life of new and existing residents, are key elements that fall from the local plans vision and objectives. The local plan will support and work alongside the council's Housing Strategy to; meet the borough's housing needs and in particular the needs of those residents who cannot afford to purchase a suitable property on the open market, improve the quality and sustainability of new and existing housing, tackle rough sleeping and homelessness and ensure that those more vulnerable members of our community have access to suitable housing and support services that enhance their lives and, where appropriate, enable them to live independently within their communities.

7.2 Government policy requires local planning authorities to use a standard method to calculate the minimum number of homes needed (the local housing need), unless exceptional circumstances exist to justify using a different approach. It also adds that in addition to the local housing need, any need that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be planned for.

7.3 Although government policy no longer refers to 'Housing Market Areas' (HMAs), supporting Planning Practice Guidance provides a definition of a housing market area which refers to the importance of key functional linkages between places where people live and work. Consideration of functional relationships was undertaken as part of the Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA, February 2016). This found that Wokingham Borough had a strong functional relationship with Reading Borough, Bracknell Borough and West Berkshire District. As a result, there has been much collaborative working between these local authorities on housing matters and associated infrastructure. Under the standard method for calculating local housing need, there is no unmet need that needs addressing.

7.4 Details of the standard method for establishing the local housing need are set out in the government Planning Practice Guide: Housing and Economic Needs Assessment. Applying the standard method leads to a local housing need for Wokingham Borough of 804 dwellings per annum from 1 April 2019.

7.5 Analysis of the housing market shows however that in the context of Wokingham Borough there several failings with the government's standard method. These include the upwards impact of substantial house building on the median house price (contrary to the premise of the standard method that higher house building will stabilise or lower house prices) and the failure to recognise the functional economic relationship with Reading Borough.

7.6 In the council's opinion, these failings of the government's standard method amount to exceptional circumstances that justify an alternative approach to calculate the minimum number of homes that should be planned for.

7.7 Addressing these issues within the general approach set by the government's standard method, leads to a local housing need of 769 dwellings per annum from 1 April 2019. This still represents a significant uplift over the requirement in the previous adopted Core Strategy local plan (662 dwellings per annum) and accords with the government's objective of significantly boosting housing supply.

Policy H1: Housing provision

Provision will be made for a minimum of 13,901 net additional dwellings, and associated infrastructure, in the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2036.

7.8 Through the previous adopted Core Strategy local plan, proposals are already in place to meet a large part of the need for future homes. To ensure the delivery the minimum requirement of [Policy H1](#), land for an additional 2,061 dwellings is required in the period to 2036.

7.9 The creation of a garden town at Grazeley in accordance with [Policy SS3](#) will meet a large proportion of this additional need to 2036, and provide substantial supply beyond this time into the 2050s.

7.10 Additional capacity is provided through minor adjustments are proposed to the existing Strategic Development Location in accordance with [Policy SS4](#), [Policy SS5](#), [Policy SS6](#) and [Policy SS7](#) where these complement the original proposal and through the proposed allocations listed in the following [Policy H2](#), which are designed to supplements the larger strategic allocations.

7.11 Table 2 indicates the progress made to date through homes that have already been built, granted planning permission or allocated within the Core Strategy local plan. In addition, it can be anticipated that further supply will continue to come forward from unidentified sites (known as windfall).

7.12 The local plan has been tested to ensure the strategy can meet the minimum local housing need, however it is implicit within the spatial strategy and land supply that there is sufficient flexibility to adapt to change over time.

Table 2 Completions and projected completions 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2036	
Completions	1,250
Sites benefitting from planning permission	6,964
Sites benefitting from existing allocation (without planning permission)	2,143
Wokingham town centre broad area	100
Small sites benefitting from planning permission and projected windfall allowance	935
Large sites projected windfall allowance	448
Total	11,840

7.13 Table 3 is an overview of the additional allocations proposed in this local plan.

Table 3 Overview of additional allocations and projected completions 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2036	
Policy SS3 Grazeley garden town	3,750
Policy SS5 North Wokingham SDL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land east of Toutley Depot Ashridge Farm 	250
Policy SS6 South of the M4 SDL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lane End House, Shinfield Road 	5
Policy SS7 South Wokingham SDL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land south of Gipsy Lane 	17
Policy H2 Sites allocated for residential / mixed use	940
Total	4,962

Policy H2: Sites allocated for residential / mixed use

The sites listed below, and defined on the policies map, are allocated for residential development:

Address	Number of Dwellings
Reading FC Training Ground, Hogwood Park, Barkham	140
Land East of Park View Drive North, Charvil	85
Land West of Park Lane, Charvil	75
Jovike, Lower Wokingham Road, Finchampstead	15
Land adjacent to Whistley Green Cottage, Whistley Green, Hurst	3
Land north-west of Hogmoor Lane, Hurst	12
Land to the rear of 9-17 Northbury Lane, Ruscombe	7
Land between 39-53 New Road, Ruscombe	13
Rustlings, The Spring and Land to rear of Cushendall, Shinfield Road, Shinfield	10
Land at Bridge Farm, Twyford	150
Winnersh Plant Hire, Reading Road, Winnersh	20
Winnersh Farms, Winnersh	250
Land on North West Side of Old Forest Road, Winnersh	35
Station Industrial Estate, Oxford Road, Wokingham	92
54-58 Reading Road, Wokingham	9

Tintagel Farm, Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead	5 ¹⁰	
Land to the rear of 166 Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead	4 ¹¹	
Woodlands Farm, Wood Lane, Barkham	15 ¹²	
Total	940	

7.14 The estimated capacity of the sites listed in [Policy H2](#) is 940 dwellings. The stated capacities are approximate since there will be a need to take into account further detailed evidence on constraints, design considerations and the need to ensure the most efficient use of land, at the planning application stage. It is likely that a number of the proposed allocations are capable of delivering a larger number of dwellings than shown, depending on the design and layout of development and detailed consideration of impacts.

7.15 The housing provided through [Policy H2](#) will not just be provided in a range of locations but also on a range of sizes of sites. The proposed allocations include a number of sites under 1Ha in size that in total will deliver around 175 dwellings (including 9 Gypsy and Traveller pitches and also including 5 dwellings at Lane End House delivered through Policy SS6). In addition, monitoring shows that around 90 dwellings per year are delivered from developments involving the construction of 9 or fewer dwelling. This range and choice of sites enables different types of housing providers to deliver housing, including major national house builders and smaller scale local builders. A number of sites under 1ha in size also form part of larger allocations, further increasing opportunity for a range of builders.

Policy H3: Housing mix, density and standards

Housing Mix & Density

1. Development proposals should seek to create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities through providing a mix of house types and sizes at an appropriate density for the area.
2. The mix of housing provided should reflect and respond to the identified housing needs and demands of the borough's households as set out in the most up to date evidence contained within the Local Housing Needs Assessment, or successor documents.
3. The final mix of dwelling types and sizes will be subject to negotiation with the applicant. Applicants will be required to provide sufficient evidence to support their proposals.
4. New housing should optimise density whilst consistently achieving good design, in line with the character and amenity of the location and site constraints.
5. Development within the defined town centres and in urban locations with a good standard of accessibility to public transport will be expected to achieve higher densities as appropriate.

Accessibility

¹⁰ Allocation is for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. See [Policy H11](#)

¹¹ Allocation is for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. See [Policy H11](#)

¹² Allocation is for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. See [Policy H11](#)

6. All new housing will be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations, unless it is built in line with M4(3) (see below).
7. On developments of 20 or more new build dwellings, at least 6% of all new housing will be wheelchair accessible and adaptable in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations.
8. Specialist housing will be accessible and adaptable in line with the threshold and criteria as set out in [Policy H9](#).

Internal Space Standards

Housing development proposals will be required to meet the up to date nationally prescribed space standard for minimum internal space.

Mix & Density

7.16 To deliver a choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, it is important to plan for a mix of homes that most closely meets the identified needs of existing and future residents. National policy requires local authorities to provide a range of housing types and sizes.

7.17 A mix of new homes will be provided based on current and future demographic and market trends, as well as on the needs of various groups within the community including those requiring specialist housing accommodation, the travelling community and those seeking plots for self or custom build properties.

7.18 The mix of homes should be able to react to changing circumstances, and contribute to the mix of both the wider area and the development site itself. Developers should have regard to the borough wide recommended housing mix as a starting point when bringing forward proposals for individual sites.

7.19 Development density should have clear regard to the characteristics of the surrounding area. Higher densities will generally be more appropriate in and around accessible locations such as Wokingham Town Centre and other transport hubs. There may be further opportunities for higher densities on larger sites, where there is scope to design a range of areas and neighbourhoods with varying characteristics, particularly at the proposed Grazeley garden town.

7.20 The mix and density of developments should take consideration of place-making aspects such as character and setting, access to walking, cycling and public transport, high quality design and environmental and neighbour impacts, as set out in [Policy DH1](#).

Housing Standards

7.21 The government has sought to consolidate a wide range of standards required for new housing across the country. Building Regulations set out minimum standards for most matters, with a small number of 'optional' national standards over and above Building Regulations, which local planning authorities can choose to apply. These cover internal space and accessibility (and water efficiency as set out in [Policy DH9](#)).

7.22 These 'optional' standards can only apply when included in a Local Plan policy. The standards are only 'optional' for the local planning authority to apply in their areas, but once applied, the standards must be met. Conditions will be applied to relevant planning permissions to ensure compliance with the policy.

7.23 Housing standards help to ensure the health and well-being of residents. Providing the appropriate types of housing can improve living conditions and wellbeing, and reduce social isolation.

Accessibility

7.24 There are two levels of options standards for accessibility:

1. M4(2) of the Building Regulations is for accessible and adaptable dwellings.
2. M4(3) relates more specifically to wheelchair user dwellings.

7.25 The requirements for wheelchair housing have been set at a level that would allow the anticipated requirement to be met. This standard should enable those who may not have specific needs now to remain in their homes as their circumstances change.

7.26 M4(2) requires relatively straightforward design measures that can allow homes to be adaptable as the needs of the occupier change. As such it is considered that 100% of new dwellings can be built to this standard without it being overly onerous.

7.27 Where the provision of M4(3) housing creates a percentage which does not equal a whole number, the number of units may be rounded upwards to the nearest whole dwelling.

Internal Space Standards

7.28 Ensuring sufficient levels of internal space is essential part of retaining and improving quality of life, which is a key element of the vision for the Borough. This is drawn into focus by the amount of development undertaken as part of permitted development rights that often provides inadequate internal space. This cannot be controlled, but, where it is possible to do so, it is important to ensure adequate internal space is provided.

7.29 All new housing should therefore include sufficient internal space to cater for a variety of different household needs with the aim of promoting high standards of liveability, accessibility and comfort. Sufficient internal space also supports independent living as circumstances change, and home working, which can help to minimise the need to travel.

7.30 Where references to the nationally-described space standard in the policy change, the requirement should be taken to refer to the most up-to-date standard.

Policy H4: Presumption against the loss of residential

1. Development proposals that would result in the net loss of residential units will be supported where one or more of the following criteria are met:
 - a) The retention of the residential unit would be undesirable due to proven environmental considerations;
 - b) The development proposed would enable the enlargement of sub-standard units to meet residential space standards;

- c) The development proposed would facilitate the provision of a provide a social, community or cultural facility or service which cannot be located within an alternative existing non-residential use;
 - d) The loss of residential units would be linked to a wider comprehensive scheme of development which would not lead to an overall net loss of residential units.
2. Development proposals that would result in the partial loss of an existing residential unit to non-residential use will be supported provided all the following criteria are met:
- a) The nature of the non-residential use would provide satisfactory levels of residential amenity for future occupiers of the retained residential use, and would not unacceptably impact on the amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties and land uses; and
 - b) The retained residential accommodation would provide acceptable standards of accommodation including adequate living space, appropriate layout of rooms, appropriate noise insulation, suitable space for drying of clothes, and quality internal and external environment including usable outdoor amenity space.

7.31 Given the pressures to build more homes under national planning policy, it is important that existing housing and land that has permission for new housing is protected from being lost to other use, unless there is clear justification for such a loss.

7.32 There may be circumstances where development proposals would result in the partial loss of residential accommodation to other uses. Such proposals will be carefully considered in relation to the impact on remaining residential accommodation.

Policy H5: Affordable Housing

1. Planning permission will be supported for residential development providing a mix and balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures and sizes. Affordable housing must reflect the sizes and types that meet the proven needs of people who are not able to compete in the general housing market.
2. All residential proposals of at least 5 dwellings (net) or covering a net site area of at least 0.16 ha will provide up to 50% of the net additional units proposed as affordable dwellings, where viable. The Council will negotiate the tenure, size and type of affordable units on a site by site basis having regard to housing needs, site specifics and other factors.
3. Subject to viability, the minimum percentages of affordable housing sought on site by land type and location are:

Land types	Location	Size trigger	%
Previously developed land	Within Development Limits	5 to 14 dwellings (net) or between 0.16ha and 0.49ha (net)	20
Previously developed land	Within Major Development Location	15 dwellings or more (net) or 0.5ha (net) and larger	30
Previously developed land	Within Modest or Limited Development Location	15 dwellings or more (net) or 0.5ha (net) and larger	40
Greenfield	Within Major Development Location	5 dwellings (net) or more or 0.16 ha (net) and larger	35
Greenfield	Within Modest or Limited Development Location	5 dwellings (net) or more or 0.16 ha (net) and larger	40
Any	Outside development location	5 dwellings (net) or more or 0.16 ha (net) and larger	40
Any	Grazeley garden town and Strategic Development Location	5 dwellings (net) or more or 0.16 ha (net) or larger	35

4. The delivery of affordable housing will be provided in accordance with the following order of priority:
 - a) on-site as part of the development. On strategic developments affordable housing should be distributed across the development to create a mixed and balanced community,
 - b) on an alternative site, only if:
 - i. provision would result in a more effective use of available resources, or
 - ii. it would meet an identified housing need, such as providing a better social mix and wider housing choice, or
 - iii. site specific considerations mean it is more feasible to provide an offsite contribution.

5. Planning obligations will be used to ensure that affordable housing will remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled to alternative affordable housing provision.

7.33 Access to affordable, high quality housing is a challenge for people living and working in the borough, and in particular the young, given that they are more likely to be on lower incomes and less able to secure mortgage finance or access the private rental sector. High house prices and rents mean there is a high need for affordable housing and it is a priority for the council to increase the number of affordable homes.

7.34 Affordable housing is subsidised housing, which enabled the asking price or rent to be set at a lower level than the prevailing market cost. This allows people on lower incomes to access housing, with mechanisms ensuring that the housing remains available to others that might need it in the future.

7.35 The Local Housing Need Assessment (LHNA) has identified an overall need for affordable housing of 7,255 dwellings over the period 2018-2036, equivalent to 403 dwellings per annum. This figure includes households currently in the private rental sector, but aspiring to become owner-occupiers, and who may be able to afford housing as their income increases over time; alongside those unable to afford housing.

7.36 Government planning policy expects developments of 10 or more dwellings to contribute towards meeting the need for affordable housing through a proportion of the new dwellings being affordable housing, or as an exception off site provision or a financial contribution in lieu.

7.37 The clear need for affordable housing in Wokingham Borough, is considered sufficient justification to depart from government planning policy and require a pro-rata contribution from schemes of 9 or less dwellings. [Policy H5](#) seeks a contribution towards affordable housing from development proposals providing 5 or more dwellings, or a site size of 0.16 Ha and above. The targets are consistent with Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy local plan which has been applied successfully without negatively impacting housing viability or deliverability. Notwithstanding, the council will be sensitive to exceptional costs of bringing a site to market such as expensive reclamation or infrastructure costs.

7.38 For the avoidance of doubt, any application for dwellings exceeding the thresholds in this policy (including mobile home and Gypsy and Traveller sites and self-contained¹³ older people's housing, such as extra care housing, assisted living, retirement housing) will need to deliver affordable housing in line with the approach set out in this policy.

Types and tenures of affordable housing

7.39 Several tenures of housing fall within the definition of affordable housing set out in national policy. This includes affordable housing for social rent and shared ownership, alongside other tenures including affordable rent, starter homes and discounted market sales housing. The council has a shared ownership model designed to ensure that homes remain affordable for our residents. Further information is contained the council's Affordable Housing SPD.

7.40 The council is supportive of the provision of housing for key workers as part of an appropriate mix of affordable housing. Key worker housing is a type of affordable rent that provides a more financially accessible option for key workers living or working in the borough. Dependent on the scheme, a key worker could be a public sector employee who is considered to provide an essential service, such as teachers, police

¹³ Self-Contained is defined as accommodation having kitchen, living area, bedroom and bathroom available for the exclusive use of its occupants

officers and firefighters. A key worker could also be an employee providing an essential service to the local economy and subject to the relevant body demonstrating that the industry's national wage structure is such that its employees are unable to afford to rent or buy homes on the open market within Wokingham Borough.

7.41 As a guide to tenure, in most cases the council will seek a 70:30 split between social rent and shared ownership. This split may be applied flexibly where there are site specific issues, including viability. Other relevant evidence will include information from the Housing Register and the type and tenure of other affordable housing in the local area.

7.42 The mix of housing will be considered on a case by case basis, with the latest available information regarding housing mix used as a starting point. There is demand for a variety of unit types and sizes across the borough. The Local Housing Needs Assessment (2019) has highlighted the need for affordable one bedroom flats and two bedroom houses in particular.

Provision of affordable housing

7.43 Affordable housing should be provided on site as part of a development proposal, and will be the minimum amount required, with a higher proportion sought where appropriate. An off-site contribution towards the provision of affordable housing may be acceptable where it is impractical to include on-site, particularly due to the small number of units proposed. Similarly, where it is deemed more practical, where the provision of affordable housing creates a percentage which does not equal a whole number, the number of units may be rounded upwards, or a commuted sum will be required for the remaining proportion of the contribution to support additional off site provision.

7.44 As set out in national policy, for proposals on brownfield land where vacant buildings are being reused or redeveloped, the provision of affordable housing sought will be reduced by a proportionate amount that is equivalent to the gross floorspace of the existing building. This does not apply to vacant buildings which have been abandoned.

7.45 Affordable housing helps to provide mixed and balanced communities, supporting the economy of the borough, and the wider Thames Valley. To provide these communities, affordable housing units should be distributed "tenure blind" around a development site and should not be concentrated in one area, unless there are specific management issues.

7.46 The council will seek the maximum provision of affordable housing on all qualifying sites with vigor. Attempts to undermine or circumnavigate the provision of affordable housing or the payment of commuted sums will not be tolerated.

7.47 The council will be alert to, and not permit any benefit to be gained from, the piecemeal subdivision of a site to circumvent this policy. Sites in the same ownership, or where an ownership relationship can be proven, will be treated as a single planning unit/site and if the overall gross site is 0.16ha or more, the applicant will be expected to enter into a legal agreement to provide affordable housing.

7.48 The provision of affordable housing on rural exception sites will be supported in accordance with [Policy H6](#) Rural Exception Sites.

Viability Assessment

7.49 The historic and continued delivery of market and affordable housing demonstrates that sites will not be rendered unviable based on the amount, threshold and tenure split of affordable housing sought on applicable sites.

7.50 Any claims that a site cannot be developed viably with an affordable housing contribution must be justified with clear and robust evidence which stands up to scrutiny and independent expert review (which will be carried out at the expense of the applicant). Any relaxation in the provision of affordable housing must be the minimum to make the scheme viable.

Policy H6: Rural Exception Sites

1. Development proposals for Rural Exception Sites that provide limited affordable housing to meet local needs will be permitted provided that:
 - a) Dwellings are designed to meet an established local affordable housing need as evidenced through a Local Housing Need survey of the town/parish, the Council's Housing Register or any specific local surveys using a methodology agreed by the Council
 - b) The number, size, type and tenure of dwellings proposed are suitable to meet the identified need and will usually be limited to small scale sites of below 10 dwellings unless it can be demonstrated that a larger development will not have an adverse impact on the other criteria
 - c) Affordable homes are secured in perpetuity for those with a local connection to the town/parish within which the scheme is located
 - d) The site is situated outside the existing settlement boundary but adjoins, or is well related to, the existing settlement pattern, is in keeping with the surrounding character, and within safe and reasonable walking distance of a settlement.
2. A limited number of market dwellings for the sole purpose of making the scheme financially viable will be supported, subject to site specific viability testing, and be limited to up to 20% of the gross number of total dwellings. Any market housing included within a scheme should demonstrate how it will be integrated with the rural exception development and take into account the local character of the area.

7.51 The council will seek to meet local affordable housing needs in rural areas by encouraging affordable housing schemes that meet an identified local need on suitable sites outside settlement boundaries, provided they adjoin, or are well related to, the existing settlement pattern and are within a safe and reasonable walking distance of a settlement. The involvement of Town and Parish Councils and local communities will be an important and active part of progressing these schemes to understand the affordable housing needs of people with a local connection to specific rural areas.

7.52 It is recognised that in a number of rural settlements higher housing costs can inhibit people remaining in their local area. Rural Exception Sites can therefore provide a means for people who would ordinarily not be able to afford to live within that settlement to remain within their local community. The purpose of a Rural Exception Site is to meet the identified housing needs of local people. In applying this policy, consideration will be given to the needs of the local community who are current or recent former residents of a town or parish or have a current employment or family connection. The development of rural exception sites will therefore help to create sustainable, mixed communities.

7.53 An appropriate proportion of market housing on a Rural Exception Site will be supported, subject to a site-specific independent viability assessment. Market housing included within a scheme should be appropriately located, taking into account the character of the area and integration with the affordable housing units on the site.

7.54 The need for rural exception sites should be drawn from a Local Housing Need survey of the town/parish, the Council's Housing Register, or any other specific local surveys as agreed by the council. To ensure the long term availability of the affordable housing for local people, applications will be required to agree to a planning obligation.

Policy H7: Rural Workers' Dwellings

1. Development proposals in the countryside of a permanent rural worker dwelling which serves an existing agricultural, forestry or other business requiring a countryside location, will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:
 - a) The rural enterprise has been demonstrated to be economically sustainable, has been established for at least 3 years and is likely to remain financially viable for the foreseeable future;
 - b) There is an essential need for one or more permanent full time worker(s) to be accommodated at all times on the site of a rural enterprise in order for the enterprise to operate;
 - c) The functional need cannot be accommodated in another existing building on the site which is suitable for conversion, or by suitable existing accommodation available within a reasonable distance of the rural enterprise;
 - d) The size and scale of the dwelling is commensurate with the functional requirement of the rural enterprise;
 - e) The dwelling is sited close to existing farm buildings as far as is practicable and is appropriately designed and landscaped to avoid harmful impact on the countryside character.
2. If a rural worker dwelling is essential to support a new rural enterprise it should be provided temporarily by a caravan, a wooden structure which can easily be dismantled, or other temporary accommodation for the first three years and will be subject to the functional and financial tests set out above in criteria.
3. Permission for all rural workers dwellings will be subject to a condition which restricts occupation of the dwelling to a person directly employed on a permanent full time basis in rural enterprise, or to their surviving partner or dependents.

7.55 National policy seeks to avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless specific identified circumstances apply. One of these circumstances is the need for a rural worker to live permanently at, or near their place of work in the countryside. While some rural workers dwellings may come forward via permitted development rights which allow the conversion of barns into dwellings, this policy provides the criteria for assessing the suitability of proposed new dwellings for rural workers.

7.56 In most cases it will be more sustainable and convenient for workers associated with agriculture, forestry or other rural based enterprises to live in suitable existing dwellings in nearby towns or villages. Potentially intrusive new residential development in the countryside should be avoided unless there are sufficient special circumstances to justify the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside. Whether an essential need exists will be assessed on a case by case basis and will depend on the needs of the enterprise concerned and not on the personal preferences or circumstances of any of the individuals involved.

7.57 A 'functional test' is required to establish whether one or more workers are required to live permanently at or near the rural business or enterprise for it to function properly. This may be if workers need to be available day and night, for example to look after animals. Applicants will need to provide robust justification that such a functional need for on site worker accommodation exists and provide further justification to explain why this need cannot be met by existing accommodation in the area. Applicants will also need to justify the number of workers needed to satisfy the requirement, which will be dependent on the scale and nature of the enterprise. New dwellings must be of a size that is proportionate with the number of workers required and with the needs of the enterprise concerned. Dwellings that are unusually large in relation to the proposed needs of the rural enterprise will not be permitted.

7.58 A 'financial test' will also be necessary. New permanent accommodation will only be justified where there is an existing enterprise which is demonstrably economically viable. In applying this test, the council will take a realistic approach to the level of profitability, taking account of the nature of the enterprise concerned. Some enterprises which aim to operate broadly on a subsistence basis, but which nonetheless provide wider benefits (e.g. in managing important landscapes or wildlife habitats), can be sustained on relatively low financial returns.

7.59 In relation to permanent dwellings for existing enterprises, the term 'at all times' in criterion 1b) covers both times of the day and times of the year. Where accommodation is required in relation to a seasonal countryside based use, this should be provided through a temporary structure and assessed against criterion 2. It is expected that any temporary accommodation associated with a seasonal use is vacated and remains unoccupied in the off season. The accommodation should be fully disconnected from utilities and stored in a suitable location until its occupation for the seasonal use is required again. This will be secured by appropriate conditions.

7.60 Where an application is submitted to remove an occupancy condition, robust marketing evidence should be provided to justify the change of circumstance. It must demonstrate that there is no longer a need for rural worker accommodation on the holding and the rural enterprise is no longer viable. Evidence will need to be provided that the property has been marketed appropriately for a minimum of 12 months and at a price which reflects the existing occupancy condition.

Policy H8: Self-build and custom housebuilding

1. Development proposals for 100 dwellings or more will provide at least 5% of dwellings as serviced plots for self and custom build.
2. The delivery of self build and custom build housing will:
 - a) be provided as serviced plots; and
 - b) be developed in accordance with an agreed design code; and
 - c) be required to be completed within 3 years of a self/custom builder purchasing a plot; and

- d) have been made available and marketed appropriately at a reasonable value, for at least 12 months and, where they have not sold, the plot(s) will be expected to remain on the open market as self-build or custom build before being built out by the developer.
3. Sites that appear to have been deliberately subdivided or phased to avoid the 100 dwelling threshold, or that feature as part of a cluster of adjoining development sites, will be considered cumulatively and in accordance with the 5% of dwellings required in this policy.
4. Delivery of market serviced self-build plots will be in addition to, and not in lieu of, an affordable housing provision requirement (in [Policy H5](#)).
5. Development proposals for individual self-build or custom housebuilding below the 100 dwelling threshold will be assessed on their individual merits in the light of the prevailing policies of this plan and any other material considerations.
6. Development proposals that provide self-build and/or custom build homes within the settlement limits will be supported in principle.

7.61 The Government actively supports those who wish to design and build their own home as part of diversifying the supply of housing. Self-build is where a person is more directly involved in organising and constructing their home. Custom housebuilding is where a person commissions a specialist advisor to deliver their own home. The [Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 \(as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016\)](#) provides a legal definition of self-build and custom housebuilding. The Act does not distinguish between self-build and custom housebuilding and states that both are where an individual, an association of individuals, or persons working with or for individuals or associations of individuals, build or complete houses to be occupied as homes by those individuals.

7.62 The delivery of a variety of housing types and sizes is important in helping to achieve balanced and sustainable communities. Self-build and custom housebuilding can play an important role in contributing towards the delivery of homes to rent or buy, alongside the mainstream, larger housebuilders.

7.63 National policy places a strong emphasis on supporting self-build housing through planning, encouraging Councils to plan proactively to encourage growth in this area. In accordance with the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, the Council maintains a register of individuals and associations of individuals who have expressed an interest in self-build and custom house-building. This has helped to inform the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding plots within the borough.¹⁴ Future demand will be kept under review.

7.64 Self-build and custom build plots can be delivered in a number of ways, ranging from multiple individually serviced plots within larger sites (as through this policy) or single or small sites identified by individuals (windfall sites) or by Town and Parish Councils and/or Neighbourhood Plan Groups through the neighbourhood plan process.

7.65 A serviced plot of land will have access to a public highway and connections for electricity, high speed broadband, water and waste water; or can be provided with this infrastructure in specified circumstances or within a specified time period. Grouping plots together on each site may facilitate the timely provision of this infrastructure.

¹⁴ Further information regarding the register is available on the Council's website at <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/housing-and-tenants/housing-needs/register-for-a-self-build-home/>

7.66 Given the demonstrable interest in self and custom build housing, it is important self-build plots remain available. Developers must demonstrate that appropriate marketing has taken place before self-build plots can be released for development with conventional market housing. Developers must provide evidence to demonstrate:

- That the plot(s) have been marketed for a minimum of a 12 month period. This period should only begin from when the services plot(s) are first available for purchase. The plot provider shall notify the council that the formal 12 month marketing period has begun.
- That the marketing and sale of plots is prioritised to those on the self-build register, to meet local demand.
- An active local marketing campaign.
- How the plot(s) have been marketed that brings them to the attention of the maximum number of potential purchasers at a fair open market value.

7.67 To ensure high quality design, and to provide clarity at the marketing stage, on sites with multiple self-build plots the council will seek the agreement of a design code with the provider of the plots. Plots should not be marketed until a design code has been submitted to and agreed by the council. This will ensure the self-builder understands the parameters for the development and what can be achieved.

7.68 Where a development site has been divided into parts, or is being delivered in phases, the area to be used for determining whether this policy applies will be the original application site as part of a single planning site. The council will seek the maximum provision of self and custom build housing on all qualifying sites and will not tolerate any attempts to undermine or circumnavigate provision through the subdivision of a site or any other means. There will be circumstances where a site may not support the delivery of self-build plots, for example, where it is of insufficient size and seeks to deliver flats rather than houses, or the proposal is for specialist housing.

7.69 The council recognises that a development may need to be phased differently to incorporate self-build plots. The plot provider will need to work with the council's planning team to progress the most appropriate way for the proposed sites, taking reasonable account of the location of the plots within the site and the phasing of the surrounding development.

7.70 Serviced self-build plots will not form part of the affordable housing provision required in [Policy H5](#). The percentage requirement of self-build plots will be additional to any other provisions set out in the plan. Affordable serviced self-build plots may be considered as part of the development proposal, however unless the plot(s) meet the affordable housing definition in the NPPF (Annex 2) it would be classed as private housing.

7.71 Grazeley Garden Town is expected to deliver a large proportion of the self-build plots. Further detail as to the phasing and delivery will be provided as part of the Grazeley master planning. Additional windfall sites are expected to come forward and contribute to the self-build and custom housebuilding plots in the borough.

7.72 Development proposals for self-build and custom housebuilding on sites below the threshold of 100 dwellings as set out within this policy will be assessed on their own merits in the light of the prevailing policies of the plan and any other material considerations.

7.73 Further detail regarding the self-build and custom build housing is set out within the topic paper¹⁵. The Council may issue further guidance on the delivery of self-build plots in due course.

¹⁵ Self-build and Custom housebuilding Topic Paper (2020)

Policy H9: Accommodation for Older People and Vulnerable Communities

1. The council will work positively and collaboratively with statutory and voluntary agencies to support the needs of current and future households in the context of vulnerable people and an ageing population, by encouraging self-reliance and independent living and by providing the right type of homes for residential, nursing and dementia care to enable these communities to live successfully in the Borough.
2. Specialist accommodation for older people and vulnerable people will be delivered primarily at a strategic scale through the existing Strategic Development Locations (Policies [SS4](#), [SS5](#), [SS6](#) and [SS7](#)) and at a new garden town at Grazeley ([Policy SS3](#)).
3. Elsewhere, development proposals for purpose built or specialist accommodation for vulnerable people and/or older people will be supported, provided the following criteria are met:
 - a) Local commissioning priorities, or a demonstrable local community need has been established
 - b) The accommodation is well located, close to an identified town, district or local centre with access to a good range of services and facilities, including existing public transport routes, or incorporates essential community facilities and services, such as healthcare services or day care for older people;
 - c) Adequate provision for service arrangements, including the provision of ambulance access; and
 - d) Incorporate areas of green space, which are particularly important for many groups of vulnerable and older people.
4. Development proposals that would lead to the reduction in the number of residential, nursing or dementia care premises will only be supported provided it can be demonstrated that a replacement facility can be provided elsewhere, or that such a use is not considered to be viable or no longer fit for purpose.
5. All new residential proposals providing a form of specialist accommodation (including extra care housing) for older people should meet the optional technical standards requirements set out in the Building Regulations Approved Document M Part 2, except where it can be demonstrated that they would be unviable. This will be a matter for negotiation but the council will expect the following requirements to be met:
 - a) as a minimum, 25% of dwellings to be constructed to Category M4(3) standard; and
 - b) all dwellings to be constructed to Category M4(2) standard.
6. Development proposals involving other forms of purpose built and/or specialist accommodation with care for older people will be supported, in principle, in accessible and sustainable locations subject to other relevant policies in the Development Plan.

7.74 Wokingham Borough is a popular place to live or retire to, and therefore faces a range of housing needs. It is therefore vital to recognise specific and complex needs by providing the opportunity for people to remain in their own homes, with the tools to live independently. Whilst some of this need will derive

from an ageing population, they also emerge from the fact that many ‘vulnerable people’ with other existing needs will need suitable accommodation¹⁶.

7.75 Vulnerable people require the assistance of others for a range of reasons, including mental health problems, learning disabilities, physical and sensory needs, drug or alcohol problems, vulnerability due to age (either younger or older people) and domestic abuse. The council’s Housing Strategy supports self-reliance and independent living for our residents, which can help reduce the likelihood of vulnerable people living in institutional settings, reducing the need for expensive care services and unnecessary admissions to hospital or residential care.

7.76 The aim is to reduce the proportion of people who are cared for in residential and nursing homes to enable people to stay in their own homes with the accessible care and support they need¹⁷. Wokingham Borough has been working with its partners in taking forward a strategic approach to future need for accommodation and care to ensure there is increased diversity of accommodation for older people and vulnerable people in the borough. To date, the council has a good track record in delivery specialised accommodation, through Wokingham Housing Limited with a completed of developments across the borough.

7.77 However, despite the success of recent developments, the proportion aged 65+ is projected to increase by 36% from 2020 to 2036. Likewise, the number of households in the borough that will require some form of specialised accommodation, including a strong care element, is projected to rise from 855 households in 2014 to 1,448 households by 2039, with a larger proportion of older households requiring lower level support such as adaptations or access to traditional sheltered housing¹⁸. As the population of the borough increases and ages, the level of disabilities, health issues and mobility problems amongst the older population and vulnerable communities is projected to increase, along with the specialist housing to address their needs.

7.78 The Local Housing Need Assessment (LHNA) has assessed the likely level of need for bedspaces for older people (within use class C2), based on projections of how many people are likely to suffer from issues such as reduced mobility and dementia. The LHNA demonstrates that there is a need for bedspaces within the plan period to 2036 for people with specific requirements, such as the older population and vulnerable people, including people with disabilities.

7.79 There are multiple solutions for health and disability-related needs. This includes a variety of types of specialised housing (purpose built and specialist accommodation) that are appropriately designed to meet the changing needs of the borough’s residents throughout their lives, including older people, people with physical, mental or learning disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

7.80 When considering proposals, developers should also refer to [Policy DH2](#), to ensure that this type of accommodation respects the character of the surrounding area and the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. Proposals for specialist or purpose built accommodation should also make sufficient provision for open space to ensure older people and vulnerable people have suitable access to green areas for social interaction and recreation within their community. Open spaces, such as greenspace within development should therefore be provided and designed in line with [Policy DH1](#), and the standards set out in [Policy HC3](#).

7.81 In delivering homes that will help to meet the current and future needs of an ageing population, it is important that homes are also adaptable to the changing needs of residents over time and provide true diversity and choice needed to support longer-term independent living. This policy ensures that homes are

¹⁶ Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update – Issues and Options Summary of Responses

¹⁷ Older People’s Strategy – Young at heart (2012)

¹⁸ Older People Housing Needs Assessment (2018), para 3.23

more accessible and easily adaptable for older people in accordance with national policy. Planning guidance is clear that where development is not considered to be viable following an independent assessment, the requirement for delivering the Optional Building Regulations Higher Accessibility Standards should not be applied.

Policy H10: Conversion of buildings including Houses in Multiple Occupation

Development proposals for the conversion or sub-division of buildings into self-contained flats or houses of multiple occupation within development limits, will be supported provided that all the following criteria are met:

- a) The character and appearance of the original building are respected in terms of materials, design, arrangement of openings, and other principal architectural features, and the character and appearance of the area in which the building sits is respected;
- b) The proposal would provide satisfactory levels of residential amenity for future occupiers of the development, and would not unacceptably impact on the amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties and land uses;
- c) The proposal would provide an acceptable standard of accommodation, including adequate living space, appropriate layout of rooms between units of accommodation, appropriate noise insulation, suitable space for the drying of clothes, and a high quality internal and external environment including usable outdoor amenity space;
- d) The proposal provides acceptable access to the highway, vehicle parking and secure cycle storage/parking. Vehicle parking should generally be on-site. Off-site provision will only be considered suitable where there is no opportunity for on-site provision and where a parking survey demonstrates to the satisfaction of the local planning authority that acceptable parking space is available in the wider area;
- e) The proposal provides adequate on-site space for refuse and recycling storage which should be contained within a covered storage area where practicable;
- f) The proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing and overconcentration of HMOs.

7.82 The conversion and sub-division of buildings into dwellings or multiple occupation can provide additional residential accommodation that makes more efficient use of existing properties.

7.83 Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) are homes which have shared basic amenities such as a kitchen or bathroom and are occupied by more than 3 unrelated individuals as their only or main residence. Smaller HMOs of between 3 and 6 individuals fall under the C4 planning use class whereas larger HMOs of greater than 6 persons are sui generis. Within Wokingham Borough, HMOs comprise only a small portion of the housing stock and are not generally common. Nonetheless, they can, due to being a relatively low cost

housing option, make a positive contribution by meeting a particular type of accommodation need e.g. for students, people on low incomes, or for single young professionals.

7.84 Whilst the conversion and sub-division of buildings can make a positive contribution, this can only be achieved where the original property is suitable, and where the cumulative impacts on the wider area and its communities are acceptable. An overconcentration of HMOs in has the potential to lead to fundamental and unacceptable changes to an area's established character.

7.85 Permitted development allows the conversion of dwellings to smaller HMOs (i.e. to C4 planning use class) and therefore planning permission is not usually required. However, planning permission is necessary to create HMOs of greater than 6 bedrooms or when permitted development rights have been removed.

7.86 Development proposals for the conversion or sub-division of buildings will be assessed in relation to their impact on the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of the suitability of the property to provide quality accommodation, the impacts on the amenities of the wider area and the ability to provide sufficient parking and servicing.

7.87 Developments should be designed so that the internal arrangement of rooms minimises opportunity for disturbance between different units of accommodation. Bedrooms should have adequate useable space having regard to shape and available headroom. Any area of the bedroom with less than 1.5m headspace should be discounted from the floorspace area and identified on submitted plans. Communal living spaces must be of adequate space to be able to cater for activities involving all members of the whole property. Facilities for refuse and recycling should be located away from the windows of habitable rooms and be positioned so that they are screened from public views, and ideally appropriately covered in order to minimise adverse streetscene or odour impact.

7.88 Vehicle parking should normally be provided on-site. Off-site vehicle parking will only be considered acceptable where it is clearly demonstrated that sufficient acceptable parking is available in the wider area through on-street parking or at nearby car parks. This will need to be robustly demonstrated and shown to be an attractive and realistic option for future occupiers through a parking survey. A parking survey will be expected to include:

- a scaled plan (in the form of a dimensioned sketch) annotated to indicate private accesses, on-street parking bays, unmarked roadside parking, waiting restrictions (single yellow lines), provision of suitable barriers to prevent parking on pavements or green verges and public car parks up to 100 metres distance from the development. The plan should also indicate areas unsuitable for parking within this distance.
- The likely levels of car ownership amongst occupants;
- An assessment of parking activity in an identified vicinity of the application site. The parking activity would need to be recorded at an agreed frequency between the hours of 6am and 11pm, covering week days (including a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) and a weekend day for up to one week . The survey is to be undertaken by an independent assessor;
- The results of the survey would be required to provide mapped records of the parked vehicle locations at each regular count interval and vehicle identities and would need to be at a time unaffected by seasonal variation (not in school holidays, or leading up to Christmas, for example); and
- An assessment of the accessibility and attractiveness of public transport, cycling and walking.

7.89 Moving forward, the council reserves the right to use Article 4 directions for specific areas if sufficient evidence emerges that greater controls on HMO conversions are required.

Policy H11: Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople provision

1. Accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople will be supported and met by:
 - a) Protecting existing Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites from redevelopment or change of use to other uses;
 - b) Allocating the sites listed below for Gypsy and Traveller use;
 - c) Requiring all strategic scale development to make an appropriate contribution of Gypsy and Traveller pitches as part of a mixed community, where appropriate;
 - d) Approving applications for pitches which accord with [Policy H12](#).
2. The sites listed below, and defined on the policies map, are allocated for residential caravan site use to be occupied by Gypsy and Travellers and should be used only for this purpose.
 - a) Land to the rear of 166 Nine Mile Ride – around 4 pitches
 - b) Tintagel Farm, Sandhurst Road – around 5 pitches
 - c) Woodlands Farm, Wood Lane, Barkham – around 15 pitches

7.90 National policy, set out in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS), is aimed at ensuring “fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community.” It requires local planning authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, and to set targets to address this.

7.91 An assessment of the accommodation needs, a [Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment \(GTAA\)](#) was published in September 2017. It found:

- Need for 26 – 90 permanent pitches for Gypsies and Travellers 2017/18 - 2035/36.
- Need for a transit site comprising 5 pitches (each capable of accommodating 2 caravans).
- No need for Travelling Showpeople plots.

7.92 Since the GTAA was published planning permission has been granted for 16 pitches. The remaining need is therefore 10-74 pitches.

7.93 [Policy H11](#) proposed the allocation of three sites to help meet the remaining need. The remaining needs are expected to be met through proposals put forward in planning applications.

Policy H12 Traveller sites

1. Development will be permitted for new Gypsy and Traveller pitches, Travelling Showpeople plots, or extensions to existing sites in these uses that are in suitable locations which are outside the Green Belt, subject to satisfying the criteria below:

- a) The site is located in, or relates well to, an existing settlement either within or adjacent to the borough which has good access to services and is not isolated in the countryside by reason of distance or other barriers;
 - b) The proposal is of a scale which does not dominate the scale of the nearest settlement whether singly or cumulatively with any existing sites in the area;
 - c) Safe and suitable access to the highway network for vehicles, caravans and pedestrians can be provided and there is adequate space for parking and manoeuvring within the site;
 - d) Development accords with national policy for flood risk and there are no other significant barriers to development in terms of drainage, ground stability or proximity to other hazardous land or installations;
 - e) The scheme is sensitively and appropriately designed so that there is no unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape. Any permanent structures should be essential for the use of the site, such as a day room;
 - f) Appropriate landscaping is provided that protects, and where possible enhances, the character of the environment and which does not unduly exclude or isolate the occupiers from the rest of the settled community. Landscaping should, as far as practicable, incorporate native plant species which respect the area's character;
 - g) The site is capable of being connected to suitable utilities or on-site services for the benefit of residents and to avoid adverse impacts on the natural environment;
 - h) There will be no unacceptable loss of amenity for neighbouring land uses;
2. Proposals for sites of mixed-use residential and business use will only be considered if appropriate to the locality and such uses will not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity.
 3. Proposals for Travelling Showperson sites will be required to satisfy the above criteria and additionally demonstrate that the site is appropriately designed to accommodate the storage and maintenance of show equipment and associated vehicles.
 4. Development which results in the loss of existing pitches or sites will be refused unless it is clearly demonstrated that:
 - a) The site is no longer suitable for such use; and that alternative provision on a site that is of equal or better quality is provided; or
 - b) It is clearly demonstrated that there is no need for GRT pitches in the borough.
 5. Appropriate, detailed and robust evidence will be required to evidence whether requirements 4a) and 4b) are satisfied.

7.94 National policy, set out in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS), sets out the definition of Gypsies and Travellers for the purposes of planning policy. This definition has created a split in policy definition between those who travel, and those who have permanently ceased to travel.

7.95 Local planning authorities are required to identify the types of homes required by Travellers who do not meet the PPTS definition. This is consistent with duties under the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016). This requires consideration of the needs of people living on sites on which caravans can be stationed. This will include Gypsies and Travellers who, though they may have ceased to travel and therefore no longer meet the PPTS definition, nevertheless continue to have a cultural aversion to bricks and mortar accommodation and therefore require specific, culturally relevant accommodation. For this reason, the GTAA established a range of need based on 'Cultural Gypsies and Travellers' – i.e. those with a cultural aversion to living in bricks and mortar accommodation – and the subset of those who fall under the PPTS definition.

7.96 The council considers that, in reality, the housing needs of both 'cultural' and 'PPTS' travellers will be met through the same provision and there is likely to be a mix on certain sites of those Gypsies and Travellers who meet the PPTS definition and those that do not. The Draft Plan therefore makes provision for the wider Gypsy and Traveller need rather than just the PPTS need.

7.97 It is important that Gypsy and Traveller pitches remain available to help meet the accommodation needs of future generations. For this reason, existing pitches will be protected from being redeveloped or being used for other purposes.

Policy H13: Houseboat Moorings

1. Development proposals for new residential moorings will be supported provided that:
 - a) There would be no unacceptable impact on the operational requirements of the watercourse;
 - b) There would be no unacceptable impact on navigation of the watercourse or navigational safety;
 - c) Adequate access for emergency services to the mooring(s) exists or can be provided as part of the development to ensure safety;
 - d) There is good access to services and facilities by walking, cycling and public transport;
 - e) The site is connected or is capable of being connected to suitable utilities and on site services including water supply, electricity and disposal facilities for sewage and waste, as far as is practicable;
 - f) There is no obstruction to the use of adjacent tow paths and no impediment to the safety of their use;
 - g) There would be no unacceptable impact on biodiversity of the water, its margins and nearby areas of nature conservation;
 - h) There would be no unacceptable visual or amenity impacts to the watercourse and nearby land uses;
 - i) There would be restriction on the desire for increased access and opportunities to enjoy enhanced water related infrastructure facilities for all residents and visitors.
2. Development proposals for transit moorings will be supported provided they satisfy criteria 1a) – 1d) and 1f) – 1i) set out above for permanent residential moorings, and:
 - a) Make appropriate provision for refuse and sewage disposal facilities which should be sited so as not cause adverse visual or amenity impact;

3. Permission for all temporary visitor moorings will be subject to a temporary occupancy condition which restricts usage to a maximum period of 14 days.

7.98 A number of waterways pass through Wokingham Borough, however the River Thames is the only waterway that is navigable. Other watercourses, such as the River Loddon and the River Blackwater, are generally too narrow to allow boats to pass along the majority of their length or to moor on their banks.

7.99 Local authorities have a statutory duty (under Section 124 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 which amends Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985) to carry out an accommodation needs assessment covering the provision of places on inland waterways where houseboats can be moored.

7.100 An assessment of accommodation needs of boat dwellers within the borough was undertaken in 2019. The Wokingham Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment (BDAA) defines a mooring as:

‘a place beside a canal or river used to moor boats. Some moorings have facilities such as electricity hook up points or space for storage. They can be used for temporary (transit) mooring or permanent mooring. ‘Authorised’ moorings have planning permission whereas ‘unauthorised’ do not.’

7.101 A transit mooring is specifically defined as:

‘a mooring used for a short period of time – usually between 24 hours and 14 days. Transit moorings are managed by a range of private and public organisations including the Environment Agency (EA) and Canal and River Trust (CRT).’

7.102 The Wokingham BDAA identified no need for transit moorings within the borough. A need for permanent residential moorings has been identified as follows:

- 2019-2024: 9
- 2024-2029: 0
- 2029-2036: 0
- Total: 9

7.103 There has been no land promoted for houseboat moorings as part of the LPU process. Availability of suitable land, given the number of private riparian landowners along the river Thames, was identified by numerous stakeholders as a barrier to delivery of moorings. The National Bargee Traveller Association (NBTA) did discuss, as part of the stakeholder engagement, their aspirations to develop a mooring marina and maintenance yard at a site along the Thames near the Kennet Mouth. However, there is no firm progress to deliver such a development. Were that scheme to come forward, or any other development proposal for residential moorings, they will be assessed against the criteria of [Policy H13](#) for their impact on the amenities of the river environment and the ability to provide suitable accommodation. This criteria based policy will be the mechanism through which needs for residential moorings are met.

Policy H14: Development of Private Residential Gardens

1. Development proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage, or the former curtilage, of private residential gardens will only be supported where:

- a) The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of:
 - i. The relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area;
 - ii. A layout which integrates with existing landscape features and the surrounding area, with regard to the built up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas;
 - iii. Existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontage
 - iv. Providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. This includes features such as the variety of trees, hedges and hardstanding/lawn etc.;
 - v. Compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area
 - vi. The materials and elevational detail are of high quality, and where appropriate distinctive and/ or complementary; and
 - vii. The arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and their rhythm between buildings.
 - b) The application site provides a site of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed in terms of the setting and spacing around buildings, amenity space, landscaping and space for access roads and parking;
 - c) The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards;
 - d) The proposal does not lead to unacceptable tandem development;
 - e) The design and layout minimises exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas and avoids the need for additional physical security measures;
 - f) The development provides biodiversity net gain wherever possible, and would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity through the fragmentation of blocks of gardens, which together, or in association with adjacent green space are deemed to make an important contribution to biodiversity and the wider green infrastructure network; and
 - g) The proposal does not prejudice the satisfactory development of the wider area.
2. Planning permission will be refused where a development proposal fails to demonstrate that criteria (a) to (g) have been fully met.

7.104 Private residential gardens are a valuable asset within the borough, providing recreation and amenity value, making an important contribution to the character of its residential areas, as well as helping to reduce flood risk and mitigate the effects of climate change, including the 'urban island heat' effect. Gardens can also provide significant opportunities for biodiversity and green infrastructure, in particular groups of gardens containing a network of habitats can provide 'stepping stones' from and between habitats, in both rural and urban areas.

7.105 National policy confirms that areas such as residential gardens in built up areas are excluded from the definition of previously developed land. Within Wokingham Borough, private residential gardens are defined as:

- i. Land within the curtilage of a residential building(s); and/or

- ii. Land where the previous lawful use was for private residential garden.

7.106 There is significant development pressure on residential gardens in the borough's towns and villages. This type of development often involves the subdivision of existing residential curtilages. Despite this type of development providing new housing in the borough, it can often appear cramped, and can have adverse effects on the existing character and setting of the area, including the existing street scene and settlement pattern. Understanding the relationship between development and the existing built form and spaces around buildings is therefore necessary to ensure development proposals make a positive contribution to the character of the area. Development of private residential gardens must therefore have regard to the place making and design principles set out in the Borough Design Guide SPD or successor document and [Policy DH1](#).

7.107 'Tandem' development is used to describe a dwelling built behind another, the rear building having no frontage and being accessed by a private roadway or track alongside the front building.

7.108 Reference to principal architectural features includes chimneys, bays and other important features. All external hard surface areas should be of permeable materials.

7.109 The clear distinction between public and private spaces is important in contributing to the sense of continuity and enclosure for existing residents. Poorly designed spaces or the loss of spaces, associated with new development on private residential gardens, can cause overlooking and overbearing impacts on the amenity of existing neighbouring properties and gardens. Proposals for development on existing private residential gardens should therefore be consistent with [Policy DH2](#).

7.110 Physical security measures can include gates and security railings etc. Gated communities will not be acceptable due to their adverse impact on community cohesion, and increasing the perception and fear of crime.

8. DESIGN, HERITAGE & THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

8.1 The high quality of the built environment, including its design and heritage are key characteristics of the borough. High quality design, a strong sense of place, and an attractive built environment can encourage walking, cycling and other healthy behaviours. The borough benefits from a wide variety of heritage assets, and the conservation and where possible, enhancement of the historic environment can further contribute towards a high quality built environment. In addition, the council has an important role in mitigating and adapting to climate change, and seeks to promote high levels of energy generation and efficiency as a key component of good design. This will help tackle the global issues of climate change by reducing carbon emissions, and raising environmental standards, such as increasing water efficiency alongside other standards and measures.

Policy DH1: Place Making and Quality Design

1. All development will contribute to a strong sense of place through high quality design which should endure over the lifetime of the development. Development is required to:
 - a) Be resilient to climate change in accordance with [Policy SS9: Adaptation to Climate Change](#), and minimise energy demand and maximise energy efficiency in accordance with [Policy DH7: Energy](#);
 - b) Reinforce or create a positive sense of place and local distinctiveness through design that respects the local natural and historic character of the area, paying particular attention to urban grain, layout, rhythm, density, scale, bulk, massing, proportions, detailing and trees;
 - c) Incorporate appropriate innovation in design to improve the quality of an area and the way it functions;
 - d) Deliver safe, easy access and movement for cars and service vehicles and maximise the opportunities for and prioritisation of walking, cycling and other sustainable modes of transport;
 - e) Have a layout that provides attractive, permeable and legible environments that encourage people to easily move around by walking and cycling;
 - f) Ensure that streets and public spaces are attractive, particularly at the pedestrian level, incorporating features of visual interest wherever possible, and are functional, inclusive and able to be managed for the long term;
 - g) Create places that foster active healthy lifestyles in accordance with [Policy HC1: Healthy and safe communities](#);
 - h) Provide sufficient levels of high quality, usable private and public amenity space which is clearly delineated through the incorporation of high quality soft and hard boundary treatments as appropriate;
 - i) Provide acceptable standards of amenity, privacy and daylight for occupiers, and not unacceptably affect the amenity of the locality or surrounding properties in accordance with [Policy DH2: Safeguarding Amenity](#);
 - j) Include an appropriate mix of uses to the scale and location of the development;
 - k) Make most efficient use of land and make best use of existing buildings while also designing in the adaptability of use into new buildings wherever possible to allow for flexibility in their usage over time;
 - l) Not prejudice by way of design and layout the comprehensive development of a wider area;
 - m) Retain and protect existing trees, hedgerows and other vegetation worthy of retention;

- n) , Integrate appropriate new landscaping and green infrastructure as an integral part of the scheme, which is consistent with achieving net biodiversity gain in accordance with [Policy NE1: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation](#);
 - o) Create safe environments that are designed to discourage crime and disorder through appropriate levels of natural surveillance and spaces that promote positive social interaction;
 - p) Be accessible to all, including people of all ages and with disabilities and other vulnerable members of the community through carefully designed access features and be capable of adaptation to meet future needs;
 - q) Minimise the visual impact of parking arrangements;
 - r) Provide adequate on-site space for refuse and recycling storage in a manner that is integrated into the scheme to reduce visual impact;
 - s) Ensure that service access to commercial uses is arranged so there is no unacceptable impact on highway safety, amenity, and visual impact;
 - t) Optimise the density of all developments, with higher densities provided in town centres and other locations well served by public transport, as appropriate;
 - u) Maximise opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land.
2. All development proposals must demonstrate that they are in general conformity with the design principles set out in supporting guidance and Neighbourhood Plans where applicable.
 3. Masterplans and Design Codes will be required for larger and more complex developments to agree an overall vision and strategy for a development as a whole, which demonstrates a comprehensive and inclusive approach to design.

8.2 In planning, design is the process of devising the physical form of development to create successful places. The creation of high-quality places, and the buildings and uses within them, should be central to all planning decisions. Good design is not merely about how things look, but also about how buildings and places function, what activity occurs, whether buildings and spaces are fit for their intended purpose, whether buildings and spaces are adaptable to changing needs, and whether they are accessible to all people. It is a combination of all these aspects which creates the identity of places. In respect of new homes, people do not merely live in houses, they live in neighbourhoods with streets and landscapes – this understanding needs to be evident in the design of our new developments.

8.3 National planning policy is clear that creating high quality buildings and places should be a fundamental outcome of the planning and development process. Local plans should include robust and comprehensive policies that specify the quality of development that will be expected for the area. The council is committed to securing good design and has an adopted Borough Design Guide SPD to help guide developers and decisions. The Borough Design Guide will be reviewed and updated from time to time to ensure it reflects best practice. Additionally, the [National Design Guide](#) sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice, and this will be a material consideration in the planning application process.

Climate change adaptation

8.4 It is vital that climate change principles are fully recognised and incorporated into the design of development proposals from the very earliest stages. All development proposals are expected to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change in accordance with [Policy SS9. Through Policy NE1: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation, developments must contribute to net biodiversity gain. Appropriate](#)

[new landscaping should be incorporated into all proposals, and developments are encouraged to provide an increase in the number of trees and hedgerows planted in comparison to that which was there prior to development, recognising the contribution that afforestation can have to capturing carbon emissions and thereby mitigating the impacts of climate change. The ability to deliver this will vary on a site by site basis.](#)

Character

8.5 Within the borough there is a wide variety of environments, both in the settlements and the countryside, many of which are highly attractive places to live and work. Places across the borough are valued by local communities as part of the heritage. Developments proposals should be designed to respect and enhance the character of places.

8.6 National planning policy encourages the empowering of local people to shape their surroundings. The importance of design and the need to respond to an area is something that is very important to residents. People considering a development proposal are encouraged to undertake early, proactive and effective engagement with the local community to help shape their proposals. Development proposals which have sought to incorporate the views of communities will be viewed more favourably than those that cannot.

8.7 In order to reinforce or improve on an area's character and sense of place, development proposals will need to consider the siting, height, scale, roofscape, massing, form, design and materials, of the proposed development. Development proposals should add to the quality of the overall area and should also seek to maximise net environmental gains through providing new habitats where possible and improving public access to the countryside.

8.8 Important aspects of local character can be set out and addressed in various supporting documents such as Neighbourhood Plans, Village Design Statements, and Conservation Area Appraisals. Where present, these should be taken into account alongside [Policy DH1](#).

Healthy and safe communities

8.9 Good design creates safe and accessible neighbourhoods where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. This will require neighbourhoods and the built environment to maximise opportunities for good natural surveillance, thoughtful design and use of public spaces and facilities, including those of local schools, and intelligent use of high quality public realm and street-lighting design so that it allows people to have a sense of safety and pride about the environments they live in and use. Careful planning and design create the right conditions for people to feel safe and secure, without the need for additional security measures. Additionally, it is important that development, especially that which will accommodate vulnerable users, should be designed to ensure community cohesion and support and be accessible to support and emergency services.

Accessibility and ease of movement

8.10 Buildings and places should be designed to be fully accessible and inclusive for all, including people of all ages and those with mobility impairment or other health issues. This is not only about physical access to buildings and places, but also different ways of improving wayfinding, to make the use of the public realm easier, more pleasant and safe.

Safeguarding amenity

8.11 A key principle of good design is that development should create a quality environment for people using new buildings and places while not reducing the quality of the existing environment for others. Development proposals must demonstrate how they have satisfied these design principles and accord with [Policy DH2: Safeguarding Amenity](#).

Efficient/re-use of land

8.12 Using land efficiently will require schemes to show how they have considered the topography of a site and its location, and also how they have had regard to aspects like solar orientation and design to prevent over-heating. Efficiency of use will also involve using under-utilised land as well as developing in airspace above buildings where it is appropriate to do so. In accordance with national planning policy, development proposals which fail to make the most efficient use of land should be refused.

[Policy DH2: Safeguarding amenity](#)

1. Development proposals should not cause by themselves, or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development, a detrimental impact on the amenity of existing properties or unacceptable living conditions for new occupiers in terms of:
 - a) Privacy and overlooking;
 - b) Access to daylight and sunlight;
 - c) Visual dominance, outlook and overbearing effects of development;
 - d) Noise and disturbance;
 - e) Artificial lighting;
 - f) Vibration;
 - g) Dust and fumes;
 - h) Smell; and
 - i) Crime and safety.
2. As well as immediate impacts, other aspects to which this policy applies will include matters such as hours of operation of businesses, and effects of traffic movements, particularly of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). Development proposals that would generate regular movements of HGVs and commercial traffic in residential areas should demonstrate that the impacts on the amenity of the local residents, by reason of noise and disturbance are minimised.
3. Where an otherwise acceptable development could change its character to a use that would have a greater impact on amenity without needing planning permission, conditions will be applied to restrict such changes.

8.13 Development should not reduce the quality of the environment for others. At the same time, development should create a quality environment for those who will occupy and use new buildings and spaces.

8.14 Negative effects on amenity should be minimised as they can impact on quality of life. Provision of good indoor daylight and sunlight levels is important for health and well-being and to decrease energy consumption through reduced need for artificial heating and lighting. Overshadowing affects the quality or operation of adjacent buildings and can negatively impact on the use of public and private open space for

recreation, rest and play. Positioning, scale and orientation of buildings as well as the incorporation of design measures should be considered to minimise overshadowing and overlooking and ensure adequate levels of privacy. Even when there may be no material loss of daylight or sunlight, new developments should prevent unacceptable increases in the sense of enclosure.

8.15 Amenity levels for new residential development can be assisted through the careful consideration of interaction between activities, for instance, layouts should avoid locating living rooms, bathrooms and kitchens next to, above, or below proposed and neighbouring bedrooms unless effects can be adequately mitigated through design. Similarly, aspects which are most likely to cause issues (e.g. car parks, bin stores and noisy equipment) should be located away from or buffered from the most sensitive activities to possible effects (e.g. children's play areas, outdoor amenity spaces or habitable rooms).

Policy DH3: Shopfronts

Development proposals for new shopfronts or alterations to existing shopfronts will be supported provided they:

- a) Create or maintain an active frontage;
- b) Respect the character, materials, design, scale and proportions of the building;
- c) Retain, do not conceal, and where possible restore, the building's important architectural or historic features;
- d) Include security measures, such as shutter or alarm boxes, that are well designed and integrated into the shopfront; and
- e) Respect the street scene and character of the area.

8.16 Shopfronts make an important contribution to the character and quality of an area and its public realm. Being at street level, they are one of the most prominent visual features that users of a centre will interact with and therefore should contribute to attractive and active frontages. An active frontage is a street façade which provides active visual engagement between users inside a building and people on the street. This is most readily achieved through full transparent glazing allowing views into the unit. It can also be achieved by creative window displays which provide visual interest. Large sections of blank wall will be discouraged, as will signage which obscures views into the interior of a unit.

8.17 Building facades may include surviving historical or architectural features or details which enhance the character of the building. These are often unique, add visual interest to a shopfront and contribute to the distinctive character of the local area. Where such details exist, they should be retained and restored as applicable, for example it may be that when more recent shopfronts are removed for refitting, earlier decorative features can be uncovered and incorporated into new proposals.

8.18 Shopfront security measures should not compromise the appearance of the shopfront, the building as a whole or the character of the wider street scene. Solid external shutters reduce the attractiveness and perceptions of safety in shopping streets after dark and where shutters are installed at a later date than the shopfront, protruding shutter boxes are visually obtrusive. Every effort should be made to incorporate internal shutters, preferably of metal lattice which maintain visibility into the shop window and allow the shutter box to be hidden inside the shop window.

Policy DH4: Advertisements and signage

1. Development proposals for advertisements and signage will be supported provided they:
 - a) Respect the building or structure on which they are located and/or their surroundings and setting in terms of size, location, design, materials, colour, noise, lettering, amount and type of text, illumination and luminance,
 - b) Will not have a harmful impact on the amenity of adjoining uses,
 - c) Will not have a detrimental effect on public safety, and
 - d) Respect the street scene and character of the area.
2. The cumulative impact of advertisements and signage will be taken into account, and a proliferation that detrimentally affects visual or aural amenity, or public safety will not be acceptable. All advertisements and signage shall comply with the following criteria:
 - a) Advertisements and signage will not obstruct windows any other sign already located on the building, or cut across significant architectural features such as historic fascias, windows, pilasters, cornices or scrolls;
 - b) Where a shop or business occupies more than one adjacent unit, the advertisement or signage will not run between the shopfronts;
 - c) Advertisements or signage on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;
 - d) Advertisements or signage will not reduce visibility for users of the highway or accesses onto the highway;
 - e) Illumination should not detract from the amenity of the area or pose a safety hazard to users of the highway; and
 - f) Advertisements or signage should not obscure the sight lines or cause an obstruction to movement.

8.19 Advertisements and signage are common features, in particular in the more commercial areas. Although they play a role in providing information, the management of advertisements and signs is important as they can have significant impacts on the quality and appearance of the street scene and upon the building on which they are displayed. They may also affect amenity and public safety, including highway safety, and can damage the appearance of the streetscape and the architectural integrity of our built environment. On the other hand, properly planned, executed and managed, advertising and signage can enhance peoples' experience of the public realm.

8.20 To ensure the most is made of the positive aspects of advertisements and signage, careful consideration will be given to the size, location, materials, details, and method of illumination of proposals together with the impact they will have on the architectural features of the building upon which they are fixed and the character of the wider area.

8.21 In areas such as the town centre where there are more advertisements and signage, it is important that they do not create visual clutter. The removal of existing advertisements and signage will be sought where their function is duplicated or where they detract from the appearance or character of the area.

Policy DH5: The Historic Environment

1. Development proposals should conserve and seek to enhance, wherever possible, the archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest of all heritage assets, including the contribution to this interest made by their setting. This will be achieved through:
 - a) ensuring that development proposals identify and understand the heritage interest(s) that may be affected by the proposed works, at an early stage in the design process;
 - b) supporting works that secure the sensitive use, enjoyment, conservation and/or enhancement of heritage assets and their settings, particularly in relation to designated assets identified as being at risk; and
 - c) securing the sensitive design of development which impacts on heritage assets and their settings, retaining or incorporating existing features or details of historic or architectural interest and/or design quality into the scheme.
2. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource. Where development proposals have the potential to affect heritage assets, a heritage assessment should be prepared and submitted alongside the development proposal describing the significance of any heritage assets affected, including the contribution to their setting. Where there is harm, information must be provided on whether the harm is assessed as being less than substantial or substantial.
3. Development proposals which would cause harm to the heritage interest of a heritage asset, or to its setting (whether statutorily designated or locally important), will not be permitted without a clear and convincing justification in the form of the public benefits of the proposal that cannot otherwise be achieved and which demonstrably outweigh any harm to the interest of the heritage asset in question, irrespective of the level of harm.
4. Development proposals that would cause substantial harm to, or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or all the particular circumstances to:
 - a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
 - b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
 - c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
 - d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

8.22 National policy defines the historic environment as “all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora”.

8.23 All heritage assets should be protected in a manner appropriate to their significance. National policy defines a heritage asset as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest. This includes designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets. Non-designated heritage assets are those

identified by the council as local planning authority (including local listing) and neighbourhood planning groups. The heritage interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.

8.24 The borough contains a number of designated heritage assets, including Grade I, II* and II Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, and Conservation Areas. The borough also contains a number of non-designated but locally important heritage assets, including Locally Listed Heritage Assets (previously referred to as Buildings of Traditional Character), Areas of Special Character, and Local Historic Parks and Gardens. Other heritage assets, not locally or nationally designated, are recognised as making a positive contribution to the historic character and distinctiveness of the borough.

8.25 The objective of conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the borough's historic environment can be achieved through ensuring that development proposals recognise and respect the significance and individual identity and fabric of buildings and the sense of place. Development proposals affecting a heritage asset or its setting shall pay special attention to:

1. Retaining and conserving original or historic architectural features both external and internal features, finishing and the building's plan form.
2. Lighting, signing and advertisements, including fascias, to ensure they do not detract from the architectural or historic quality of the building or the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.¹⁹
3. The scale, proportions, design, workmanship and materials of development proposals in relation to the existing heritage asset.
4. Understanding the, sometimes complex, relationship between historic buildings and their surroundings.
5. Retaining original or historic garden or landscape features.

8.26 Development proposals affecting heritage assets should include a proportionate level of supporting information to identify the significance (heritage interest) of the asset and to convey the exact nature of the proposals, and their impact on that significance. This should also include mitigation that is proportionate to both the impact on and the significance of the heritage asset, and where possible positive opportunities to conserve and enjoy heritage assets. Where loss is unavoidable and justified, an exercise recording this loss and advancing knowledge should be undertaken (noting that the ability to record historic evidence is not a consideration in deciding whether an application will be granted permission). Supporting information should include:

1. Detailed survey drawings and plans, elevations and sections;
2. Use of appropriate references such as, for designated assets, the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) (maintained by Historic England) and, for non-designated assets, the Berkshire Historic Environment Record and the Berkshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment (maintained by Berkshire Archaeology);
3. For assets of archaeological interest, an appropriate desk-based assessment; and, where necessary, a field evaluation; and draw upon specialist expertise and guidance as appropriate.

8.27 Care should be taken to understand and assess the implications of development on the setting of heritage assets and of development within the setting of assets, drawing on Conservation Area Appraisals where relevant. Where a development proposal is permitted that would result in harm to or loss of the significance of a heritage asset, developers will be required to record and advance understanding of the significance of that asset, in a manner appropriate to its importance and the impact, and to make that evidence publicly accessible.

¹⁹ Wokingham Borough Council maintains a program of Conservation Area Appraisals.

8.28 The NHLE is the only official database that provides access to up to date information on all nationally designated heritage assets. The listing details in most cases identify external features, and can be used to support an assessment of significance, however internal features may not be fully covered, so requiring additional consideration. The NHLE should be used along with other relevant documentation such as the Berkshire Historic Environment Record and the Berkshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment. Keeping historic buildings in good repair and in active use that is consistent with their conservation is the key to their preservation.

8.29 Conservation Areas are designated heritage assets identified on the Policies Map. Further information of those designated within the borough, including Conservation Area Appraisals are located on the council's website.

8.30 Historic England maintains the national Heritage at Risk Register, which includes Grade I and II* listed buildings, places of worship used for worship at least six times a year nationally, scheduled monuments, registered historic parks and gardens, conservation areas, registered battlefields and protected wreck sites. In January 2020 there were five scheduled monuments and one registered historic park and garden within the borough on the Register, but assets can be added or removed at any time.

8.31 The council will monitor listed buildings and structures at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. Through discussions with landowners solutions will be sought proactively for these at risk assets alongside positively considering development schemes that would ensure assets are repaired and maintained. However, if a listed building is being allowed to deteriorate then the council may take action to secure its repair. This could be either through the use of Urgent Works/Repairs Notices as set out in the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 and the powers of maintenance under Building Act (1984) or the use of a Section 215 Notice under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The council will also have regard to the advice set out in Historic England's 'Stopping the Rot' guidance to make effective use of these powers.

8.32 Within the borough, there are areas or groups of buildings of a consistent period or character type which reflects the area's past, but where a Conservation Area designation may not be justified. These are known as Areas of Special Character. There are also some buildings which, whilst not meeting the standards for statutory listing, are nonetheless of considerable local importance to local built heritage and as such merit consideration in planning decisions. These are known as Locally Listed Buildings. The council maintains a Register of Locally Listed Buildings.

8.33 Where development affecting either an Area of Special Character or a Locally Listed Building is proposed, this should protect the architectural integrity of the building and its setting or the special character of the area. Development proposals should have special regard to the historical context, outbuildings, scale, form, massing and materials of the area or building, as well as key architectural features or detailing that contributes to its character.

Policy DH6: Archaeology

1. Development proposals that would affect the significance of a scheduled monument, are within areas defined as Areas of High Archaeological Potential, or locations where archaeological remains are known or suspected, will need to be accompanied with a detailed assessment of the impact of the development upon archaeological remains and their significance. This should be in the form of an appropriate desk-based assessment using suitable references such as the Historic Environment Record and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

2. Development proposal should take appropriate measures to protect any archaeological remains by preservation in situ. Where assessment of archaeological potential demonstrates this is not justified or proportionate, applicants shall provide for the excavation, recording and archiving of remains.

8.34 The council will work with Berkshire Archaeology, developers and their heritage consultants to ensure that the appropriate level of archaeological evaluation as well as measures to protect and preserve remains are undertaken. This will be assessed on a site by site basis and the level of preservation will be appropriate to the significance of the remains.

8.35 Where archaeological remains cannot be preserved in-situ, developers should record their significance and make this publicly accessible by depositing the evidence with the relevant Historic Environment Record (Berkshire Archaeology) and depositing the remains in local museums. The cost of recording and depositing remains will rest with the developer.

Policy DH7: Energy

Energy generation in new development

To minimise energy use development proposals will be supported where they:

- a) Implement the Energy Hierarchy within the design of new buildings by prioritising a 'fabric first' approach and passive design and landscaping measures to minimise energy demand for heating, lighting and cooling;
- b) Demonstrate a reduction in on-site energy demand and maximise the use of low carbon energy sources across the scheme to minimise the effects of climate change;
- c) Maximise opportunities to link into and/or expand existing renewable and low carbon energy networks wherever it is feasible and viable to do so;
- d) Embrace innovative sustainable design solutions for energy efficiency and low carbon energy generation and use, over and above the National Housing Standards Building Regulations;
- e) Appropriately integrate solar gain, natural ventilation or ventilation with heat recovery, fabric performance and passive principles into the layout and design.

Energy efficiency in existing developments

Development proposals which would result in considerable improvements to the energy efficiency, carbon emissions and/or general suitability, condition and longevity of existing buildings will be supported, with significant weight attributed to those benefits.

The sensitive retrofitting of energy efficiency measures and the appropriate use of micro-renewables in historic buildings, including listed buildings and buildings within conservation areas will be encouraged, providing the special characteristics of the heritage assets are protected.

8.36 Without any mitigation, new development will increase the demand for energy. However, new development will also play a positive role in supporting the establishment of new renewable energy technologies as a key part of the development, as well as supporting the expansion and efficiency of existing renewable energy schemes where it is appropriate to link into these. Clean growth is essential to meet

future emission targets and to avoid costly retrofit programmes at a later date. New development is expected to maximise opportunities to deliver high standards of energy efficiency through good design by implementing the energy hierarchy.

8.37 The energy hierarchy is as follows:

A) **Reduce the need for energy** – site layout and orientation of buildings can reduce the energy demand of buildings. This by capitalising on passive solar gain which utilises the energy from the sun to heat and provide light. It can also help keep buildings cool.

B) **Use energy efficiently** – there are many measures that help to save and efficiently use energy. These include thermal efficient glazed windows, draught proofing, insulation, and energy efficient appliances (light fittings etc).

C) **Supply energy efficiently** – by using existing supplies more efficiently greenhouse gas emissions can be significantly reduced (also termed low carbon sources) e.g Combined Heat and Power (CHP) networks.

D) **Use renewable energy** – Developments can incorporate technologies that obtain energy from flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – such as from the wind (wind turbines), the fall of water (hydro), from the sun (photovoltaics) and from biomass.

8.38 Existing domestic buildings contribute around 34% of Wokingham Borough's carbon dioxide emissions whilst existing non-domestic buildings contribute around 20%. Retrofitting the existing building stock therefore presents a significant opportunity to help meet the 2030 carbon neutrality target.

Policy DH8: Environmental standards for non-residential development

Development proposals for non-residential development will be supported provided they meet the following environmental standards.

- a) Meet or exceed water conservation measures so that predicted per capita consumption does not exceed the appropriate levels set out in the applicable BREEAM standard;
- b) Incorporate greywater recycling and rainwater harvesting where possible; and
- c) Incorporate suitable waste management facilities, including on site recycling.

Major development

- d) Major non-residential developments or conversions to non-residential will additionally be required to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM 'Excellent' standards, or any future equivalent.

Minor development

- e) Minor non-residential developments or conversions to non-residential will additionally be required to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM 'Very Good' standard as a minimum;

Extensions to existing non-residential premises

- f) All extensions to existing non-residential premises of 500sqm floorspace or more are encouraged to achieve 'Very Good' in BREEAM.

The standards within this policy should be achieved as a minimum unless it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist. Where on-site achievement is not viable or practical, a pro-rata contribution to the carbon offset fund should be provided.

8.39 Development proposals have the potential to impose a large environmental footprint in terms of consumption of resources and materials, the use of energy and the associated emission of greenhouse gases that contribute towards climate change. As such, the incorporation of sustainable design and construction techniques are essential in order to minimise this impact in the context of Wokingham Borough.

8.40 This policy incorporates the use of BREEAM standards. These standards cover a wide range of matters including building fabrics and materials, energy and water use, amenity areas and ecology, waste recycling, the location and accessibility of developments, daylighting, sound insulation etc.

Water efficiency

8.41 Water is a valuable resource, and there is a clear need to ensure that the highest possible standards of water efficiency are in place. This is due to the broader effects of climate change on future water resources and also due to localised pressures for water that are evidenced in the area. Two water supply companies serve Wokingham Borough: Thames Water and South East Water. Wokingham Borough is classified as an area of serious water stress²⁰. These findings are mirrored in the Wokingham Borough Council Water Cycle Study – Phase 1 Scoping Study (WCS) (2019). In order to address this issue, and contribute towards wider climate change adaptability, the higher optional standard for water efficiency of 110 litres per person per day is justified.

Carbon Emissions

8.42 A motion Declaring a Climate Emergency for Wokingham Borough Council with a target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 was approved at Council on 18th July 2019. Given the scale of residential development in Wokingham Borough, achieving the aim of becoming carbon neutral will not be possible without that development having a minimal impact on carbon emissions.

8.43 As the current BREEAM standards give high scores in urban areas to using previously developed land that is close to services, amenities and public transport routes, most major developments in Wokingham Borough will naturally score relatively highly before any consideration of the impact of development itself. As such the council believes that development should mitigate effects further by reducing greenhouse gas and other polluting emissions and providing higher energy conservation, hence the requirement for BREEAM 'Excellent' ratings. Minor development proposals will be required to meet BREEAM 'Very Good'.

8.44 All minor and major developments are required to demonstrate compliance with the standards set out in [Policy DH8](#) in a Sustainability Statement.

Policy DH9: Environmental standards for residential development

Development proposals for residential development will be supported provided they meet the following environmental standards.

²⁰ Environment Agency and National Resources Wales's study Water Stressed Areas - Final Classification (2013)

- a) Meet the higher water efficiency standard in Regulation 36 of the Building Regulations.

Minor developments

- b) Minor residential developments will additionally be expected to achieve at least a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined within Building Regulations Approved Document Part L 2013, or satisfy any higher standard that is required under new national planning policy or Building Regulations.

Major developments

- c) Major residential development will additionally be expected to be designed to achieve carbon neutral homes.

Conversions to residential and extensions to existing dwellings

- d) All conversions to residential and extensions to existing dwellings of 500 sqm of residential floorspace or more are encouraged to achieve 'excellent' in BREEAM domestic refurbishment.

Measures to reduce energy use of existing dwellings

- e) Measures which facilitate a reduction of carbon emissions in existing dwellings will be supported provided they do not give rise to unacceptable impacts on landscape, biodiversity, heritage assets, character of the area, and amenity

The standards within this policy should be achieved as a minimum unless it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist. Where on-site achievement is not viable or practical, a pro-rata contribution to the carbon offset fund should be provided.

8.45 The Government has sought to consolidate the wide range of standards required for new housing across the country. The approach has been to rely on minimum requirements in the Building Regulations for most matters, but to set a small number of 'optional' national standards over and above the Building Regulations minima, which local authorities can choose to apply in their areas. These 'optional' standards include water efficiency.

8.46 These 'optional' standards can only apply where a policy is included in a local plan. This policy therefore applies those standards in Wokingham Borough. It should be noted that the standards are only 'optional' for the local planning authority to apply in their areas, but that once applied, compliance in line with the policy is compulsory. Conditions will be applied to relevant planning permissions to ensure compliance with the policy. For water efficiency and accessibility, the standards will be applied through the Building Regulations. Planning conditions may be required to secure compliance. Where references to the Building Regulations in the policy change, the requirement shall be taken to refer to the most up-to-date standard.

8.47 Housing standards serve an important role in ensuring resident health and well-being. Providing the appropriate types of housing at affordable levels can reduce overcrowding, unhealthy living conditions,

injuries in the home and social isolation²¹. Deprived residents are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a result of substandard housing²².

Water efficiency

8.48 Water is a valuable resource, and there is a clear need to ensure that the highest possible standards of water efficiency are in place. This is due to the broader effects of climate change on future water resources and also due to localised pressures for water that are evidenced in the area. Two water supply companies serve Wokingham Borough: Thames Water and South East Water. Wokingham Borough is classified as an area of serious water stress²³. These findings are mirrored in the Wokingham Borough Council Water Cycle Study – Phase 1 Scoping Study (WCS) (2019). In order to address this issue, and contribute towards wider climate change adaptability, the higher optional standard for water efficiency of 110 litres per person per day is justified.

Carbon Emissions

8.49 A motion Declaring a Climate Emergency for Wokingham Borough Council with a target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 was approved at Council on 18th July 2019. Given the scale of residential development in Wokingham Borough, achieving the aim of becoming carbon neutral will not be possible without that development having a minimal impact on carbon emissions.

8.50 Therefore, the requirement will be that major new housing is built to zero carbon homes standard. A revised Sustainable Design and Construction SPD to be produced in 2019 will contain more detail on achieving this requirement. Minor development will be required to make an improvement above Building Regulations.

8.51 All minor and major developments involving net additional residential dwellings are required to demonstrate compliance with the standards set out in [Policy DH9](#) in a Sustainability Statement.

Policy DH10: Low carbon and renewable energy generation

1. Development proposals for new standalone low carbon and renewable energy generation schemes and associated infrastructure, or extensions to existing schemes, will be supported provided they are of an appropriate scale and do not give rise to unacceptable impacts on landscape, biodiversity, heritage assets, character of the area, and amenity.
2. Where clear evidence can be demonstrated of local support for the provision of new, or extension of existing, low carbon or renewable energy generation schemes, this will be given significant weight in decision taking.
3. Neighbourhood plans are encouraged to identify and allocate sites for renewable energy generation within their neighbourhood area.

²¹ NHS Healthy Urban Development Checklist.

²² Shelter, The Impact of Bad Housing on Physical Health.

²³ Environment Agency and National Resources Wales's study Water Stressed Areas - Final Classification (2013)

8.52 Applications for low carbon and renewable energy generation may include solar farms, wind turbines, hydro-power, biomass, district heating, combined heat and power (CHP) from renewable resources and others.

8.53 Due to the benefits low carbon and renewable energy generation brings to tackling climate change, development proposals will be supported unless there are unacceptable impacts that outweigh the benefits.

8.54 To ensure that the benefits are not outweighed by the impact of transportation, development proposals for biomass infrastructure will only be supported where there is a local and adequate source of material, and local arrangements are also in place for the disposal of ash.

9. HEALTHY & SAFE COMMUNITIES

9.1 A key part of the vision of the Local Plan Update is to focus on the needs of our communities. This includes creating and promoting healthy, safe communities and facilitating social interaction through the provision and enhancement of infrastructure such as open space. Protecting existing communities from the adverse effects of other land uses and hazards, such as pollution, also helps to promote wellbeing and high standards of environmental quality.

Policy HC1: Promoting Healthy Communities

1. Strong, vibrant and healthy communities will be promoted through a high quality environment with local services to support health, social and cultural wellbeing and reduce inequalities.
2. Development proposals should include measures to contribute to healthier communities and reduce health inequalities. This includes making a positive contribution to creating high quality, active, safe and accessible places.
3. Development proposals will be supported which:
 - a. Contribute to the priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Board and partners to help reduce health inequalities;
 - b. Support the provision of new or improved health facilities, in consultation with Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS England;
 - c. Protect existing health facilities in line with [Policy HC2: Community Facilities](#).
4. Proposals for all major development schemes will be required to include a Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

9.2 The built and natural environment strongly influences behaviour, including travel patterns and physical activity levels as well as social connectivity. Places should therefore support healthy lifestyles, including opportunities to interact socially, in a safe and accessible environment. Through the planning process, development can positively improve quality of life, with new development presenting a valuable opportunity to plan new spaces and places that promote and integrate healthy behaviours. This can help to entrench active travel choices such as walking and cycling, alongside good urban design and access to open spaces.

9.3 One of the key objectives for the Local Plan Update is to 'improve health and wellbeing by enabling independence, encouraging healthy lifestyles, facilitating social interaction and creating inclusive and safe communities'. This theme transgresses the policies in this plan, promoting the health and wellbeing of communities, including through quality of housing, tackling climate change, and access to community facilities amongst others. The creation of healthy environments for people of all ages across the borough will be therefore be a key consideration through the planning process.

9.4 The Health and Wellbeing Board brings plans how best to meet local health and care needs and influence the commissioning of services, and brings together the NHS (NHS England and the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group), Healthwatch, local authority executive members, the voluntary sector and public health. Wokingham's Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2018-2021) sets out three priorities: creating

physically active communities, reducing social isolation and loneliness and narrowing the health inequalities gap. As a result, consideration must be given to the priorities and actions identified in the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy. The Wokingham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) further underpins these priorities.

9.5 Health Impact Assessments (HIA) are a useful tool that can help to identify the likely health impacts of development, and set out measures to improve health outcomes and address negative effects and inequalities. The scope of a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) will vary depending on the size and location of the development. HIAs for developments of 100 homes or more should include details of the engagement undertaken with local health and community stakeholders. Information gathered through this engagement will help to identify and address any impacts.

Policy HC2: Community Infrastructure

New Facilities

1. Development proposals for the provision of new or extended community facilities will be supported, particularly where there is an identified present or future need, and should be:
 - a. Of a suitable nature and scale to meet identified needs, be compatible with the character of the area and be sufficiently flexible to meet changing needs over time;
 - b. Designed to accommodate a range of community uses. The co-location of facilities, including access for appropriate organisations and the local community will be strongly encouraged;
 - c. Accessible by all members of the community and promote social inclusion;
 - d. Provided as part of a large residential scheme where development increases demand beyond current capacity, or generates a newly arising need.
2. New facilities should not adversely impact on the existing facilities in the local area.

Existing Facilities

3. Existing community facilities should be retained, improved and enhanced.
4. Proposals that result in the loss of an essential community facility or service will only be permitted where:
 - a. It would lead to the significant improvement of an existing facility or the replacement of an existing facility, of equal accessibility and convenience for the local community, with equivalent or improved facilities; or
 - b. It has been determined that the facility no longer meets the needs of the local community; or
 - c. It would provide sufficient community benefit to outweigh the loss of the existing facility; or
 - d. It is no longer economically viable.
5. Appropriate, detailed and robust evidence will be required to satisfy the above criteria.

9.6 Community facilities provide an important service to the local community. The ability to access meeting places, healthcare, libraries, local shops, cultural buildings, public houses, places of worship, sports

venues and youth provision, forms a vital part of the quality of life for residents. There are a variety of community facilities across the borough, that form an essential part of local settlements and centres to meet community's day to day needs and support sustainable, cohesive and integrated communities. For example, Finchampstead Baptist Church Centre is used by the church, youth groups, and a variety of other classes, with facilities including a sports hall, library and café.

9.7 National policy provides strong protection for community facilities, and local planning policies will have an important role to play ensuring that community facilities are provided in an effective and accessible way. Existing services must be protected as much as possible, whilst making sure that they are 'fit for purpose'. It is important that facilities keep pace with new development so that both existing and new communities have good access to community facilities. New development can put additional pressure on infrastructure and may create the need for new facilities and local services, so appropriate developer contributions will be important to fund delivery.

9.8 To promote social inclusion and wider public health benefits, including more active lifestyles, new facilities should be sustainably located for the community it intends to serve, particularly for access by pedestrians and cycles. Proposals that seek to enhance community facilities will generally be supported, unless it risks undermining the viability of an existing valued facility. Community uses can also be vulnerable to development pressure for other uses. Although the retention of existing community uses is strongly supported, there may be situations where the community use is no longer required/viable.

9.9 To justify the loss or redevelopment of a community facility for a non-community use, the following evidence should be provided:

- Evidence of continued marketing for at least 12 continuous months, demonstrating there is no longer demand for the facility.
- Evidence that other service providers and the community have been consulted to confirm there is no need for the facility.
- Evidence of alternative facilities of a similar size, function, accessibility and adaptability in the local area to meet the day to day needs of the community.

9.10 The nomination of a facility as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) is one way of identifying a building or land use that is important to the social wellbeing or interests of the local community. Once listed as an ACV the local community will be informed if listed for sale within a five year period, allowing the community to enact a Community Right to Bid, and a period of six months to determine whether they can raise the finance to purchase the asset. A list of ACVs is available on the council website. If a facility is listed as an ACV, or the application is pending, it will be taken into consideration as part of the planning application process.

Policy HC3: Open Space, Sports, Recreation and Play Facilities

Existing Facilities

1. Existing open space, sports and recreation and play facilities will be protected, maintained and where possible enhanced.
2. Development proposals resulting in the loss of open space, sports and recreation and play facilities will only be permitted where:

- a. An assessment has been undertaken which clearly shows the open space, facilities or land are surplus to requirements and alternative facilities are available within a reasonable distance; or
- b. It can be demonstrated that alternative facilities of equivalent or superior quality and quantity will be provided in an accessible and suitable location;
- c. The development is for alternative sport and recreational provision, the needs and benefits of which outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

New Facilities and Residential Development

- 3. Development proposals for open space, sport and recreation and play facilities will be encouraged and supported, in line with other policies in the Plan and Sport England guidance. New open space, sports, recreation and play facilities should be well related to the communities they serve and, where possible, be co-located with other community uses.
- 4. Development proposals for new residential development, will be required to provide or contribute to the provision of open space, sport and recreation and play facilities and must demonstrate how they meet the standards in the table below.

Type	Borough standard (ha per 1,000 population)
Parks and public gardens	1.1
Natural/ semi natural greenspace (excluding country parks)	2.84
Amenity greenspace	0.98
Provision for children and young people (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play; Local Equipped Areas of Play; Local Areas of Play)	0.25
Civic Space	0.01
Outdoor sports facilities	1.66
Cemeteries/ Burial grounds*	14.4 grave plots per 1,000 population
Allotments	0.52
Type (indoor sports)	Borough standard (m ² per 1,000 population)
Sports hall (4-bad court) including indoor bowls (2 rinks) and Health & Fitness gyms (20 stations)	65.43
Swimming pool	8.26
Activity halls	41.31
*Assumes a grave plot can accommodate 2.5 burials on average.	

- 5. Open space, sports, recreation and play facilities should be provided on-site.
- 6. Provision for the long term maintenance and management will be sought and must be agreed as part of the planning application process.

9.11 National policy recognises the importance of access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sports and recreation, to the health and well-being of all. This includes access to a wide range of open space, sporting, leisure and play facilities. As well as improving and maintaining our quality of life, these features provide a wide range of benefits including biodiversity, green infrastructure and visual amenity.

9.12 Wokingham borough has a wealth of open space and outdoor recreation facilities, including additional provision delivered through new developments. Existing open spaces, sports and recreation and play facilities will be protected. Development proposals that result in the loss of these facilities will need to demonstrate that the proposal would either provide a community benefit or that alternative provision of equal or better value will be provided.

9.13 New development must include the open space, sport and recreation and play facilities required to meet the needs of both existing and future communities. This can provide opportunities to provide, protect and enhance new and existing public open space (including cemeteries and burial grounds), indoor and outdoor play, sport and recreational facilities, either through on site measures or by contributing to off-site facilities. Developments will be expected to provide public open space on site in the first instance. In some cases, for example, small sites where the site cannot physically provide or appropriately accommodate open space, indoor or outdoor play or sport and recreational facilities on site, a financial contribution will be sought to fund offsite provision.

9.14 The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Assessment and Standards (2010-12) provides detailed background information on how the standards are calculated. The subsequent Open Space, Sports and Recreation Strategy (2013) provides detailed guidance on the application of the standards set out in this policy, benchmark outline specifications for types of open space and sports facilities, and detailed guidance on delivery requirements.

9.15 Outdoor play space has a valuable role to enliven, inspire and educate our children and young people. The Play Space Design Guide (2018) supports the Borough Design Guide and Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy by providing guidance and specific requirements for the design of play spaces within the borough, to help raise the quality of playable space. Proposals for recreational facilities should also consider the potential that such features may have for attracting crime and anti-social behaviour. Management and maintenance of the new facilities will be in perpetuity, with further detail included in the Open Space, Sports and Recreation Strategy.

Policy HC4: Local Green Space

The following areas are designated Local Green Spaces as shown on the policies map:

- a) Elms Field, Wellington Road
- b) Howard Palmer Gardens, Cockpit Path
- c) Barkham Recreation Ground, Latimer Road
- d) Langborough Recreation Ground, Gipsy Lane
- e) King George V Playing Field, Goodchild Road
- f) Land south of Reading Road, Bulmershe, Earley
- g) Fox Hill, Woosehill
- h) Joel Park and Holt Copse, Wokingham

Within the Local Green Space, development will be restricted to those limited types of development which are deemed appropriate, unless very special circumstances can be

demonstrated.* Development proposals will be considered appropriate where it is compatible with the reasons for which the land was designated.

All development proposals should be carefully designed and managed to minimise visual impact, respect the reasons for which the site was designated, and ensure the continued integrity of the site.

Development proposals outside Local Green Space, but conspicuous when viewed from it, should minimise any detrimental impacts to the visual amenity and respect reasons for which the site was designated.

Development proposals which improve accessibility to, or enhance the use of Local Green Space will be supported.

* 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

9.16 The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Local Green Spaces may be designated where those spaces in both villages or in a town.

9.17 Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.

As outlined in national policy, Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife; and
- Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

9.18 Development within, or in proximity of the Local Green Space, should respect reasons for which the site was designed and minimise any impacts on it.

9.19 Where communities promoted green areas for Local Green Space, these have been assessed against the above criteria²⁴. Proposals for additional designations of Local Green Space in neighbourhood plans will require similar assessment.

9.20 A summary of each space proposed for designation is provided below.

Elms Field, Wellington Road

9.21 The combination of recreational playing fields, play space and open space, with associated tree cover from several veteran trees acts as an important 'green lung' for visitors and residents accessing Wokingham Town Centre. Elms Field is demonstrably special to the local community to ensure a high level of civic provision is maintained in the borough.

Howard Palmer Gardens, Cockpit Path

²⁴ Local Green Space Topic Paper (2020)

9.22 Howard Palmer Gardens is a small park and garden located in Wokingham Town Centre. This park is rich in heritage due to its association with a prominent historic figure in Wokingham and its location within the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area, one of the first to be designated in Berkshire. The Conservation Area contains a number of traditional buildings that vary in scale and colour which contribute to the area's local character and distinctiveness.

Barkham Recreation Ground, Latimer Road

9.23 Barkham Recreation Ground is considered an important recreation feature for the existing residents of Barkham, containing an allotment, community garden and a variety of leisure and recreation activities for children and teenage/youth provision. This site is demonstrably special to the local community due to its recreational, historic and ecological value. Wokingham Town Council hold an annual allotments open day on the site in support of National Allotments Week. The recreation ground is also bordered by an avenue of veteran lime trees planted to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V and give the area a local identity and distinctiveness.

Langborough Recreation Ground, Gipsy Lane

9.24 Langborough Recreation Ground is located within the Langborough Road Conservation Area, and in proximity to Murdoch Road Conservation Area. Part of the site is designated as a village green under section 29 of the Commons Act, and is considered an important recreation feature for the existing residents of Murdoch Road and Langborough Road, whilst also being accessible from Wokingham Town Centre. The area to the south of the recreation ground provides a sense of openness associated with open views to the countryside across a flat landscape with limited enclosure.

King George V Playing Field, Goodchild Road

9.25 King George V Playing Field is located adjacent to St Crispin's playing field which is frequently used for leisure, sport and recreation activities by younger and older children. The site is demonstrably special to the local community and residents towards the eastern part of Wokingham Town Centre, as the existing sport and leisure facilities provided at St Crispin's School are for private access only. The presence of herald plaques at the entrance of the playing field, associated with the commemoration of King George V's death provide a sense of local identity and element of distinctiveness to the area.

Land south of Reading Road, Bulmershe, Earley

9.26 The combination of playing fields, open space with associated tree cover, woodland and allotments provides an important contribution to the local character, townscape and urban form. The site provides a diverse range of uses and habitats which provide a significant open and undeveloped space within an attractive green setting, which act as a 'green lung' between the settlements of Woodley and Earley. This site is also designated as a Site of Urban Landscape Value (SULV) in accordance with [Policy NE7](#) of the local plan due to its distinctive, local and special qualities associated with High Wood Local Nature Reserve and the Local Wildlife Site²⁵

Fox Hill, Woosehill

9.27 Fox Hill is located within proximity to existing residents of Woosehill and Barkham. The site is self-contained by residential development at Woosehill and Limmerhill, but forms part of the open countryside due to the presence of Coombes Wood and Bearwood Estate which is designated as a Registered Park and Garden and Local Wildlife Site. The site also forms an important separation between the settlements of

²⁵ Sites of Urban Landscape Value Topic Paper (2020)

Woosehill and Barkham due to undulating hills characterised by dense woodland, which provide local character and distinctiveness to the area. Fox Hill is considered demonstrably special to the local community as it is regularly used for a range of recreational and leisure activities, such as walking and cycling.

Joel Park and Holt Copse, Wokingham

9.28 Joel Park and Holt Copse is owned by Wokingham Town Council and currently designated as a Local Wildlife Site and Local Nature Reserve, dominated by mature trees and vegetation which have a high ecological value. Holt Copse encompasses an area of ancient and semi-natural woodland which provides valuable biodiversity to the area. The park is also used for formal and informal recreation, including visitors coming from Wokingham Town Centre and Wokingham Station, existing residents of Woosehill and Emmbrook, and the new communities established at Matthewsgreen. The site is bordered by two oak avenues associated with King George V's Silver Jubilee consisting of Green Oaks and Lombardy Poplars which give the area a sense of local identity and distinctiveness. Joel Park's location on the fringes adjacent to Cantley Park create a wooded character and sense of seclusion within an urban setting. This site is also designated as a SULV in accordance with [Policy NE7](#) of the local plan.²⁶

Policy HC5: Environmental Protection

1. Development proposals will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that individually, or cumulatively in combination with other schemes, they do not have an unacceptable impact, either during the construction phase, or when completed, on:
 - a. Human health, wellbeing or safety,
 - b. Residential amenity,
 - c. Environmental quality or landscapes,
 - d. Other sensitive receptors.
2. Development proposals should demonstrate how an assessment of all reasonable environmental risks has been undertaken.

9.29 National policy highlights the importance of mitigating and adapting to climate change through the reduction of pollution and other environmental guidelines such as helping to improve biodiversity, and minimising waste through the effective use of the land and resources.

9.30 The planning system has an important role in directing the location of development that may give rise to pollution or other hazards. Pollution can be anything that affects the quality of land (including soils and the subsurface), air or water and that may have an adverse impact on human health, the natural environment or public amenity. Examples of pollution may include but are not limited to; noise, vibration, light, air quality, radiation, gas emission or the degradation of soil and water resources from their natural state.

9.31 Pollution, both new and historic, can have a considerable impact on the local environment and on the health, well-being and quality of life enjoyed by individuals and communities within the borough. The impact of both new and existing sources of pollution should be taken into consideration when locating new development. A development which places sensitive receptors in close proximity to the source of pollution, would not be considered appropriate where the sources of pollution cannot be satisfactory mitigated in advance.

²⁶ Sites of Urban Landscape Value Topic Paper (2020)

9.32 The Council is committed to protecting existing good environmental quality and where possible reducing adverse effects on the local and natural environment as a result of changes in activities or from new development. Development proposals should seek to maintain existing good environmental quality and improve quality where possible. Opportunities for such improvements should be incorporated at the design stage or through a developments operation. This will be achieved through the combination of avoiding any additional impacts to; and the minimisation and mitigation of historic pollution on, all proposed sites. This is assisted by ensuring all developments take into account the most up-to-date, relevant best practice guidelines.

Policy HC6: Air Pollution and Air Quality

1. Prevailing air quality and potential impacts upon air quality arising from airborne emissions, dust and odour associated with the construction and operation of a proposal (including vehicular traffic) will be considered when determining planning applications.
2. Air Quality Assessments can demonstrate how prevailing air quality and potential impacts upon air quality have been considered and how air quality will be maintained at an acceptable standard through avoidance and mitigation measures. Development proposals are likely to require an Air Quality Assessment where:
 - a. The site is located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA); or
 - b. The site is within proximity to a source of air pollution which could present a significant risk to human health; or
 - c. The type of development would mean its occupiers would be particularly sensitive to air pollution, such as schools, health care establishments or housing for older people.

9.33 National policy highlights the importance of planning policies in helping to sustain and contribute towards compliance with air quality objectives. Air pollution in Wokingham primarily relates to pollutants emitted from road transport vehicles, along with other pollutants as specified within the UK Air Quality Strategy. Local Authorities have a duty to declare Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) and work towards achieving national air quality objectives in areas where residents are exposed to pollutants in excess of the objectives.

9.34 Three AQMA are declared in the borough and shown on the Policies Map. The Wokingham AQMA covers an area along the M4, as it transects Wokingham encompassing adjacent properties and part of the A329 where it passes under the M4. The two other AQMA relate to two specific urban areas, the crossroads in Twyford and Wokingham Town Centre.

9.35 Development proposals may result in a significant impact on air quality both outside of and within the current AQMA. Air quality is a significant environmental health risk contributing to chronic illnesses, with air pollution estimated to reduce life expectancy by an average of 7-8 months²⁷. Air pollution is not only harmful to human health, it effects both our productivity and wellbeing, plants, wildlife and habitats.

9.36 Developers will therefore be expected to take air quality issues into consideration when preparing development proposals. Promoting the use of public transport, walking and cycling as alternatives to private

²⁷ The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, volume 1, 2007
www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-air-quality-strategy-for-england-scotland-wales-and-northern-ireland-volume-1

vehicles, and providing services and amenities within walking distances of proposed homes on new large scale sites will help to reduce both greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.

9.37 Where it is identified that a scheme will result in a harmful increase to emissions, measures should be identified to mitigate this rise. This mitigation could be achieved through scheme design or through the introduction of a low emissions strategy, comprising a package of measures to reduce transport related emissions. A low emissions strategy will be specific to individual developments and dependent upon the exact nature and location. Other mitigation methods may include, but are not limited to, planting green walls, placing residential accommodation at higher locations on mixed used property developments or using specific types of paving that absorb NO₂.

9.38 In some circumstances it may be necessary to fund mitigating measures elsewhere within the borough, to offset any increase in pollutant emissions as a consequence of the proposed development.

Policy HC7: Light Pollution

1. Development proposals which include external lighting schemes will be granted permission where it is demonstrated that:
 - a) The proposed lighting scheme is at a level equal to the minimum illuminance required by the development for its purpose;
 - b) Light spillage and glare has been minimised to the lowest feasible level, where still allowing the lighting scheme to be fit for purpose;
 - c) Where the lighting is located as part of a larger scheme, the proposed lighting is both well integrated and appropriate to the wider setting;
 - d) Where not part of a greater development scheme, the lighting has no adverse impact on existing neighbouring, local properties, businesses or amenity areas and the scheme is appropriate to the wider setting in terms of its local context;
 - e) Consideration has been given to the tranquillity of the borough, with a clear distinction between what is suitable within rural and urban environments;
 - f) Any potential impacts on sensitive receptors can be avoided or comprehensively mitigated where avoidances is not possible.

9.39 Artificial lighting is capable of providing a safe secure environment where it is used appropriately. Sensitively used in the highlighting of buildings or key locations, façade illumination can add to the amenity of locations within the borough. In addition to security and aesthetic considerations, more intensive lighting may also be required for industrial and commercial business sites, transport locations including bus stops, stations and carparks and for community and sports facilities such as floodlit sports pitches.

9.40 Whilst this lighting must be of a level suitable for purpose, it is critical that there is no significant adverse impact on the amenity of the surrounding location. National planning policy states that that planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

9.41 Excessive light levels, ill-considered design schemes or poorly located light sources can all result in significant issues to sensitive receptors. These issues associated with light pollution include but are not limited to sky glow, glare and light spill/trespass. As an authority with a significant rural areas Wokingham Borough is highly sensitive to this form of pollution, which can affect the perceptual landscape of the

countryside including its tranquillity and dark skies. Light pollution can disturb residents resulting in sleep deprivation and associated health problems.

9.42 Our perception of the environment is not the only environmental impact caused by light pollution. Artificial light can have the potential to heavily disrupt ecosystems. Special consideration should be given to the effect of light, both directly impacting, and as a result of reflections off of manmade and natural surfaces, on insects, avian, aquatic, riparian and nocturnal wildlife. Additionally the positioning of lighting points should maintain the connectivity of wildlife corridors and habitats.

9.43 If artificial light is required, then it should be considered at the design stage that only the necessary amount of light is provided for the required task and that it is properly controlled or mitigated, to avoid light pollution. Only proposals that will not adversely affect amenity, the natural environment or public safety will be supported. Lighting used must be appropriate to character with the avoidance of impact on sensitive receptors, illuminating into the UV spectrum should be avoided and where possible installations should illuminate within a 'warm red' range.

9.44 Where following a development an issue of light pollution is reported as a result of development, re-assessment should be undertaken to mitigate this for example through the additional provision of shields.

Policy HC8: Noise Pollution

1. Development proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts to protect noise sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed) from noise impacts.
2. The noise impact of the development must be assessed. Where there is no adverse impact (No Observed Effect Level) then noise will not be a material consideration.
3. Where there is an adverse effect (Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level to Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level), then;
 - a. The development layout must be reviewed. Where this results in there no longer being an adverse impact then design and mitigation measures should be incorporated accordingly.
 - b. Where there is still an adverse impact then internal layout must be reviewed. Where this results in there no longer being an adverse impact then design and measures should be incorporated accordingly.
 - c. Where there is still an adverse impact then physical mitigation measures such as barriers/mechanical ventilation must be reviewed. Where this results in there no longer being an adverse impact then design and mitigation measures should be incorporated accordingly.
 - d. Where there is still an adverse impact and the development falls within the significant observed adverse effect level then planning permission will normally be refused.

9.45 Excess noise and vibration can have a harmful impact on sensitive receptors and lead to a loss of amenity in the immediate area of the source of noise pollution. It is important that the location of proposed development will not negatively impact amenity of existing and future occupiers.

9.46 The existing use of a site or area should be taken into account as part of development proposals, particularly when additional development may include sensitive receptors is proposed. Where existing noise and vibration levels in an area are unsuitable for residential development or other uses, the applicant should provide evidence of existing levels of environmental noise and to suitable mitigation to reduce the impact of existing noise and vibration down to acceptable levels.

9.47 Development proposals should aim to meet the following internal and external noise standards for residential developments:

Room	Time	Noise Level
Bedrooms	Night (23.00-07.00)	30 Individual noise events should not exceed 45dB LAmax during the night time
Living Rooms	Daytime (07.00-23.00)	35
Outside amenity space	Daytime (07.00-23.00)	55 Balconies will need to meet the same standard unless it is clear they are not intended to be an outdoor living area

9.48 These levels are based on Table 4 of BS8233:2014 Guidance on sound insulation and noise reduction for buildings. Where development sites are affected by a non-steady noise source, commercial or industrial noise, or noise that does not follow a typical diurnal pattern, the acceptability of noise levels will be determined on a case by case basis.

Policy HC9: Contaminated Land and Water

1. Development proposals on or near sites which are known, or suspected to be potentially contaminated, or proposals for sensitive land uses will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the following receptors will not be exposed to levels of potential contamination which would give rise to unacceptable risks or harm to health, or other adverse impacts:
 - a. People
 - b. Natural environment
 - c. Property
 - d. Water bodies
 - e. Other receptors
2. A preliminary assessment should be undertaken, which includes:
 - a. Details of any historic contamination,
 - b. The extent, scale and nature of the potential contamination,
 - c. An assessment of the potential risks to human health, property, nature conservation, water quality or other receptors, and
 - d. Any preventative, mitigation or remedial measures and supporting assessments.

Development proposals must demonstrate how any pollution arising from previous land uses or as a result of the proposed development can be sufficiently mitigated.

Contaminated Land

9.49 National planning policy supports the use of previously developed land, which can enable development in sustainable locations. However, in the presence of contaminated land it is important that the future health and quality of life of existing and future occupiers is not put at risk.

9.50 For existing land uses part 2a of the Environmental Protection Act (1990) provides a risk based approach to the identification and remediation of existing land uses, including contaminated land, where the assessed risk is at an unacceptable level. Building regulations also provide a further set of requirements. New development is therefore considered as part of the planning process.

9.51 The Wokingham Borough Council Contaminated Land Strategy (2015) sets out how the council intends to manage those sites and the potential risks arising, in order to protect the health of those living and working in the borough. Following remediation, as a minimum, land should not be capable of being determined as contaminated land under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act (1990).

9.52 The council has a duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to investigate land for possible contamination and, where necessary, to use legislative powers to ensure that any risks highlighted are minimised to an acceptable level. Although Wokingham has never been a heavily industrialised area, there are parts of the borough with a legacy of potentially contaminated land. Sources of contamination are not restricted to sites where there has been an obvious contaminating land use in the past. Sites which appear to be uncontaminated, and sites not known to have undergone any specific historic industrial use may still contain sources of contamination.

9.53 For land within the borough to be considered “Contaminated land” there must be a ‘pathway’ linking a ‘source’ of contamination to a ‘receptor’. Together, these three components are known as a ‘Contaminant Linkage’. Where the risk posed by this site is considered to be significant, then the land is considered contaminated.

9.54 The presence of contaminated land can present risks to human health and the environment; however, development presents an opportunity to mitigate these risks successfully. Where a site is affected by ground contamination and as a result of development a ‘Contaminant Linkage’ is created the responsibility for mitigating this and ensuring a safe development lies with the developer/land owner.

Contaminated Water

9.55 Development proposals that include or are adjacent to a watercourse must protect or enhance its function, setting and biodiversity as put forwards in [Policy NE10: River Corridors](#).

9.56 Surface water and groundwater resources can be put at serious risk through development and other human activity. Examples of these activities include but are not limited to land fill activities, petrol stations and farming activities. Sufficient measures should be in place to protect the quality of water where appropriate for a given development.

9.57 New development should also consider the presence of aquifers, which provide an underground layer of water-bearing permeable rock. In the north west of the borough where the chalk is exposed along the River Thames, the Environment Agency has designated the bedrock as a ‘Principal Aquifer’, with bordering areas of ‘Secondary Aquifer A’.

9.58 Source Protection Zones (SPZs) define areas which are considered to form the catchments to both public and private water supplies. There are a total of ten SPZs either fully or partially contained within the borough relating to public water supplies. These consist of five 'inner and four 'outer SPZs and one Total Catchment Zone. SPZs are designated relative to the time it would take for contamination to travel to the point of extraction. It is important to mitigate any contamination on sites in SPZs and where possible to direct development, that may involve contaminative installations, to areas of the lowest risk. Where appropriate the council will liaise with the Environment Agency and water companies in relation to measures that affect surface and ground waters.

Policy HC10: Development in the vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield

1. Development proposals in the land use planning consultation zones surrounding AWE Burghfield will be managed in the interests of public safety, emergency response, defence and security.
2. All development proposals located within, or in proximity to, the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) will require consultation with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR).
3. Development proposals will be assessed in relation to the impact it may have on the West Berkshire Council's AWE Off-Site Emergency Plan arrangements as detailed in the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 (REPPPIR), national policy and guidance, or any equivalent replacement/updated guidance.
4. Development proposals should have particular regard to the following:
 - a) the proposed use
 - b) the scale of development proposed
 - c) the location of the development, and
 - d) the impact of the development on the function and operation of the emergency plan through appropriate consultation with the agencies who have responsibilities in the West Berkshire Council's AWE Off-Site Emergency Plan.
5. The applicant will need to provide this information where the development proposal exceeds the scale of development for the consultation zone²⁸.
6. Development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that the increase in the number of people living, working, shopping and/or visiting the proposal (including at different times of the day) can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of the responding agencies detailed in the West Berkshire Council's AWE Off-Site Emergency Plan for the Atomic Weapons Establishment sites.

9.59 Whilst there are no Atomic Weapons Establishments in Wokingham Borough, there are two licensed nuclear installations located in the adjoining local authority West Berkshire District Council. These are the Atomic Weapons Establishment sites in Aldermaston and in Burghfield. The activities within the AWE Burghfield include final assembly, maintenance and decommissioning of warheads.

²⁸ See Table 4 of the supporting text of the Local Plan Update for the thresholds of each consultation zone for the AWE Burghfield site. The consultation zones are defined outside the Local Plan process but identified on the Policies Map

9.60 Regulation of the AWE Burghfield requires the delineation of detailed and outline emergency planning zones to reduce the potential impact on the public of any accident arising from site operations. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides general advice about the need for consultation regarding development proposals in the vicinity of licensed nuclear installations²⁹. This is a requirement of longstanding government policy which is administered by the ONR. The consultation thresholds and zones are agreed locally between the local authorities and the ONR, and are kept under review. At the time of preparing the Local Plan Update, the consultation thresholds for the Outline Planning Zone and Detailed Emergency Planning Zone are set out in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Consultation thresholds for the Outline Planning Zone and Detailed Emergency Planning Zone for the AWE Burghfield site

Consultation Zones	Definition	Scale of Development
Detailed Emergency Planning Zone ³⁰	<p><i>"detailed emergency planning zone"</i> determined in accordance with regulation 8 and covered by the local authority's off-site emergency plan³¹.</p> <p>The detailed emergency planning zone is based on the minimum geographical extent proposed by the operator in the consequences report and should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) be of sufficient extent to enable an adequate response to a range of emergencies; and b) reflect the benefits and detriments of protective action by considering an appropriate balance between; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. dose averted; and ii. the impact of implementing protective actions in a radiation emergency across too wide an area <p>This is an area where detailed emergency planning is required based on information provided by AWE in their consequence report. The plan produced as a result is required to have the aim of keeping the radiation exposure of workers and members of the public that might occur in events, as low as reasonably practicable.</p>	All residential or non-residential proposals where one or more additional person may live, work, shop and/or visit (all development proposals except household extensions, shop fronts, advertisements, Listed Building, Conservation Area consent, prior notifications and telecommunications).

²⁹ MHCLG (2019) Planning Practice Guidance, in particular Paragraph: 075 Reference ID: 39-075-20140306

³⁰ as set out by the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR)

³¹ [REPIR 2019 Approved Code of Practice](#)

	A proportionate and graded approach to planning will ensure that the emergency management system is able to effectively respond to the impact of a wide range of radiation emergencies.	
Outline Planning Zone (OPZ)	<p>“outline planning zone” means a zone determined in accordance with regulation 9 and covered by the local authority’s off-site emergency plan.</p> <p>Outline planning builds on the arrangement and capabilities in existing emergency plans to provide commensurate planning for low probability events and operates at distances beyond the detailed emergency planning zone. The outline planning zone assists in the planning for extremely unlikely but more severe events. The central aim of the outline planning zone is to support the decision-making of emergency responders in the event that detailed or generic arrangements are not sufficient.</p>	All residential or non-residential proposals where 500 or more additional people may live, work, shop and/or visit.

9.61 Early engagement with the council’s Emergency Planning Team and the ONR is strongly recommended to establish whether a development proposal is likely to have any implications on the Off-Site Emergency Plan for AWE Burghfield.

9.62 The ONR’s decision to advise against a particular development will be based on the extent to which the Off-Site Emergency Plan can accommodate the additional population.

9.63 The council will work with the other authorities within the consultation zones (West Berkshire District Council, Reading Borough Council and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council), in partnership with the ONR and other multi agencies who have duties under REPPiR and the ONR, in monitoring (through the Authority Monitoring Report) the potential cumulative effects of any population increase surrounding these installations.

10. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT & FLOODING

10.1 Sites designated due to their importance for nature conservation, habitats, or species of principal importance, alongside landscape features are essential to maintain and enhance biodiversity levels and quality of life. Trees, woodlands, hedgerows, river corridors and other elements make a significant positive contribution to the landscape and environment of the borough, and when considered holistically present significant conservation and enhancement opportunities as part of new development.

Policy NE1: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

1. Sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level, as identified on the Policies Map, in addition to Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites, will be maintained, conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. The degree of protection given will be proportionate to the status of the site in terms of its international or national importance.
2. Development proposals which may harm habitats, or species of principle importance for nature conservation in England, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna, will only be permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation or geological importance of the site, and no alternative site is available that would result in less or no harm. Where this test is met, every effort must be made to reduce the harm to the site through avoidance and mitigation measures.
3. Development proposals across sites of all sizes should achieve a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity, either within the site boundary or as part of on-site compensation, or where necessary, off-site compensation towards a larger strategic habitat restoration network.
4. Development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that proposals:
 - a) Incorporate new biodiversity features and enhance existing features of value through design, layout and landscaping.
 - b) Provide or retain appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites, as well as habitats and species of principal importance for nature conservation;
 - c) Provide coherent ecological permeability that is integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure and any nature recovery network identified as relevant to the location;
 - d) Are compatible with any Biodiversity Action Plan or strategic conservation management plans for a species or habitat that has been formally adopted by the local authority.
5. Development located within, or neighbouring, a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA), Living Landscape, Nature Recovery Network or similar opportunity should support the objectives of each initiative.

Sites of principle importance for nature conservation and designated sites are set out below:

A) Sites of national or international importance

- i. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and,
- ii. Adjacent to the borough, the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA).

B) Sites of local importance

- i. Local Nature Reserves (LNR), as designated in consultation with Natural England
- ii. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) (these were previously known as Wildlife Heritage Sites)
- iii. Local Geological Sites
- iv. Priority Habitats and species listed in the national and local Biodiversity Action Plan
- v. Ancient woodland or veteran trees

10.2 Local Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites of significant value for the conservation of wildlife. These sites represent local character and distinctiveness and have an important role to play in meeting local and national targets for biodiversity conservation.

10.3 There are five Local Geological Sites, which are non-statutory sites of local geological importance that have been surveyed and assessed against a national set of qualifying criteria, as set by [Natural England](#).

10.4 Ancient woodland is recognised as a rich land-based habitat for wildlife and is discussed in more detail in [Policy NE3: Trees, woodland and hedgerows](#)

10.5 The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) has found that that there may be cumulative effects of the proposals in the Plan on designated European (Natura 2000) sites (SPA and SAC), within or outside the borough. The HRA therefore sets out a number of recommended measures in order to mitigate the impact of the development proposals on air quality, and European sites.

Biodiversity Net Gain

10.6 Net gains in biodiversity means improvement through habitat creation and enhancement, with the aim of leaving biodiversity in a better state than before. This helps to deliver high quality sustainable development through the plan led system. Government, notably in national planning policy and the 25 Year Environment Plan, support the principle of net gain. DEFRA has recently consulted on making biodiversity net gain a mandatory element of the planning system, which the government intend to include in a forthcoming Environment Bill. This Bill is also likely to include duties for local planning authorities to prepare Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) that will further set out the wider benefits of habitats, including connectivity, as part of protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

10.7 Biodiversity accounting is a mechanism that uses a standard formula, or metric, to measure the losses and gains of biodiversity on a development site. This metric calculates that all land has an ecological value, meaning sites can be assessed to understand whether they are delivering measureable net gains for biodiversity.

10.8 Biodiversity net gain does not apply to statutory designated or irreplaceable habitats, where any adverse impacts should be avoided as a general principle.

10.9 The mitigation hierarchy will be applied as part of any biodiversity accounting process to ensure any potential harm is avoided. If harm cannot be avoided it must be reduced through appropriate mitigation measures. If any residual harm still remains after avoidance and mitigation then compensation can be sought through biodiversity offsetting on-site, or if necessary off-site.

Habitat and biodiversity networks

10.10 National policy is clear that establishing coherent ecological networks that are resilient to current and future pressures can play an active role in enhancing the natural and local environment. Biodiversity cannot be preserved in nature reserves and wildlife sites alone. It is fundamentally reliant on the matrices of habitats across the wider landscape that provide stepping stones and wildlife corridors between them.

10.11 A coherent ecological network relies on protection of both key wildlife sites and habitat that provides functional connectivity. Development should improve the robustness of the local ecological network by contributing to nature recovery networks. Nature recovery networks can be based on general ecological permeability and wildlife corridor principles, but can also include a strategic landscape level approach to an individual species or habitat of principal importance.

10.12 Nature recovery networks may identify Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) or Living Landscapes with specific objectives for the creation, restoration, or reconnection of key habitats of principal importance. Where a development is located within or adjacent to a recognised BOA, it should complement the objectives of the BOA in order to contribute to the nature recovery network. Wildlife corridors within a network can be in the form of open spaces, residential gardens, grass verges, retained hedgerows, ditches, rivers, or streams. [Policy NE10: River Corridors](#) further sets out how watercourses are a valuable ecological resource that should be protected and enhanced.

10.13 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) can form a key part of a nature recovery network where they are integrated with wildlife corridors, providing biodiversity enhancements and helping to address the impacts of climate change, in addition to their function as mitigating the impact of flooding and facilitating drainage. The biodiversity merit of habitat created within the SuDS chain must be evaluated, to determine the extent to which it improves the local ecological network and the inherent value of the habitat created as calculated in any biodiversity impact assessment calculator.

Surveys and Reports

10.14 Development proposals should seek to create or improve areas of habitat within the site through design and landscaping for biodiversity along with sustainable management plans for these habitats. Concepts such as green roofs and walls, as supported by [Policy DH1: Place Making and Quality Design](#), can provide valuable opportunities for wildlife whilst reducing the impact of climate change.

10.15 Potential impacts on as yet unrecorded biodiversity resources must be considered in reports prepared as part of development proposals. Indirect effects may affect biodiversity sites some distance from the development proposals and this impact and should also be considered. Surveys and reports should be prepared by suitably qualified or experienced ecologist, and include:

- i. existing biodiversity interests and any impact of the development on these
- ii. recommendations for mitigation to minimise harm
- iii. whether compensatory measures are required, including the timing of compensatory measures to ensure compensation is in place before any accepted damage to biodiversity interests takes place, in order to maintain continuous ecological function
- iv. how the development will deliver an overall net gain in biodiversity, including references to Biodiversity Impact Assessments.
- v. consideration of existing or potential wildlife corridors on site and links from these to the wider ecological networks, including those identified in the Green Infrastructure network
- vi. A monitoring and management plan drawn up for the biodiversity interests of the development site to ensure the long term future management.

10.16 Where the development proposals are anticipated to have significant impacts on nature conservation sites, further ecological surveys may be required. Any further activities should ensure and maintain continuous ecological function during a development's construction and operational phases.

10.17 The council's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) identifies areas that are priorities for the maintenance, restoration and creation of priority habitat. Measures should therefore protect and where possible help the recovery of priority habitats and species. Any Subsequent BAP or strategic conservation management plans may similarly be used to identify and determine whether development proposals are contributing to biodiversity net gain.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

10.18 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is a network of heathland sites that provides a habitat for important species of ground nesting birds. The area is a designated site which is accorded priority protection and conservation. This policy seeks to ensure the integrity of the SPA is maintained, and the impact of any development proposals is effectively mitigated.

Policy NE2: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

1. Development, which following a Habitat Regulations Assessment, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is considered to have likely significant effects on the ecological integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.

Residential development

2. Proposals for a net increase in residential development¹:
 - a. Within the 400 metres exclusion zone of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA will be resisted because the impacts of such development on the SPA cannot be fully mitigated.
 - b. Between the 400 metres threshold but within five kilometres linear distance of the SPA boundary (the SPA zone of influence) will be required to deliver avoidance and mitigation measures prior to occupation of new dwellings and in perpetuity. Measures must be in accordance with the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy or any successor document.
 - c. Between five and seven kilometres from the SPA boundary (the SPA zone of influence) proposals for a net increase of more than 50 dwellings may be required to provide mitigation measures based on a combination of SAMM and the provision of SANG to a lower standard than within the 400m to five kilometre zone. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with Natural England and, where appropriate, a Habitats Regulations Assessment may be required to ascertain whether the proposal could have an adverse effect on the SPA.

SANG Provision

3. Within the five kilometre zone, a minimum of eight hectares of SANG land (after discounting to account for current access and capacity) should be provided per 1,000 new occupants. SANG must be secured or provided, in addition to being maintained in perpetuity, in accordance with the quality and quantity standards advocated by Natural England. SANG capacity should be based on an average occupancy of 2.4 persons per dwelling. The quantity and capacity of SANG to be provided for development proposals outside the five kilometre zone will be assessed individually on a case-by-case basis in consultation with Natural England.
4. The council has identified sufficient SANG provision as part of the avoidance and mitigation measures required for the Development Plan.
5. There is a presumption against the development of SANG sites for uses other than SANG, unless the applicant can demonstrate that sufficient alternative avoidance measures for all relevant submitted and/or approved plans and projects within the borough taking account of Natural England's advice on SANGs. Development proposals must fall within the catchment of a specified SANG, except developments of less than a net increase of 10 residential dwellings.
6. Applications for non-residential development will be assessed on a case by case basis.
7. Proposals will be required to make financial contributions towards avoidance and mitigate measures, including SANG and SAMM.

¹ Residential development means development which provides permanent accommodation including units falling with Use Class C3 (dwellinghouses) and houses of multiple occupation (Use Classes C4 and sui generis), units of residential accommodation falling within Use Classes C1 and C2, traveller accommodation and student accommodation

10.19 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area is designated under European Directive 79/409/EEC and provides a network of heathland sites that provide a habitat for important species of ground nesting birds, including the Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark. The Directive has been transposed into UK law; the TBH SPA was designated in March 2005 and is protected by UK legislation. The SPA sites do not fall or extend into Wokingham Borough, but the five kilometre 'zone of influence' covers a large part of the south of the borough.

10.20 Natural England has advised the council, along with the other ten local authorities surrounding the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area that the integrity of the SPA has the potential to be adversely affected by new development, through urbanisation, recreational activity and air pollution. The provision of appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) together with contributions towards Strategic (pan-SPA) Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) would address the recreational disturbance issue to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. These measures are unlikely to be acceptable unless agreed with Natural England in accordance with South East Plan policy NRM6.

10.21 The council has successfully established a network of SANGs across the borough through previous development strategies, including through the four Strategic Development Locations (SDLs) identified in the

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy. Information on the capacity of SANGs, and therefore the ability to mitigate any adverse effects is available from the council.

10.22 Following recent legal judgements, an assessment has been undertaken of the cumulative potential impacts of development on air quality and protected sites (including SPA and SAC) within, and around the borough. This takes particular account of road traffic emissions associated with planned new development in order to inform the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA).

Zones of influence

10.23 Natural England has identified that net additional housing development up to five kilometres from the SPA, and large-scale housing development for over 50 net dwellings up to seven kilometres from the SPA, are considered to have likely significant effects, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, on the integrity of the SPA. Within this zone of influence, a Habitats Regulations Assessment will be required to identify measures that avoid, as a first step, and mitigate any adverse effects. If these residential developments provide or contribute to appropriate SANG and SAMM measures, in accordance with [Policy NE2](#) and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy, it is likely that it can be concluded that no adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA will occur as a result of increased recreational pressure.

10.24 Where mitigation for residential development is required, the 400m, 5km and 7km buffer zones will be measured in a straight line from the SPA boundary.

10.25 Development proposals for 50 or more net residential units that fall within five to seven kilometres linear distance from the SPA boundary will be assessed on an individual basis. In line with the Habitats Regulations, development proposals should be screened to establish whether they are likely to have significant effects on the SPA, and a Habitats Regulations Assessment must be undertaken to identify measures that avoid, as a first step, and mitigate any adverse effects. Development proposals may be required to provide or contribute to SANG and SAMM.

SANG

10.26 Proposals for less than net 10 dwellings do not need to fall within a certain distance of a SANG, provided that sufficient SANG is in place to mitigate the increase in residents. Proposals for 10 or more net dwellings will need to be located within the catchment of a specified SANG that has sufficient capacity.

10.27 A bespoke SANG as part of a development will usually only be necessary for larger developments of 50 or more dwellings. All relevant standards recommended by Natural England should be met, including a financial contribution towards SAMM.

10.28 Where a change of use to all, or part, of an allocated SANG is proposed, the applicant will need to demonstrate that it does not prevent the delivery of any other relevant approved or submitted plan or project within the borough taking account of Natural England's advice on SANG.

10.29 Non-residential development could also have a significant effect upon the SPA. This could either be from linked trips including a recreational use of the SPA or from workers employed close to the SPA using the area during breaks (especially lunch time). Consequently, proposals for non-residential development will also need assessing to determine whether they are likely to have a significant effect upon the SPA. Where non-residential proposals include avoidance and mitigation measures, the likely significant effects upon the TBH SPA will have been addressed. This will be assessed on a case by case basis and in consultation with Natural England. All applications for non-residential development that are likely to have a significant adverse

impact on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA will need to be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment.

10.30 The council maintains a live list of SANGs, including their location and capacity, in the borough which is published on the council website. This list is likely to be subject to change as future development comes forward.

Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)

10.31 Developer contributions towards the SAMM project fund SPA wide bird monitoring measures to ensure adverse visitor impacts are avoided and that SANGs function effectively, as well as monitoring the overall efficacy of SANGs in the borough. Natural England acts as the host for the SAMM project.

10.32 As part of strategic, cross boundary cooperation, the council will work with other local planning authorities to implement mitigation measures.

Trees, woodland and hedgerows

10.33 Trees, woodlands and hedgerows make a valuable contribution to the landscape character, local distinctiveness and biodiversity of the borough. It is important therefore to preserve and protect trees, woodlands and hedgerows, and support further planting as part of enhancing the natural local environment.

Policy NE3: Trees, woodland and hedgerows

1. Trees, woodland and hedgerows are important visual and ecological assets in towns, villages and the countryside. To retain and provide local character and distinctiveness in the landscape, trees (including ancient or veteran trees), woodland, ancient woodland and hedgerows are of particular significance. Development proposals should:
 - a) Ensure existing trees, hedgerows and other landscape features are protected, and where possible enhanced, as an integral part of the development,
 - b) Retain the existing pattern of fields, hedgerows, woodlands, trees, watercourses, water bodies, underlying topography and other landscape features,
 - c) Provide appropriate buffer zones around woodlands, including semi-natural woodlands, planted ancient woodland sites, orchards, hedgerows and individual trees.
2. The loss, threat or damage to any tree, woodland or hedgerow of visual, heritage or nature conservation value will only be acceptable where:
 - a) Development proposals have sought to avoid, reduce or minimise impact,
 - b) Mitigation measures, such as structural tree planting are incorporated as part of the development proposals providing equivalent scale, canopy cover, habitat connectivity and where possible character.
3. Development proposals that would result in the loss or deterioration of woodland, ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees will only be permitted if there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Existing trees, woodland and hedgerows

10.34 The borough is fortunate to benefit from areas of mature woodland, including ancient woodland, in addition to trees, ancient or veteran, near veteran trees and hedgerows. This includes several important tree lined routes, a number of which are important historically. Imposing tree lined roads like Wellingtonia Avenue in Finchampstead are an excellent example of the important contribution trees can make to the character of the area. The Landscape Character Assessment sets out some of the history of land in the borough, including its role as part of the wider Windsor Great Forest, and the hunting estate for Windsor Castle.

10.35 Ancient woodlands, ancient or veteran and near veteran trees cannot be recreated once lost. Their unique character and valuable biodiversity and habitat resource will be safeguarded and any loss or deterioration through development should be avoided.

10.36 Woodlands, trees and hedgerows are key features within rural and urban environments and provide a range of ecosystem services, including flood mitigation, reducing surface water run-off, carbon sequestration and helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. The integration of trees, woodlands and hedgerows into wider green infrastructure networks as part of well-designed development can also assist in reducing urban heat islands and improving air quality, as well as contributing to landscape character and amenity value. These features provide landmarks or 'stepping stones' between otherwise isolated habitats as well as being important habitats in their own right. Urban hedges, trees and other planting form a green link from the countryside into towns and villages and also provide space for wildlife. The removal and severing of woodland, hedgerows and trees must be avoided.

10.37 Development pressures around areas of woodland have served to highlight the importance of protecting the borough's existing woodland. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) will be used to protect specific trees, groups of trees or areas of woodland. Constructive dialogue with developers will help to ensure protected trees are safeguarded from development and managed in accordance with good arboricultural practice, with full regard to public amenity, ecological and historical interests.

10.38 Where development may have an impact upon ancient woodland or veteran trees, the Natural England and the Forestry Commission's Standing Advice on Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees³² and its associated Assessment Guide³³ will be used.

³² Forestry Commission and Natural England (2018) Standing Advice on Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees

³³ Forestry Commission and Natural England (2018) Assessment Guide: helping to assess the impact of planning development proposals on ancient woodland and veteran trees

Policy NE4: Development and existing trees, woodland and hedgerows

1. Development proposals that may affect a tree, woodland or hedgerow should:
 - a) Assess the health of all trees, woodland and hedgerows affected, including describing and assessing their value and the potential impact of the development on them as part of an Arboricultural Impact Assessment
 - b) Incorporate existing woodland, trees and hedgerows and ensure integration into the public realm within a suitable landscape setting,
 - c) Ensure the layout of new developments provide sufficient space to enable trees to thrive, including maintaining adequate root protection areas and limiting excessive shading to residential properties.
 - d) Ensure appropriate tree protection measures are in place prior to development commencing on site as part of an Arboricultural Method Statement, including a Tree Constraints Plan and Tree Protection Plan and actively monitor tree protection throughout the construction process.

Designing trees into new development

10.39 Existing woodland, trees and hedgerows will need to be surveyed and assessed in accordance with the requirements of British Standard (5837:2012), and should be incorporated into the layout as part of development proposals. The design of development proposals should therefore allow sufficient space for the natural development of a tree, particularly its predicted height and canopy spread, as well as including sufficient protection for above and below ground constraints, including the protection of the roots and soil structure as a priority.

10.40 Existing trees and hedgerows can play a vital role in mitigating the impact of climate change, including through shading, carbon storage and a reduction in pollutants. These features can also help to define the landscape and character of the borough and provide multiple benefits to the urban environment including maintaining and enhancing biodiversity. Trees are an important component of the character of many parts of the borough, particularly within Conservation Areas and help to reinforce a landscape structure and framework for new development.

10.41 Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the requirements of both this policy, [Policy DH1](#) and the principles set out in the Design Guide SPD are incorporated into the design and construction of any scheme.

Landscape

10.42 Wokingham Borough benefits from a varied and interesting landscape, ranging from elevated chalk plateau to open and settled clay farmlands to coniferous plantations and heaths. These landscapes are highly valued by those who live, work or visit the borough and provide a valuable resource for recreation, biodiversity and important historic and cultural heritage. These policies aim to conserve and enhance distinctive landscape character across the borough, in the context of enabling sustainable growth where appropriate.

Policy NE5: Landscape and Design

1. Development proposals will respect, conserve and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local landscape by adopting a landscape led approach, using the most up-to-date landscape studies, including the borough-wide Landscape Character Assessment, as part of making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the development site and the quality of the borough's landscape. Development proposals should:
 - a. Reflect local character and distinctiveness, including the scale and pattern of the surrounding landscape and existing settlement form
 - b. Incorporate a landscape scheme that contributes and respects local landscape character by ensuring development is informed by a landscape assessment, including choice of species. The use of native species is preferred.
 - c. Provide an appropriate landscape scheme. This should include strategic tree planting in all types of development, reinforcing existing vegetative boundaries and corridors with new planting and any replacement and mitigation planting to compensate for tree removal as detailed in [Policy NE4](#). The layout will need to allow sufficient space for all planting to thrive and mature.
 - d. Promote landscape spaces, public realm and green infrastructure with associated planting to improve ecological connectivity, create a sense of place, mitigate and adapt to climate change and improve health and wellbeing.
 - e. Design effective landscape edges for land on the rural edge, consisting of native tree and hedgerow planting consistent with local landscape character.

10.43 Development proposals must be supported by a landscape scheme which reinforces existing landscape character and provides suitable opportunities for new planting of trees, woodland and hedgerows. Species selection should be appropriate for the site conditions such as soil type and micro climate and there is a preference for native species, especially in the countryside. When selecting species and sources of trees, due regard must be had to the expected impacts of climate change, genetic variability and disease.

10.44 It is essential that all new development provides a high quality environment and considers the siting and function of the spaces around buildings, materials and hard and soft landscaping. New planting should support and enhance the public realm, green infrastructure and ecological networks, maximising opportunities for net gains in local biodiversity.

10.45 An integrated approach can help new trees and hedgerows connect to and with the existing landscape framework and support ecological activity. Avenue tree planting, feature trees at key points and groups of trees in public open spaces can help to create memorable spaces and places. Proposals located in, or immediately adjacent to Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) will be expected to contribute to the objectives of the BOA through suitable soft landscaping in the form of trees, hedgerows and woodland planting. Other suitable measures are identified in the Wokingham Borough Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) to enhance different habitats, including woodland and grassland and hedgerow habitats.

Policy NE6: Landscape Character, Value and Green Routes

1. Development proposals must take into account key characteristics and sensitivities of the landscape, in order to safeguard intrinsic character, scenic beauty and perceptual qualities, for example tranquillity and dark skies, as set out in the Landscape Character Assessment.

2. Valued landscapes are identified on the Policies Map. Development proposals will only be permitted where they protect and enhance features that contribute to the attributes and quality of valued landscapes and specifically the criteria set out in the Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) Box 5.1:
 - a. Landscape quality (condition)
 - b. Scenic quality
 - c. Rarity
 - d. Representativeness
 - e. Conservation interests
 - f. Recreation value
 - g. Perceptual aspects
 - h. Associations
3. Development proposals on or in proximity to Green Routes will only be permitted where existing protected trees are retained and should contribute to the improvement of Green Routes through landscape and tree planting schemes.

10.46 The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) forms the primary document in relation to the character and valued attributes of the landscape of the borough, by describing and identifying variations in landscape. This should be the starting point for all development proposals. The LCA identifies a number of character areas including describing key characteristics and acts as a positive tool to guide land uses and planning, including the management of future change.

10.47 This policy applies to all development proposals in the borough, including Green Belt and countryside locations. The policy also ensures that development proposals have particular regard to Green Routes in the borough through the retention of existing protected trees or improvements through appropriate landscaping and tree planting.

10.48 The LCA should be used in conjunction with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and the Borough Design Guide and Local Plan policies to produce high quality development that actively contributes towards place making and sustainable development. This includes incorporating measures to enhance biodiversity and soften hard urban edges. Development proposals should therefore take into account an area's capacity to change, as part of acknowledging and assessing cumulative effects. Together this should inform a landscape and visual impact study.

Valued Landscapes

10.49 All landscapes are important, but some will have particular value and exhibit the specific attributes and characteristic landscape features of a specific landscape character area. These landscapes are considered representative of the landscape type or have characteristics that create a strong sense of place. National policy highlights the importance of protecting and enhancing valued landscapes as part of enhancing the natural and local environment.

10.50 The Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) sets out the process of assessing the landscape and visual effects of developments and their significance. GLVIA Box 5.1 explains a number of factors that can be considered when assessing landscape value in more detail.

10.51 These factors have been incorporated into a methodology set out in supporting evidence to identify valued landscapes in Wokingham Borough, which also takes into account appeal decisions, desk based

assessments, site specific investigations and other relevant data. The extent of these valued landscapes are shown on the Policies Map. Development proposals on land neighbouring an identified valued landscape should pay particular attention to its specific features and characteristics.

Green Routes

10.52 Many routes into Wokingham Town and across other settlements are lined with trees and other vegetation that together make a significant contribution to the environmental character of the borough. It is important to retain and enhance these green routes by protecting and managing existing trees and other vegetation, ensuring a high quality streetscape, including hard and soft landscaping and well-designed signage. Additional planting, or other measures to improve green routes, particularly sections between existing green routes, will be supported.

Policy NE7: Sites of Urban Landscape Value

1. Sites of Urban Landscape Value are defined on the Policies Map.
2. Planning Permission will only be granted for development proposals within or affecting Sites of Urban Landscape Value where they demonstrate that they:
 - a. Retain and enhance the special landscape features and qualities that make the site valuable to the character, townscape and urban form; and
 - b. Minimise the visual impact of the development site on the Sites of Urban Landscape Value; and
 - c. Protect, manage and enhance the sites' capacity for informal recreation.

10.53 Across the borough, there are a number of open and undeveloped areas within the urban areas of settlements that provide an important contribution to local character, amenity and landscape. Some of these areas also provide an essential role by supporting biodiversity for habitats and species, as well as providing communities with opportunities for informal/formal recreation. These areas are known as Sites of Urban Landscape Value (SULV). Four SULVs were designated in the Managing Development Delivery Document (MDD) local plan, adopted in February 2014.

10.54 The council has reviewed the existing SULVs and considered whether the designation of additional SULVs is justified³⁴. The review recommended retaining the existing SULVs. In addition, two other areas of land at Woosehill Meadows and at Cantley Park are recommended for designation.

10.55 The SULVs form part of the setting and identity of the settlements of Earley, Wokingham and Woodley. They are primarily open spaces interspersed with and bounded by, mature trees. They also include individual landscape features such as ponds, woodlands and hedgerows. Each SULV provides an important area of informal open, green space, alongside recreational opportunities and valuable habitats, which can enhance biodiversity. Together these complimentary roles within a within a built-up context, are sufficiently important to warrant protection and enhancement in the Local Plan

10.56 The treed nature of the SULVs provides a softer and semi-rural fringe, which results in some of the built-up areas being barely discernible at both close and distant views. [Policy NE7](#) seeks to ensure that the openness and visual benefits of the SULVs are retained and enhanced and their important features protected.

³⁴ Sites of Urban Landscape Value Topic Paper (2020)

10.57 Development proposals within or affecting SULVs shall respect the special local character and the important landscape, wildlife and recreational amenity of the SULVs. Consideration shall also be given to views within, into and from the SULVs. Proposals should be of a high standard of design that is in character with and integrated into the landscape, to minimise any visual impact. Applicants should submit a Landscape and Visual Assessment to demonstrate this.

Bulmershe, Woodley

10.58 The combination of playing fields, open space with associated tree cover, woodland and allotments provides an open and undeveloped space between the settlements of Earley and Woodley. The character of this SULV is greatly enhanced by the presence of a strong tree and shrub screen on the rear boundaries of and within the gardens of properties on the east side of Pitts Lane and Church Road as well as the mature woodland within High Wood to the south. The boundary of the previously designated SULV has been amended to remove a small area following the completion of 10 dwellings at the rear of Pitts Lane³⁵.

South Lake, Woodley

10.59 The lake of South Lake is considered an important landscape feature within this SULV as it dominates the site with mature trees surrounding the margins of the lake. The SULV has a distinctly urban character, as the well-used footpaths are never far from the adjacent residential area, although these views are often limited by intervening trees. The mature vegetation within the site and mix of tree species provides a parkland type character and creates some seclusion from the adjacent urban area. The boundary of the previously designated SULV has been amended to include a small area of land to the north-west, improving the relationship between the South Lake SULV and the adjacent Bulmershe SULV.

Maiden Erlegh Lake, Earley

10.60 This SULV is within the residential settlement of Earley and consists of a lake within a wooded setting. The extensive woodland is visually significant locally and provides a wooded backdrop to the surrounding properties and the adjacent playing fields. The residential properties do not exert a high urban influence over the SULV due to the high woodland cover and restrictions to various parts of the site for ecological reasons, leaving parts of the site feeling secluded and natural. The boundary of the previously designated SULV has been amended to include the adjacent Laurel Park Recreation Ground.

Joel Park, Wokingham

10.61 This SULV is of a semi-rural character and is dominated by mature trees and vegetation especially within Joel Park itself which has high ecological value. The SULV has two distinct areas which are Joel Park and the land around St Paul's Church and are separated by Reading Road. St Paul's Church is prominently sited on high ground with its spire forming a focal point in distant views, from either direction along Reading Road and which makes an important visual contribution to the wider SULV in long views from the north. The open setting of the SULV separates the Church from the surrounding built up areas and is a key element in its visual significance.

Woosehill Meadows, Emmbrook

10.62 This is a new SULV recommended due to its value as an important landscape resource and relationship to the Emm Brook. The SULV is surrounded by parkland and associated vegetation giving the area character and a strong sense of place in an urban area. Groups of mature trees are located within the

³⁵ Appeal decision ref. APP/X0360/A/11/2148730/NW

site, enhancing the character of the area and provide a wooded backdrop when viewed from the surrounding residential areas, a key element in its visual significance.

Cantley Park, North Wokingham

10.63 This is a new SULV recommended as Cantley Park is a valuable landscape resource, providing parkland type planting and significant landscape features including large, dominant specimen trees that contribute towards the area's character and distinctiveness within the urban setting. The site is also recognised as a valuable resource for formal and informal recreation, which is well-used by local residents and visitors. The mature trees within the site and on the site's boundaries greatly enhance the character of the SULV and provide a characteristic wooded backdrop.

Policy NE8: Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)

1. All sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages of the development and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding. Proposals must be consistent with national policy and guidance and demonstrate how they have used the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to determine the suitability of the proposal.
2. Development proposals in Flood Zones 2 or 3 must take into account the vulnerability of proposed development.
3. Development must be guided to areas of lowest flood risk, in the first instance, by applying the sequential approach taking into account the effects of climate change and flooding from all sources. Development should ensure flood risk is not worsened for the application site and elsewhere, and ideally that betterment of existing conditions is achieved. The sequential test will not be required if at least one of the following applies:
 - a) Minor non-residential extensions: industrial/commercial/leisure etc. extensions with a footprint of less than 250 square metres.
 - b) Alterations: development that does not increase the size of buildings e.g. alterations to external appearance.
 - c) Householder development: for example shed, garages, games rooms etc. within the curtilage of the existing dwelling, in addition to physical extensions to the existing dwelling itself. This definition excludes any proposed development that would create a separate dwelling within the curtilage of the existing dwelling e.g. subdivision of houses into flats.
 - d) Changes of use, except where the change of use is to a caravan, camping or chalet site, or to a mobile home or park home site¹.
4. In exceptional circumstances, new development in areas of flood risk will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:
 - a) The development provides wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk
 - b) The development will:
 - i. Be safe for its lifetime, taking account of the vulnerability of its users
 - ii. Not increase flood risk in any form elsewhere and, where possible, will

potential flood risk has become available. Where the exceptions test is required, it must be applied at the earliest possible stage.

Flood Risk Assessments

10.69 The sequential and exceptions tests should be informed by either the SFRA, or a site specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) depending on when the application is being prepared.

10.70 To fully consider the implications of the risk of flooding, Flood Risk Assessments should take into account the impact of surface water flooding and drainage, ground water and other sources of flood risk. National policy is clear that local planning authorities should ensure that when determining planning applications, flood risk is not increased elsewhere.

10.71 On and off-site measures can help to reduce flood risk or even improve existing conditions. This can include showing how the proposal retains overland flow routes.

10.72 The PPG sets out that minor developments are unlikely to raise significant flood risk issues unless:

- they would have an adverse effect on a watercourse, floodplain or its flood defences;
- they would impede access to flood defence and management facilities, or;
- where the cumulative impact of such developments would have a significant effect on local flood storage capacity or flood flows.

10.73 The Environment Agency and the government have also published advice on flood risk assessments in relation to minor development such as extensions and alterations.³⁶

10.74 Proposals will also need to have regard to the future Flood Risk Strategy for the borough and the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, including the SuDS Approval Body.

Policy NE9: Sustainable Drainage

1. All development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development, including the impact of climate change, is managed in a sustainable manner. This must be demonstrated through a:
 - a) Site-specific Flood Risk Assessment, or
 - b) Surface Water Drainage Strategy.
2. Development will only be supported where proposals:
 - a) For major developments and developments in areas at risk of flooding from all sources incorporate SuDS as an intrinsic part of the proposal, unless it can be effectively demonstrated that it is not feasible within the constraints of the site
 - b) Reproduce greenfield runoff characteristics and return run-off rates and volumes back to the original greenfield levels for greenfield sites; and for brownfield sites both run-off rates and volumes be reduced to as near greenfield as practicably possible, or 40% betterment of existing, whichever is achievable
 - c) Incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), which must be of an appropriate design (in line with the principles and local standards set out in the council's latest SuDS Strategy and Technical Guide and any current national technical standards) to meet the long term

³⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessment-for-planning-applications>

needs over the lifetime of the development and which achieve wider social, ecological and environmental benefits

- d) Provide clear details of proposed SuDS including the adoption arrangements and how they will be maintained to the satisfaction of the council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)
- e) Do not cause adverse impacts to the public sewerage network serving the development where discharging surface water to a public sewer
- f) Incorporate guidance set out in the Wokingham SuDS Strategy to effectively manage flood risk, improve the water environment, enhance biodiversity and mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change
- g) Incorporate SuDS solutions that will contribute towards water quality treatment and biodiversity enhancements in line with the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Thames River Basin Management Plan
- h) Avoid the use of underground tanks, except when all other reasonable alternatives to provide a sustainable drainage solution have been exhausted.

10.75 The use of well designed, constructed and maintained Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) ensures a more efficient and resilient drainage system, and also helps to manage flood risk, improve the wider water catchment and improve resilience to the effects of climate change. Sustainable drainage is therefore integral to a development scheme. It will always be more effective to manage surface water flooding at and from new development early in the land acquisition and design process rather than to resolve problems after development. As a result, surface water techniques for a site, including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), have to be decided at the earliest stage of the design of the development proposal to allow sufficient space and optimal placement of SuDS devices.

10.76 Developers should consider SuDS as their first choice for managing surface water. All development proposals are required to follow the SuDS Management Train taking account of the specific characteristics of the site and its surrounds, including layout, topography and geology. SuDS shall also be designed to meet national standards as set out in CIRIA Guidance C753 or subsequent national standards introduced through the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to ensure the future sustainability of the drainage system. They should also follow design criteria and be technically feasible.

10.77 Where major or strategic developments involve more than one landowner a coherent approach should be taken to surface water management to ensure delivery of strategic SuDS as opposed to multiple developments generating their own isolated approach.

10.78 In this context, major developments are defined as:

- 10 or more dwellings
- A site larger than 0.5Ha, where the number of dwellings is unknown
- A building greater than 1,000m²
- A site larger than 1Ha.

10.79 Minor schemes should also demonstrate how development proposals would not exacerbate existing levels of drainage or water flow, by identifying specific mitigation measures.

10.80 The Environment Agency publish mapping showing the extent of surface water flooding which should be used to inform the development proposals.

10.81 SuDS can help to reduce the overall amount of rainfall being discharged to the drainage system from new development and help to reduce the borough's susceptibility to surface water flooding. The approach is

consistent with the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Environment Agency Catchment Flood Management Plans.

10.82 The wider social and environmental aspects of SuDs can include health and well-being benefits through the protection of drinking water resources and enhanced local amenity. SuDS features should be integrated into proposals, forming an integral part of landscape design, which can support recreational opportunities and open space/green infrastructure and support climate change resilience through adaptation and mitigation, in addition to environmental benefits, such as water quality and biodiversity enhancements.

10.83 This can be achieved by taking into account [Policy DH1 \(Place making and Quality Design\)](#), and [Policy NE1 \(Biodiversity and Nature Conservation\)](#). These measures can also help deliver the recommendations of the Thames River Basin Management Plan and the Water Framework Directive.

10.84 The Thames River Basin Management Plan (2015) covers Wokingham Borough, and provides a framework for protecting and enhancing the benefits provided by the water environment.

10.85 The council's SuDS Strategy (2016) contains guidance for the design and application of SuDs in the borough, to assist developers designing schemes across varying scales. The Strategy is supported by the SuDS Technical Guide (2016) which sets out the technical requirements and expectations for SuDS in the borough.

10.86 The Water Cycle Study – Phase 1 Scoping Study (2019) further supports the use of SuDs to manage water run-off effectively.

10.87 The provision of SuDS within SANG may be acceptable, subject to consultation and negotiation with the council and Natural England.

Maintenance and Adoption

10.88 The satisfactory performance of SuDS depends not only on good design, construction and operation but also adoption and maintenance that meet or exceed national standards.

10.89 Applicants should submit a feasibility assessment of their intended utilisation of SuDS with their planning application. This information can be incorporated within a FRA or a Surface Water Drainage Strategy.

10.90 For major developments, a Maintenance Plan for the lifetime of the development should include arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme. The Plan should ensure all those involved in the maintenance and operation of the SuDS system understand its long term functionality and maintenance. The Plan should include:

- Surface management measures for the safe and sustainable removal of any waste arising from the drainage system, including the materials and standard of work required.
- An exceedance flow routing plan for unforeseen drainage failures or flows above a 1 in 100 year + 40% climate change event
- The identification of exceedance flow routes through the development based on proposed topography, with flows directed to highways and areas of public open space. Flow routes through gardens and other areas in private ownership will not be supported.

10.91 A risk assessment may be required to determine whether adequate mitigation measures are in place, and subsequently agreed with the council. This should assess the risks associated with conveyance routes and storage areas for exceedance flows, flow depth, velocity, duration and take into account the impact of flooding to people and property on and off site.

10.92 The adoption and maintenance of SuDS will be the responsibility of Wokingham Borough Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and SuDS approving body.

10.93 Most sewers in the borough are public sewers owned by Thames Water. Developers are required to provide evidence that capacity exists in the public sewerage network to serve their development in the form of written confirmation. The Water Cycle Study – Phase 1 Scoping Study provides high level information on sewerage capacity across the borough.

10.94 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 amends the Water Industry Act 1991, making the right to connect surface runoff to public sewers conditional upon the drainage system being approved by the SuDS Approving Body.

10.95 Development proposals should be consistent with Surface Water Management Plans produced by the authority or jointly with a neighbouring authority; the recommendations in the SFRA (2019), and any new national standards, i.e. through Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, policy or regulations.

10.96 Planning conditions or agreements may be used to secure sustainable drainage.

Policy NE10: River Corridors

1. Development proposals that include or are adjacent to a watercourse must protect or enhance its function, setting and biodiversity and historical significance. Development should provide mitigation for any unavoidable impacts.
2. Development encompassing a watercourse, wherever practicable and appropriate, should provide or retain a minimum undeveloped 10 metre buffer zone to create a corridor favourable to the enhancement of biodiversity. This should be provided on both sides of a main river measured from the top of each watercourse bank at the point at which the bank meets the level of the surrounding land.
3. Where appropriate, development proposals adjacent to watercourses will be required to:
 - a. meet the principles of high quality design set out in this plan, having special regard to riverside setting and water frontage character, and consider views of the proposals from all public vantage points, including from the river
 - b. maintain, and where possible enhance, public access for riverside walking and river corridor cycling (including Greenways, and Green Routes), and tourism and leisure activities, such as fishing and boating
 - c. maintain tree cover, conserve and enhance natural watercourse banks and their associated bankside and marginal vegetation and the ecological value of the area including its role as a wildlife network. There may be opportunities for the restoration and enhancement of natural elements of the river environment that should be incorporated within the design of new developments.

- d. demonstrate how the development proposal will support the achievement of Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives, and guidance set out in the Thames River Basin Management Plan or any local catchment management plans
- 4. Appropriate proposals for sport, leisure and river-related employment, infrastructure and renewable energy generation will be supported where they meet the above criteria and where they do not obstruct access along or to the river for any users, or harm its ecological value.
- 5. The culverting of any watercourses should be avoided.

River Thames

- 6. The ecological value of the River Thames will be maintained and in appropriate circumstances restored and enhanced together with natural elements of the riparian environment. Proposals should seek to promote the healthy growth in the use of the River Thames for communities, wildlife, leisure, business and tourism in ways that are compatible with its character, setting and ecology, and in line with the objectives of the River Thames Waterways Plan and the Environment Agency's Thames River Basin Management Plan.
- 7. Particular care will be taken to ensure developments within the setting of the River Thames complement the distinctive character of the water frontage and important views. Existing riverside access will be maintained and opportunities to improve or extend access to the River Thames and adjoining sites will be supported.

10.97 Watercourses are vital to the borough; they provide a range of habitats, act as wildlife corridors and are rich in biodiversity. They form a key aspect of the borough's ecological network. There are three low land river valleys across the borough: the Thames, Loddon and Blackwater. They make a significant contribution towards the character of the landscape and form an important part of the borough's network of green and blue infrastructure, connected by a series of Greenways and Green Routes. They provide vital ecosystem services, maintain and enhance habitats networks, help improve water quality, provide drainage and natural flood management and provide green space for informal recreation.

10.98 An overarching objective of national policy is to protect and enhance our natural environment whilst helping to achieve a net gain in biodiversity. The health of watercourses are at risk from abstraction, pollution originating from development and increased human associated disturbance. The council's latest SuDS Strategy indicates that the assessed surface water bodies and groundwater bodies in the borough are currently achieving either 'poor' or 'moderate' overall status in line with the WFD (with the exception of Farnborough Bagshot Beds), and none are achieving a 'good' status.³⁷ As a result, it is imperative that watercourses are positively integrated into the design of new development from the outset in order to protect their ecological and historical importance and to maintain and enhance biodiversity.

10.99 Watercourses are defined in two categories: main rivers and ordinary watercourses. Main rivers are designated as such by the Environment Agency; usually larger streams, brooks and rivers, but also including some smaller watercourses of significance. Ordinary watercourses are defined as headwaters, smaller brooks, streams and ditches, which also form an important feature of the borough's landscape. The important function and setting of these water bodies should be protected and enhanced by a minimum ten metre wide undeveloped buffer zone (measured from bank top) on both sides. Bank top is defined as the point at which the bank meets the level of the surrounding land, and ten metres is the minimum required for rivers and their associated corridors under the provisions of the Environment Act 1995, current best practice

³⁷ Wokingham Borough Council (2016) Wokingham SuDS Strategy: Guidance on the use of sustainable drainage systems

and national guidance published by the Environment Agency. On larger sites where more land is available, it may be appropriate to include a more extensive buffer zone that varies in size and shape depending on the local circumstances. The provision of a buffer zone should also be supported by a long term ecological management plan.

10.100 The River Thames in particular makes a valuable contribution to the setting and landscape of the borough, stretching from north east from Thames Valley Park, via Henley-on-Thames towards Remenham. The Thames is a popular location for tourism, recreation and sporting activities, including the annual Henley Regatta, boating activities and walkers using the popular Thames Path. The Thames Waterway Plan and Thames River Basin Management Plan, alongside other relevant documents together play an important role in maintaining and enhancing such a valuable natural asset.

11. MINERALS AND WASTE

11.1 The sustainable management of waste is a key part of driving waste up the waste hierarchy, and ensuring there is sufficient provision of waste management facilities. This contributes to local and national objectives to manage waste generation, treatment and disposal more effectively, as part of the challenge of mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change.

11.2 In addition, finite mineral resources can make an important contribution to the materials needed to construct new development. Where this aggregate is extracted locally, including on development sites, it can reduce vehicle movements, and maximise the efficient use of land. The borough benefits from a number of areas where mineral extraction may be feasible, where further on site investigations will be required.

11.3 Wokingham Borough Council is working together with Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to prepare the Joint Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Plan, which will set out the long-term strategy for minerals extraction and waste management across the four authorities. Development proposals relating to aggregate or waste management should therefore meet the requirements of both the Local Plan Update and the Joint Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Plan.

Policy MW1: Sustainable Waste Management

New Facilities

1. All new strategic developments should provide on-site recycling and composting waste management facilities capable of processing a volume equivalent to the volume of waste produced by the development and its occupants, except where existing or proposed facilities in the immediate vicinity of the strategic development can meet existing and newly arising needs. The longer-term waste needs of the borough, including any shortfall in capacity, should be considered as part of providing new waste management facilities.
2. Development proposals for waste management must maximise the management of waste through the Waste Hierarchy with priority given in order of preference to:
 - i. Prevention;
 - ii. Preparation for re-use;
 - iii. Recycling;
 - iv. Other recovery; and
 - v. Disposal.

Safeguarding

3. All existing, planned and allocated waste management facilities are safeguarded against development that may affect their ability to operate.
4. Development proposals for non-waste uses that result in the loss of permanent waste management capacity will only be acceptable when it is demonstrated that:

- a. The proposed development will have no adverse impact on the continuing function of the waste site, and suitable mitigation provided to minimise any impact on proposed non-waste development; or
- b. There is an alternative site providing an equal or greater level of waste management capacity of the same type within the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan area, which will be operational prior to the loss of the existing site; or
- c. The waste management facility is no longer required and will not be required within the Plan period; or
- d. The planning benefits of the non-waste development clearly outweigh the need for the waste management facility at the location.

11.4 The council will work to support the government’s ambition of zero avoidable waste by 2050³⁸ through policies set out in the Joint Minerals and Waste Plan and the Local Plan. Wokingham Borough Council is committed to meeting the requirements of the EU Waste Framework Directive as set out in national planning guidance, including actively supporting the movement of waste up the Waste Hierarchy. In order to do so it is essential there is sufficient provision for waste, recycling, storage and collection, which contributes towards the national policy goal of net self-sufficiency within each waste planning authority. New waste facilities delivered as part of new strategic scale development can contribute towards this goal.

11.5 However, this may not always be appropriate, including where there is sufficient capacity at other waste facilities that can serve the development, both now and throughout the lifetime of the development.

11.6 New waste facilities may also be suitable on land currently in use for general industry (B2), and storage and distribution (B8). Further information is included in the Joint Minerals and Waste Plan, and any applications for such development would be assessed against the development plan as a whole.

11.7 Waste management activities play an important role in the recycling, recovery and disposal of waste at a regional, national and global level, and safeguarding existing facilities therefore helps to support the challenge of mitigating and adapting to climate change. These facilities help meet long-term waste management needs, and the Joint Minerals and Waste Plan safeguards the capacity of sites for waste use across the Central and Eastern Berkshire area.

11.8 Existing waste sites can come under pressure for alternative uses that may generate higher values, notably residential uses. Alternative development proposals that encroach onto existing waste sites should therefore include robust mitigation measures to ensure the proposed development and any sensitive receptors are sufficiently protected from any potential adverse effects from the existing waste facility. This reflects the “agent of change” principle in national policy, where suitable mitigation should be in place prior to completion of the development.

11.9 The nature and scale of the existing use will require different assessments in terms of scale and technical specificity. Development proposals should ensure all relevant assessments are provided to assist in the decision making process.

Policy MW2: Minerals Resources and Infrastructure

Resources

³⁸ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (Policy 40)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy>

1. Mineral Safeguarding areas (MSAs) are defined on the Policies Map.
2. Sand and Gravel are a finite resource of national and local importance that can only be worked where they occur. Resources within the MSAs will be protected from sterilisation by non-minerals development, where this can be avoided. To this end proposals for non-mineral development within the MSA must be accompanied by a Mineral Resource Assessment.
3. Development proposals for non-mineral development within the MSAs will only be permitted where:
 - a) The proposal incorporates the prior extraction of all minerals of economic value in an environmentally acceptable way, where a comprehensive Mineral Resource Assessment shows that only a percentage of the reserve may be extracted all evidence must be submitted as part of the assessment; or
 - b) The mineral resource concerned is, not present, no longer of any economic value or holds no potential future economic value following consultation with industry; or
 - c) The extraction of any minerals is not feasible on grounds of access or other constraints; or
 - d) The need for development outweighs the need to safeguard the minerals for the future; or
 - e) Development would not prevent the future extraction of minerals on neighbouring land; or
 - f) The development constitutes 'exempt development' (Set out in Table 5)
4. Where prior extraction is not viable, the mineral recovered through incidental extraction as part of the construction process and should be reused on site, where possible, to reduce the environmental impact and conserve mineral resources which may otherwise have been lost.

Infrastructure

5. Alongside in-situ resources there is a need to safeguard minerals infrastructure. Development proposals, which may impact the ability of an existing or proposed/allocated site to function as permitted, should prepare a Minerals Infrastructure Assessment to outline whether and how, the existing minerals development may be impacted, and what mitigation is proposed.
6. Development proposals for non-mineral development in close proximity to existing or proposed minerals infrastructure will only be permitted where:
 - a) Development proposals will not involve the loss of the site or its capacity, or
 - b) Development proposals will not cause an unacceptable detrimental impact on permitted operations; or
 - c) The safeguarded infrastructure facility affected is not viable or required; or
 - d) The capacity of the infrastructure can be satisfactorily re-located elsewhere prior to its loss.

11.10 National policy requires a steady and adequate supply of aggregate. [Policy MW2](#) sets out how finite minerals resources should be protected from sterilisation from non minerals development in order to contribute towards the supply of aggregate.

11.11 Wokingham has a history of mineral extraction with historic aggregate quarries and brick clay works. The principle geological deposits in the borough are sharp sand and gravel aggregate that are widely used in the construction industry. Minerals are a finite resource that can only be worked where they occur naturally. As a result, to preserve mineral resources it is important to ensure the sterilisation of mineral bearing land through non-mineral developments is avoided.

11.12 The Joint Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Plan sets out the position of Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs), as part of Minerals and Waste Safeguarding Areas (MSWA). The location of MSAs are based on data provided by the British Geological Survey (BGS). MSAs indicate the presence of aggregate resources that be taken into consideration from the earliest stage in the planning process. There is no presumption in favour of development proposals for mineral extraction in an MSA, and nor will other development types be precluded. Some MSA are located in areas with existing development, including large-scale residential estates, and it is recognised that such areas are unlikely to come forward for minerals extraction.

11.13 To help determine the extent of minerals resources within a MSA, a Minerals Resource Assessment must be provided as part of the planning application process. This should consist of a detailed site investigation that identifies the quality, quantity and extent of resources within the MSA. Where a viable reserve is found to be in situ, a study on the economic viability of prior extraction must be undertaken in consultation with industry. Any assessment must also take into consideration the size, nature and need for the non-mineral development proposed. The proposed phasing and programme of operations should also be set out.

11.14 The prior extraction of minerals from a development site can provide a valuable way of increasing mineral supply for use on site during construction. Development proposals should therefore provide evidence to demonstrate how prior extraction has been considered in an environmentally acceptable way.

11.15 As part of some development proposals mineral extraction will not be possible or feasible. A list of exempt development is included in Table 5.

Table 5: Exempt Development

For a development to be considered exempt it must constitute one or more of the following	
i	Development under 3ha
ii	Applications for a change of use in an existing development, where the scale of development is not essentially altered.
iii	Applications for reserved matters including subsequent applications following an existing extant permission.
iv	Prior Notifications
v	Certificates of Lawfulness (Section 191 and Section 192)
vi	Applications for Tree Works
vii	Applications for temporary planning permission
viii	Applications for Conservation Area Consent
ix	Applications for Listed Building Consent

11.16 There is currently no minerals infrastructure in the borough. Any applications for minerals infrastructure will be determined in accordance with this Local Plan, the Joint Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Plan, and be assessed and safeguarded in accordance with national policy.

11.17 Applicants are encouraged to review the Mineral Products Association and the Planning Officers' Society's 'Minerals Safeguarding Practice Guidance' (April 2019), or any successor document.

APPENDICES

Additional guidance for the Development of Strategic Development Locations Arborfield Garrison SDL

To be inserted

South of the M4 SDL

To be inserted

North Wokingham SDL

To be inserted

South Wokingham SDL

To be inserted

Allocations Maps

Maps of proposed sites to be inserted

GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Accessibility		The ability to access places and services, to be able to get about or get to specific facilities.
Active frontage		A front of a building which provides activity to the street or space onto which it faces. Please note that this also has a specific policy definition – see policy DH3.
Affordable housing		Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers).
Air Quality Action Plan		An action plan for addressing air quality issues in an Air Quality Management Area.
Air Quality Management Area	AQMA	Areas designated by local authorities because they are not likely to achieve national air quality objectives by the relevant deadlines.
Ancient woodland		An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD.
Ancient or veteran tree		A tree which, because of its age, size and condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient, but are old relative to other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.
Asset of Community Value	ACV	A process used to identify a building or land use that is important to the social wellbeing or interests of the local community.
Atomic Weapons Establishment	AWE	Atomic Weapons Establishment. There are two licensed nuclear installations located in West Berkshire which are the Atomic Weapons Establishment sites in Aldermaston (AWE A) and in Burghfield (AWE B).
Authority Monitoring Report	AMR	A report showing how the council are keeping to their timetable and what the effects of their plans are.
Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy	BLIS	The Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy builds on the government's vision to drive productivity and sets out the commitment to accelerate the pace of economic growth and to sustain economic growth at a high level in the Thames Valley.
Biodiversity		The diversity of plant and animal species
Biodiversity Action Plan	BAP	A strategy prepared for a local area aimed at conserving and enhancing biological diversity.
Biodiversity Opportunity Areas	BOA	Areas where biodiversity improvements are likely to have the most beneficial results at a strategic scale.
Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment	BDAA	An assessment of accommodation needs for boat dwellers in the borough.
BREEAM		A widely used means of reviewing and improving the environmental performance of buildings. BREEAM assessment methods generally apply to commercial developments (industrial, retail etc).
Brownfield		Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by

		landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.
Combined Heat and Power		Combined Heat and Power (CHP) units generate electricity through an engine and capture the by-product, combustion heat, for use in heating and hot water systems.
Community facilities		Facilities and services which are of benefit to the wider community. See policy HC2 for a definition of community facilities as it applies to the Local Plan
Community Infrastructure Levy	CIL	A charge which local authorities can charge on most types of new development in their area, to be spent on infrastructure to support the development of the area. CIL was introduced in Wokingham Borough in February 2015.
Comparison retail		Retail items not bought on a frequent basis, for example televisions and white goods (fridges, dishwashers etc).
Completions		This term is used to describe where housing is completed. The housing does not necessarily have to be occupied.
Conservation area		An area designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as being of special architectural or historic interest, the character and interest of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance.
Convenience retail		The provision of everyday essential items, such as food.
Coalescence		The merging or coming together of separate towns or villages to form a whole entity.
Core Employment Area		These tend to be the largest employment areas in the Borough and are where development for business, industry, or warehousing will generally be permitted and where, the expansion or intensification of existing employment uses is acceptable.
Core Strategy		Forms part of the current Development Plan for the Borough setting out the spatial vision and objectives of the planning framework for the area. The Core Strategy was adopted in 2010. Policies in the Core Strategy will be replaced by the Local Plan Update, once it is adopted.
Crossrail		A transport project to provide east-west rail links across London, which will terminate at Reading station. Services will be known as the Elizabeth Line.
Design and Access Statement		A Design and Access Statement is required for many types of planning application – full, outline, and listed building application. It should clearly identify a number of issues including the philosophy and approach to inclusive design and the key issues of the particular scheme
Design code		A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.
Development limits		Development limits are defined with the Development Plan / Local Plan. They identify the area within which development proposals

		would be acceptable, subject to complying with other policies contained in the Development Plan. They seek to prevent development from gradually extending into the surrounding countryside.
District centre		A group of shops and some service outlets serving part of an urban area and providing a geographic focus for it, separate from the town centre but with more variety than local centres.
Economic Development Needs Assessment	EDNA	The Economic Development Needs Assessment considered the objectively assessed economic development needs of the Central Berkshire Functional Economic Market Area over the period 2013-2036.
Employment and Skills Plan		A plan to show how a proposal accords opportunities for training, apprenticeship or other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills required by developers, contractors or end users of the proposal.
Extra care housing		May be either planning use class C3 or C2 (see 'use class'). Extra care housing offers self-contained apartments, each one with a bedroom, a living room, bathroom and kitchen either for rent or to purchase. A care team is onsite 24 hours a day and personal care and support for individuals is tailored to each persons assessed needs. The care service will be registered with the Care Quality Commission for 'Extra Care Housing Services'. Extra care housing offers a community with facilities for people to socialise and pursue their hobbies and interests together with catering facilities on site providing meals to purchase. Extra care housing gives people control over their income, care and support and assistance in emergencies
Flood Risk Assessment	FRA	An assessment of the likelihood of flooding in a particular area so that development needs and mitigation measures can be carefully considered.
Flood Zones		The Environment Agency designate flood zones to reflect the differing risks of flooding. Flood Zone 1 is low probability, Flood Zone 2 is medium probability, Flood Zone 3a is high probability and Flood Zone 3b is functional floodplain. See the National Planning Policy Framework.
Functional Economic Market Area	FEMA	An area in which there are particular economic interrelationships, and which therefore functions as an economic whole, regardless of authority boundaries.
Green Belt		<p>A designation for land around certain cities and large built-up areas, which aims to keep this land permanently open or largely undeveloped. The purposes of the green belt is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas • prevent neighbouring towns from merging • safeguard the countryside from encroachment • preserve the setting and special character of historic towns • assist urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land <p>In Wokingham Borough, the Green Belt primarily covers the northern parishes of Wargrave, Remenham and Ruscombe, along with a small</p>

		section of the parish of Hurst. The Metropolitan Green Belt is defined on the Policies Map.
Green Infrastructure		A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
Green Route		Roads into settlements that are lined with trees and other vegetation which make a significant contribution to character and environment of the area and contribute to the Borough's network of wildlife corridor.
Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	GLVIA	The Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment sets out the process for assessing the landscape and visual effects of development and their significance.
Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment	GTAA	A study to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in the borough.
Habitable rooms		Any room used or intended to be used for sleeping, cooking, living or eating purposes. Enclosed spaces such as bath or toilet facilities, service rooms, corridors, laundries, hallways, utility rooms or similar spaces are excluded from this definition.
Habitats Regulations Assessment	HRA	Used to assess the impacts of proposals and land-use plans against conservation objectives of a European Protected Site and to ascertain whether it would adversely affect the integrity of that site.
Health Impact Assessment	HIA	A tool that can help to identify the likely health impacts of development, and set out measures to improve health outcomes and address negative effects and inequalities. The scope of the assessment will vary depending on the size and location of the development.
Heritage asset		A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
Historic environment		All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
Historic Environment Record	HER	Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.
House in Multiple Occupation	HMO	Residential property where common areas such as bathrooms and kitchens are shared by more than one household. HMOs consist of a variety of property types such as bedsits, shared houses, and purpose-built HMOs
Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment	HELAA	An assessment that examines the capacity of an area for housing and economic development uses. National Planning Practice Guidance provides more information on such assessments.
Housing Infrastructure Fund	HIF	The Housing Infrastructure Fund is a government capital grant programme of up to £2.3 billion, which will help to deliver up to 100,000 new homes in England. Funding will be awarded to local authorities on a highly competitive basis, providing grant funding for

		<p>new infrastructure that will unlock new homes in the areas of greatest housing demand.</p> <p>A joint HIF bid for £252m was submitted by Wokingham Borough Council, West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council to government for infrastructure to support a new garden town at Grazeley – see Policy SS3 for further information on Grazeley garden town.</p>
Housing Market Area	HMA	A geographical area defined by household demand and preferences for all types of housing, reflecting the key functional linkages between places where people live and work.
Infrastructure Delivery Plan	IDP	The Infrastructure Delivery Plan includes details of the infrastructure needed to support the delivery of the local plan.
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	JSNA	The Wokingham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment assesses the current and future health, care and wellbeing and needs of the population in the borough.
Key worker housing		A key worker is a public sector employee who is thought to provide an essential service. Key workers include teachers, doctors, police officers and fire fighters.
Landscape Character Assessment	LCA	A technique used to develop a consistent and comprehensive understanding of landscape character. It provides more detailed descriptions and analysis at a local level. Formally describes and classifies different landscapes. It also outlines how landscapes should be conserved and managed.
Legibility		A legible area is one with a strong sense of local identity. Locations, streets, open spaces and places that have a clear image and are easy to understand. For example, a location that is easy to find your way around.
Listed building		A building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II* or II with grade I being the highest. Listing includes the interior as well as the exterior of the building, and any buildings or permanent structures (e.g. wells within its curtilage).
Local Areas of/for Play	LAP	An area of at least 100m ² with up to three activities, with a minimum 5m buffer zone.
Local centre		A small group of shops and perhaps limited service outlets of a local nature (for example, a suburban housing estate) serving a small catchment. Sometimes also referred to as a local neighbourhood centre.
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan	LCWIP	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans set a strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at a local level, through a long-term approach to developing cycling and walking networks.
Local Green Space	LGS	A type of green space protected for its particular local significance according to criteria in the National Planning Policy Framework.
Local housing need		The number of homes identified as being needed through the application of the standard method set out in national planning guidance (or, in the context of preparing strategic policies only, this may be calculated using a justified alternative approach as provided for in paragraph 60 of the NPPF).
Local Housing Needs Assessment	LHNA	The Local Housing Needs Assessment identifies the size, type and tenure of homes that will be needed in the borough. The LHNA also

		identifies the housing needs of different groups, including affordable housing.
Local Nature Reserves	LNR	Non-statutory habitats of local significance designated by local authorities where protection and public understanding of nature conservation is encouraged.
Local Plan Update	LPU	The Local Plan Update is the document that will contain policies for how development across Wokingham Borough will be managed in the period to 2036. Once adopted, the Local Plan Update will form part of the council's Development Plan and can be used by the council when making decisions on planning application in the borough. The Local Plan Update will replace all policies in the Core Strategy and Managing Delivery Development local plan.
Local Transport Plan	LTP	An integrated transport strategy, prepared by local authorities in partnership with the community, seeking funding to help provide local transport projects. The plan sets out the resources predicted for delivery of the identified in the strategy
Local Wildlife Site	LWS	Local Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites of significant value for the conservation of wildlife. These sites represent local character and distinctiveness and have an important role to play in meeting local and national targets for biodiversity conservation.
Locally Equipped Area of/for Play	LEAP	An area of at least 400m ² with at least five activities, with minimum 20m buffer zones (NB minimum of 30m buffer zones for teenage equipment).
Main town centre uses		Retail development; leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).
Major development		For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m ² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. ³⁹
Managing Delivery Document Local Plan	MDD	The Managing Delivery Development DPD forms part of the current Development Plan for the Borough. It sets out specific planning policies that are used in the determination of planning applications. The MDD's policies will be replaced by the Local Plan Update once the plan is formally adopted.
Market housing		Housing supply where the type, design, and prices are set in a market determined by supply and demand and there are no barriers to entry.
Mineral Safeguarding Areas	MSA	An area designated by Minerals Planning Authorities which covers known deposits of minerals which are desired to be kept safeguarded from unnecessary sterilisation by non-mineral development.
Mixed-use		Provision of a mix of complementary uses, for example, town centre development which contains mixed use development e.g. retail, leisure, office and residential.

³⁹ Other than for the specific purposes of paragraphs 172 and 173 of the National Planning Policy Framework

My Journey		A Wokingham Borough Council sustainable travel campaign that aims to help and inspire residents, employees and students to travel by walking, cycling and public transport.
National Heritage List for England	NHLE	The official database which provides access to up to date information on all nationally designated heritage assets.
National Planning Policy Framework	NPPF	The revised (2019) NPPF sets out government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.
Nature Recovery Network		An expanding, increasingly connected, network of wildlife-rich habitats supporting species recovery, alongside wider benefits such as carbon capture, water quality improvements, natural flood risk management and recreation. It includes the existing network of protected sites and other wildlife rich habitats as well as and landscape or catchment scale recovery areas where there is coordinated action for species and habitats.
Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play	NEAP	An area of at least 1000m ² with at least eight activities, with a minimum 30m buffer zone.
Neighbourhood Plan		A plan prepared by a town/ parish council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
Office for Nuclear Regulation	ONR	The ONR is responsible for regulation of nuclear safety and security across the UK. The ONR seeks to secure the protection of people and society from the hazards of the nuclear industry, by ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and by influencing the nuclear industry to create an excellent health, safety, and security culture.
Older people		People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.
Open space		All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.
Park and Ride		A transport system where drivers leave their cars in a car park and continue their journey on public transport.
Phasing or phased development		The phasing of development into manageable parts. For example, an annual rate of housing release for a large development that may need to be controlled so as to avoid destabilising housing markets and causing low demand.
Planning Policy for Traveller Sites	PPTS	Sets out the Government's policy for traveller sites and is to be read in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework.
Planning Practice Guidance	PPG	The national Planning Practice Guidance is a planning practice online resource covering a range of planning issues.
Policies Map		This shows the location of proposals and designations in the Local Plan on an Ordnance Survey base map.
Primary shopping area		Defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are adjoining and closely related to the primary shopping frontage).

Public realm		The parts of a village, town or city (whether publicly or privately owned) that is available, without charge, for everyone to use. This includes streets, squares and parks.
Public Rights of Way	PRoW	A public right of way is a highway/path over which the public have a right of access along the route.
Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019	REPIR	The Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 establishes a framework of measures to ensure that arrangements are in place to effectively respond to radiation emergencies, both on the site and off-site where members of the public might be affected. The Regulations ensure that members of the public are provided with information, before and during an emergency, so that they are properly informed and prepared.
Registered Parks and Gardens		Parks and gardens of special historic interest, designated by Historic England.
Rights of Way Improvement Plan	ROWIP	A Rights Of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) seeks to improve public rights of way and other non-motorised routes to support of the needs of all types of users.
Rural Exception Site		Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection.
Section 106 agreement		A legally binding agreement or obligation entered into by the local authority and a land developer over an issue related to a planning application, under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
Self-build and custom-build housing		Housing built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual. Such housing can be either market or affordable housing. A legal definition, for the purpose of applying the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended), is contained in section 1(A1) and (A2) of that Act.
Significance (for heritage policy)		The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	SSSI	Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
Sites of Urban Landscape Value	SULV	Open areas within settlements that are important to local character, amenity and landscape and which may have biodiversity and recreational roles.
Source Protection Zones	SPZ	The Environment Agency identifies Source Protection Zones to protect groundwater (especially public water supply) from developments that may damage its quality.
Special Area of Conservation	SAC	Areas defined by regulation 3 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which have been given special protection as important conservation sites.
Stepping stones		Pockets of habitat that, while not necessarily connected, facilitate the movement of species across otherwise inhospitable landscapes.

Strategic Access Management and Monitoring	SAMM	This is a project overseen by Natural England and Hampshire County Council to implement standard messages and additional wardening and education across the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. This is one of the avoidance and mitigation measures to protect the Thames Basin Heaths from the impacts of new residential development, the other is SANG. See also: Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace.
Strategic Development Location	SDL	Key sites allocated through the Core Strategy (2010). Policies SS4, SS5, SS6 and SS7 in the draft local plan roll forward the existing SDLs.
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	SFRA	Study carried out by the local planning authority to assess the risk to an area from flooding from all sources, now and in the future, taking account of the impacts of climate change, and to assess the impact that land use changes and development in the area will have on flood risk. The purpose of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is to identify and analyse current and future broad scale flooding issues for key locations across the borough.
Strategic Housing Market Assessment	SHMA	An assessment that looks at which areas can be defined as housing market areas, and identifies needs for different sizes and types of housing within those areas. The Berkshire (with South Bucks) SHMA dates from February 2016.
Student accommodation		Living accommodation provided specifically for those in education.
Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace	SANG	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces or 'SANGs' are new or existing open spaces designed to attract visitors away from the Special Protection Area by providing an enjoyable natural environment for recreation
Supplementary Planning Document	SPD	Documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.
Sustainability Appraisal	SA	A sustainability appraisal should be completed for all local development documents at all stages. It highlights the main environmental, economic and social effects of the preparation process to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.
Sustainable Drainage Systems	SuDS	Sustainable drainage systems use techniques to control surface water run-off as close to its origin as possible, before it enters a watercourse. This involves moving away from traditional piped drainage systems towards engineering solutions, which mimic natural drainage processes. Sustainable drainage systems cover the whole range of sustainable approaches to surface drainage management.
Tandem development		A term used to describe a dwelling built behind another, the rear building having no frontage and being accessed by a private roadway or track alongside the front building.
Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area	TBH SPA	A collection of sites on the borders of Berkshire, Hampshire, and Surrey covering an area of 8,274 hectares. The Thames Basin Heath SPA is home to three rare species of ground nesting birds - the Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark. In order to protect these, the Government has designated the 'Thames Basin Heaths' as a

		special protection area (SPA) under the European Community Directive on Wild Birds and placed mitigation zones around the heaths (of 5km and 7km) to lessen the impact of human activity on them.
Thames River Basin Management Plan		River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) are drawn up for the 10 river basin districts in England and Wales as a requirement of the Water Framework Directive. Wokingham Borough Council is covered within the Thames River Basin Management Plan (2015).
Thames Valley Berkshire Strategy Economic Plan	SEP	The Thames Valley Berkshire Strategic Economic Plan set out the prospectus for growth across the Thames Valley, by prioritising access to talented people and innovative ideas.
Town centre		Area defined on the Policies Map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. Unless they are identified as centres in the development plan, existing out-of-centre developments, comprising or including main town centre uses, do not constitute town centres.
Transport assessment		A comprehensive and systematic process that sets out transport issues relating to a proposed development. It identifies measures required to improve accessibility and safety for all modes of travel, particularly for alternatives to the car such as walking, cycling and public transport, and measures that will be needed deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the development.
Transport statement		A simplified version of a transport assessment where it is agreed the transport issues arising from development proposals are limited and a full transport assessment is not required.
Travel plan		A long-term management strategy for an organisation or site that seeks to deliver sustainable transport objectives and is regularly reviewed.
Tree Preservation Order	TPO	An order made by a local planning authority in respect of trees and woodlands. The principal effect of a TPO is to prohibit the cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, wilful damage or wilful destruction of trees without the LPA's consent.
Vitality and Viability		Vitality and viability are concepts used to measure the health of a retail centre. Vitality refers to the capacity of a centre to grow or develop its likeliness and level of activity. Viability refers to the centre's capacity to attract investment and adapt to changing needs.
Waste hierarchy		A framework for securing a sustainable approach to waste management. Wherever possible, waste should be minimised. If waste cannot be avoided, then it should be reused; if not capable of being reused the value to be recovered by recycling or composting; or waste to energy; and finally landfill disposal.
Water Cycle Study	WCS	A Water Cycle Study provides a high-level assessment of future development on water supply, wastewater collection and waste water treatment. A Phase 1 Scoping Study was published in 2018.
Water Framework Directive	WFD	The EU Water Framework Directive is an EU Directive which sets the objectives for water protection in order to achieve good qualitative and quantitative status of all water bodies of all EU member states.

Windfall sites		Sites that are either previously developed land or greenfield, that have not been specifically identified for development through the planning process but have unexpectedly become available during the lifetime of the plan.
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