

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about Issues and Options Stage (note first compiled 5 July 2016 – Live document)

General FAQs re terms used

Q. Is there a glossary to help me understand the different terms used?

A. Yes. You can find a glossary via www.wokingham.gov.uk/localplanupdate.

General FAQs re the consultation

Q. What is this consultation about?

A. This consultation is about seeking people's views on producing a Local Plan Update (LPU) for Wokingham Borough. The Local Plan Update will become part of the Borough's Development Plan. The Issues and Options stage is a scoping and shaping stage, to understand what should be included within the plan and set up a direction of travel.

Q. What is a Local Plan?

A. The Council is responsible for planning for the use of land in the borough which includes producing a Development Plan for how an area will develop over time as a guide to future development.

Q. How will the Local Plan Update be used?

A. In England, there is a 'plan-led' system, which means that all proposals for development that require planning permission will be considered in the first instance against the Development Plan for the Borough. The Local Plan Update will in time become part of the Borough's Development Plan.

Q. Why do we need the Local Plan Update?

A. One of the key reasons for needing the Local Plan Update is that the Government has changed the way that we plan for development, particularly for new housing. Previously, numbers of new houses required were set at regional level (in a document called the South East Plan) for each authority. However, now it is the responsibility of individual local authorities to assess how much development is needed in its area and how much should be provided.

Q. What will happen to the Council's existing planning policies?

A. The Council already has two key planning policy documents that contain planning policies. These are:

- The Core Strategy (adopted 2010) – containing the overarching strategic policies (for example setting the number of new houses to be built to 2026)

- The Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (adopted 2014), which includes adding extra detail to the policies within the Core Strategy

Both documents form part of the Borough's Development Plan.

- The Plan period for the two above documents runs until 2026, whereas the Local Plan Update will need to look beyond that date. Because the Core Strategy and MDD only look to 2026, there is likely to be a need to replace most policies to ensure that there are up to date policies beyond that date. However, in some instances, the broad policy approach could still be continued beyond 2026

Q. How do I get involved / how long is the consultation for?

A. Consultation on the Issues and Options document runs from Thursday 4 August to 4pm on Friday 30 September 2016.

Q. I have some questions about the consultation. How can I contact you?

A. You can find all of the documents on the Council's website at www.wokingham.gov.uk/localplanupdate. Paper copies are also available at the Council's offices at Shute End. A leaflet has also been produced to highlight the key issues. Please send us your comments via our online form, by email or by post. If you only wish to address certain parts of the consultation, please feel free to respond to only some of the questions.

- Online at: www.wokingham.gov.uk/consultations
- By email to: LPU@wokingham.gov.uk
- By post to: Land Use & Transport Team, Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1WR

If you have any questions regarding the consultation, please contact the Land Use and Transport Team on 0118 974 6478 or by emailing LPU@wokingham.gov.uk.

Q. What happens next?

A. Your comments will be published as part of the Local Plan Update process. These comments, along with the results of further technical studies, will help us to develop the 'Preferred Options', which is the next stage of the process. This stage will explain why certain options are preferred to others and will seek your views on whether you agree. Figure 1 shows the different stages of the Local Plan process. The plan is examined in public by an independent Planning Inspector who will consider comments made on the document. The role of the Inspector is to ensure that the plan is legally compliant and 'sound', the latter relates to whether the document is in essence the most appropriate strategy based on the best evidence. National guidance found in paragraph 182 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF), provides further detail about what is meant by 'sound'.

The Government is considering making a number of changes to the planning system. These will also need to be taken into account as the plan is developed.

Q. Will my comments be made public?

A. The council is required by law to make available the comments you send us about the Plan, including your name and postal address. Your comments may be made available for the public to read in council offices and online as part of the Local Plan preparation process. Your telephone number, email address, and signature will not be published. Please note that we cannot provide anonymity or accept comments marked 'private' or 'confidential'.

The Council has a duty not to accept comments which may reasonably be considered offensive, racist, discriminatory or threatening. These, along with other non-relevant statements will be destroyed.

Q. What is the timetable for the Local Plan Update?

A. The current timetable can be seen in the Local Development Scheme on the website at www.wokingham.gov.uk/localplanupdate.

General FAQs re sites

Q. How were the sites that have come forward in the 'call for sites' identified?

A. Sites can be put forward by anyone or any organisation and typically have been promoted by land owners, developers, agents, local businesses and individuals in the Borough.

Q. How was the exercise publicised?

A. The exercise was publicised through two calls for sites, January to February 2016 and then again in May to June 2016. Letters/emails of invitation to take part were sent to a wide audience including parish councils, landowners, developers, businesses. A press release was also issued on our website, local papers and via Facebook and Twitter.

Q. Have you analysed whether these sites are suitable?

A. No. At this stage, we have not yet analysed / filtered the sites.

Q. If sites are identified in the 'call for sites' exercise and are being assessed does it mean that they will be allocated for development in the Local Plan?

A. No. The 'call for sites' and the technical assessment of sites will be used to inform the plan, but does not necessarily mean a site will be allocated for development. This is because not all sites considered in the assessment will be suitable or ultimately acceptable for development.

All the sites will be considered holistically across the whole borough to ensure the best strategy for borough-wide development. Allocation of land will depend on different policy constraints (such as designated heritage or environmental sites) and practical constraints (such as rivers and hills).

The decision on allocation of sites will ultimately be made by the Borough Council following public consultation on the options available.

Q. When will I be able to see a list of the suggested sites?

A. A list of all sites submitted through the Calls for Sites and a distribution map will be made available for you to view on our website **on 21 September 2016**. There will be no analysis or assessment of the submitted sites released on 21st September 2016. The information released will show the location and the suggested use for each site.

Q. When can I comment on the sites?

A. When published, this list will be for information purposes only and we will not be inviting comments at that stage. The intention (subject to Councillor approval through the Executive process) is to ask people during the Preferred Options Consultation (June to July 2017) for comments on the sites as well as other topics.

Q. How will existing infrastructure and services cope and what new infrastructure and services will be provided to support the growth?

A. All new development, housing in particular, will contribute to the delivery of appropriate infrastructure either directly or through a financial contribution. The Council is already working closely with the relevant agencies to ensure that the exact infrastructure requirements of specific sites can be understood.

Q. What is a Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment?

A. There is a requirement to produce a Sustainability Appraisal alongside the Local Plan. The Sustainability Appraisal assesses the impact of the issues and options identified against a range of social, environmental and economic objectives. This helps us to ensure that our future policies are sustainable, i.e. they support development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This document is out for consultation at the same time as the Issues and Options and you may wish to comment on this document as well.

Miscellaneous FAQs

Q. Does the Green Belt study mean that land will be taken out of the Green Belt?

A. The Green Belt Study is a technical piece of evidence that looks into how the Green Belt within Wokingham Borough performs against the five purposes of the Green Belt identified in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 80)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

The Green Belt Study does not make any recommendations as to whether land should be taken out of the Green Belt. The decision on whether any land should be removed will be made through the Local Plan Update process. Land would only be released for development in exceptional circumstances.

Q. How will BREXIT affect the Local Plan Update?

A. As the LPU is progressed, we will need to review whether the evidence is still robust to take account of any potential changes. For example, this may include considering whether the population / job projections are still robust.