

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 and following from the previous Issues & Options consultation. We are seeking views on many areas of land that have been promoted by landowners and developers as available for new housing, jobs and other uses. No decisions have been made yet and we value your input in this process. This consultation takes us one step closer to this by seeking the views and local knowledge of residents, local businesses', landowners' and others on the key issue of how development should be managed in different places across the borough, for example town centres, towns and villages.

Q. What is a Local Plan?

A. Local Plans are the key documents through which the Borough Council manages the growth pressures for our communities and sets out where new homes, jobs and other types of development should go. The council has a statutory duty to prepare a local plan.

Q. Why is the Council preparing a new Local Plan now?

A. It is important that the Council has up-to-date and robust planning policies which reflect the latest national policy and guidance. Some of the Council's existing planning policies are not fully up to date.

Producing a new Local Plan supports the Council's aim of having a plan-led approach to development, allowing us to plan new infrastructure and provide certainty for residents, rather than reacting to developers' proposals, which can result in piecemeal development and result in unwelcome impacts. The government is also clear that councils should have up-to-date plans or risk government intervention (where the government steps in and directs plan preparation). This would not stop development, but, would mean that decisions about it would not be made locally.

Q. What are the stages in producing a Local Plan and where are we now?

A. There are two broad stages in preparing a local plan:

- 1) Evidence and opinion gathering to inform the preparation of a draft local plan; and

- 2) Testing the legal compliance and soundness of the chosen local plan against legal and national policy requirements.

The Council is broadly free to consider how best to undertake the first stage. Common approaches to consultation include exercises looking at the scope of issues that should be included in the local plan and focused engagement with residents, businesses and other interested parties on key issues. Many councils choose to consult on a draft local plan as part of the plan making process.

The second broad stage is subject to set procedures set out in regulations. These include the publication of the proposed submission plan for scrutiny against defined requirements, and examination by a government planning inspector.

The process chosen by the council is set out in our Local Development Scheme. This sets out the key stages including opportunity for formal engagement. This is available on the website.

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

A. Consultation on the Local Plan Update runs from 12th November 2018 to 4pm on 22nd February 2019.

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.

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: Growth & Delivery Team, Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1WR

If you have any questions regarding the consultation, please contact the Growth & Delivery Team by emailing LPU@wokingham.gov.uk.

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.

Q. Is the 'Local Plan Update' different to the 'Borough Plan'?

Yes. These are two separate documents with different purposes. The 'Borough Plan' is a document that sets out the key priorities for the borough covering a wide range of issues such as waste collection, education, congestion, social care, community safety, etc. It is about addressing the wide range of issues that help achieve a sense of community. The upcoming Borough Plan will set out how the Council's wide ranging corporate priorities will be delivered by working together with partners of the Council. It will cover the period 2019-2025. The Borough Plan has previously been known as the 'Council Plan'.

The Local Plan Update (LPU) is specifically about future development i.e. the buildings and how land is used in the borough. It is a statutory town planning document that will set out where new homes, roads, employment, shops, etc will go and how it will be managed. Every future planning application will be assessed against the policies in the LPU once it is adopted. The LPU will cover a longer period to 2036 and it is one of many specific plans/strategies that the council produces which all feed into and inform Borough Plan.

General FAQs re Sites

Q. How were the sites within the consultation identified?

A. Sites can be put forward by anyone or any organisation (even if they do not own the land) and typically have been promoted by land owners, developers, agents, local businesses and individuals in the Borough. A call for sites exercise took place from January to February 2016 and May to June 2016. Additional sites have subsequently been individually promoted to the Council.

Q. Have you analysed whether these sites are suitable?

which visits to every site to form initial observations. An in-depth desk-based study and a sustainability appraisal will then be undertaken. The submitted sites will be assessed holistically, that is to say they will be considered in a borough-wide context to inform an appropriate strategy for Wokingham Borough's future development.

Q. Why have you undertaken Masterplanning on certain sites, and which sites were they?

A. It is important to look at the larger sites in more detail because they provide potential opportunities for large-scale, sustainable and infrastructure-rich housing development, though they also have significant challenges which would need to be overcome.

Five clusters of sites have been considered through this masterplanning process. These can be seen in the reports on www.wokingham.gov.uk/localplanupdate.

The commissioning of the masterplanning work does not pre-judge the outcome of the Local Plan Update. At this stage we do not know and have not committed to any particular

approach to deciding which sites could potentially be developed. The masterplanning work will be used to help us make a decision on whether any development could be suitable at these locations.

Q. If sites have been promoted and are being assessed does it mean that they will be allocated for development in the Local Plan?

A. No. The 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 borough to inform an appropriate strategy for 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).

Decisions to allocate sites will ultimately be made following public consultation on the options available, and will need to be supported by an independent planning Inspector through an 'Examination in Public'.

FAQs re the Statement of Community Involvement

Q. What is a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

A. Statement of Community Involvement is a statutory planning document that sets out how we find out what you think about planning matters. This sets out how consultation will take place with the community, businesses and others during the preparation of planning policy and the consideration of planning applications.

Q. Why is the Council preparing a new Statement of Community Involvement now?

A. As with local plans, it is important that the council has an up to date SCI which reflects latest national policy, guidance, and legislation. The SCI is being updated now because since the Council adopted its existing SCI in 2014, there have been changes to national planning policy and guidance. For example, it is now a requirement for an SCI to incorporate guidance on the support that is available for communities producing neighbourhood plans (see chapter 5 for more details). As a result of these changes, a review of the SCI has been undertaken and we are seeking your views on this draft document.

Q. Is the SCI consultation separate from the LPU consultation 'Homes for the Future'

A. Yes. We are running a separate consultation on the SCI alongside the LPU consultation. So your views on both of these consultations are welcomed. The LPU consultation is taking place in accordance with our existing SCI (from 2014) as well as this proposed new SCI.

Q. How do I respond to the consultation on the draft SCI?

A. 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. Please return your completed response form or comments to us by:

- Online at: www.wokingham.gov.uk/consultations

- By email to: PolicyandPlans@wokingham.gov.uk
- By post to: Growth & Delivery Team, Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1WR

General FAQs re Housing

Q. Why is the housing needed?

A. The government has made clear that every local authority in the country has to allocate land to provide housing. Wokingham borough is no different and the Local Plan will have to allocate land for additional housing.

The government has committed to using a standardised methodology for calculating the housing need for each local planning authority. Based on current data, and the government's proposals in the technical consultation on the standard methodology, the housing need for Wokingham is 864 dwellings per annum (dpa). This would be recalculated each year as new data on house prices, incomes, and household growth is published.

The starting point for the standardised methodology is the national household projections for each local authority. These are a demographic projection informed by the projected population, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and projected household representative rates inform by Census and labour force survey data.¹ These projections are based on assumptions on future levels of fertility, mortality and net migration, and household formation behaviour. The standardised methodology for calculating housing need then adjusts this figure to take into account house prices and incomes.

As new data becomes available, the housing need for the borough is likely to change.

Q. Where will the housing go?

A. The Local Plan will allocate land for new housing. The Council prepares lots of evidence that will help to determine where housing should (and should not) be located. This is pulled together through a robust site assessment process. Residents, businesses and other stakeholders will all be consulted on where development should be located.

Q. What is the 5 year housing land supply?

A. Government planning policy (The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)) requires local planning authorities to identify and update annually a supply of deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements. This is a considerable task, as the test is not simply what has planning permission, but whether the housing will realistically be built by the landowner or developer in the next five years. As part of our process, the Council contacts developers to understand their intentions towards their land.

The 5 year housing land supply is important because national planning policy states that where a council cannot demonstrate 5 years worth of deliverable housing sites, some policies in that council's adopted Local Plan will be considered out of date by the Planning Inspectorate. Developers are therefore keen to challenge the council's ability to demonstrate this housing supply because, if successful, speculative planning applications on sites that

¹ Labour Force Survey is a study of the employment circumstances of the UK population. It is the largest household study in the UK and provide official measures of employment and unemployment.

have not been allocated for development are more likely to be accepted by Planning Inspectors.

Q. Housing in the borough is unaffordable. What is being done to address this?

A. The Council recognise that the affordability of housing is a significant concern for people living in the borough, including younger people looking for their first property, and those looking to buy larger housing for their growing families. In recent years the council has taken a number of steps to improve access to housing, including building on land owned by the council, regeneration of areas including Wokingham Town Centre, and using developer money to purchase new land for future development.

The Local Plan will include a policy that requires a portion of the housing delivered on qualifying sites (those that provide a particular quantity of housing) to deliver affordable housing. The exact amount of housing will depend on the policy and what can be delivered viably by developers. Our existing planning policies go beyond the government's national planning policy, requiring contributions from smaller schemes. We have taken this approach because we recognise the importance of providing affordable housing and consider this a key step in addressing it.

Q. Given the number of permissions for housing, can we stop granting more?

A. No. Whilst having a healthy supply of housing is beneficial to resist speculative, unplanned developments, we still need to plan longer term to ensure the supply remains, particularly beyond 2026.

Bringing a steady supply of housing sites to the market also helps ensure there is competition in the housing industry, and incentivises other developers to progress their schemes or lose market share.

Q. Can the housing be built elsewhere instead of in Wokingham Borough?

A. The Council has a statutory duty to plan for the development needs of the borough, including housing and jobs. National policy states that this development should first and foremost be located in the borough where it is needed.

The Council works closely with other public bodies including adjoining councils to fully cooperate on cross boundary matters, such as infrastructure, housing and transport, this is referred to as the 'duty to cooperate'. This process is ongoing through the preparation of the Local Plan.

Q. Why can't all development take place on brownfield sites, or in urban areas?

A. The Council has to, and does make appropriate use of development opportunities on sites within existing settlements, including previously developed land (brownfield land). Over the last 10 years, around 80 new homes each year are built on previously developed land across the borough. This compares to a calculated housing need in the region of 850-900 homes each year.

A limited number of previously developed sites have been promoted to the Council for consideration for future development by the landowner or a developer. Many of these sites will be suitable for development. In places it may be possible to build more homes by building higher or smaller homes, however this needs to be balanced with respecting the character of the area and ensuring high quality design.

In summary, there is simply not enough deliverable previously developed land to meet the calculated development needs. For land to be allocated it must be available, and therefore have a willing landowner promoting the site.

Q. Has the Local Plan taken Brexit into account?

A. The Council can only work on the basis of known information. The local plan process requires local plans to be based on evidence. If the government changes national planning policy in response to Brexit, then the Local Plan will have to be reviewed.

The national household projections produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) include consideration of future migration. The last projections included an assumption that future net migration would be lower than in the past.

Q. What is our housing target and what are the components – I have heard of the 5-year supply and I have heard annual build numbers what are they?

A. The National Planning Policy Framework, requires local authorities to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than 5 years old.

The government introduced a standardised methodology for calculating Local Housing Need (LHN) and a Housing Delivery Test alongside the revised NPPF in July 2018. At the time of writing, LHN calculates as 752 homes per annum. In October 2018 government launched a technical consultation that proposed changing the way housing need is calculated. If these proposals are brought into national policy the LHN for Wokingham Borough would increase to 864 dwellings per annum.

Under the Housing Delivery Test, the Council is required to add an additional buffer of 5%, having exceeded the LHN over the preceding 3 years.

The current 5 year supply figure is 7.84 years, when considered against a LHN of 752 dwellings per annum. .

Q. Where does the housing target come from and what is driving it?

A. The Council decides the housing target for each year of the Local Plan.

The government will set the amount of housing they think the borough will need to provide as part of the standardised methodology, which is called the housing need. It is up to the Council to decide whether this housing need can be met with enough new homes, when deciding what the housing target is. The housing need and housing target do not need to be the same. Councils are under pressure to provide enough sites to meet the housing need the government has identified, and will have to have very good reasons should a council decide to set a housing target that is below the housing need the government has identified.

Q. What happens if we fail to meet the target?

A. Government expects local authorities to deliver the amount of housing set out by the Local Housing Need calculation. This expectation is set out as part of the Housing Delivery Test (HDT). Under this test, from November 2018 authorities will be penalised if they do not deliver 25% of housing required by November 2018, followed by 45% a year later and 75% in 2020.

MHCLG is yet to define the consequences for failing to meet housing delivery targets. However if the council delivery drops below 95% over the previous three years, the authority will have to prepare an action plan in line with national planning guidance, to assess the causes of under delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years.

Q. When does our land supply run out?

A. Our current housing land supply is 7.84 years; however, this number is reviewed every year and is subject to change.

Q. Does land supply include houses with planning permission not yet built?

A. Yes, the supply includes housing with planning permission that may not have commenced, or may be under construction.

Q. If we have a 5 year housing land supply can we still be forced to build houses on appeal?

A. A 5 year housing land supply allows the council to give adopted planning policies in the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) lots of weight when making recommendations for decisions on planning applications. This includes directing development to areas that have been allocated for development in existing planning policies, and protecting areas that have not been allocated for development.

However, developers have, and will continue to challenge our 5 year housing land supply statements to try and obtain planning permission. It is therefore the Planning Inspector who will decide whether the 5 year housing land supply is robust through Planning Appeals.

Q. Is there any sub targets of affordable, social, intermediate etc or is there just a land supply target?

A. No there are no specific sub targets but an affordability ratio is applied when calculating our Local Housing Need.

Q. Can we transfer our targets to other neighbouring authorities? Is there a risk that if reading do not meet theirs we will get more or vice versa?

Wokingham is in the same housing market area as Bracknell Forest, Reading and West Berkshire. Best practice is to ensure that the housing need for this area is met locally. The need for housing has increased across the area. The starting point is for each local authority to aim to meet its need within its own administrative area. Where this is not possible, other

authorities within the same housing market area have to try and find sites for the unmet housing need.

Q. How have plans to expand Heathrow been taken account of in plan making?

A. The government announced in October 2016 that its preferred option for expansion of airport capacity in the south east is a third runway at Heathrow. Further evidence is being gathered and a second round of consultation on the draft airports national policy statement (NPS), which sets out the government’s support for the Heathrow project took place at the end of last year. Heathrow is also currently seeking the public and council’s views on emerging proposals in terms of what the expanded airport could look like, how it might operate, and how Heathrow might best mitigate against the potential impacts. There is yet to be a parliamentary vote on the issue.

The Council can only take account of committed projects. In view of the above, the current version of the Local Plan does not take account of the impact of any expansion at Heathrow. If the government changes national planning policy in response to Heathrow then the Local Plan will have to be reviewed.

General FAQs re Infrastructure

Q. Will there be new infrastructure such as roads and schools to support new housing development?

A. Yes. When the Council has a better understanding of where and when development is going to take place, a detailed infrastructure strategy can be prepared. This will set out what infrastructure is needed, to support the new development proposed. This will include new and expanded schools, parks and open spaces, roads and cycleways, and how they will be funded.

The Council recognises the need to delivery new infrastructure to support new communities. Alongside the developments planned for in the existing planning strategy for the borough (the [Core Strategy](#)) the Council will deliver over £400m of investments including 7 new primary and 1 new secondary schools; 7 new strategic roads, 6 new neighbourhood centres and 1 new district centre, 3 new sports hubs and one enhanced sports hub, parkland and improvements to public transport, as well as over 30% affordable housing.

Q. Will access to open space and our parks be lost due to development?

A. Open space is an important feature of the Borough and it is important that local residents have access to open spaces, including outdoor sports and leisure facilities, near to their homes. Through the LPU new open space will be required on housing sites in line with requirements set out in the borough’s new Open Space Strategy.

Q. The roads are already congested so how will they cope with more traffic?

A. The Council understands that more people are driving and that this can lead to areas of congestion. This is why we have planned investments in 7 new strategic roads, and chosen to deliver new facilities close to new communities to limit the need to travel.

The Council recognise that the roadworks required to upgrade and install new highways infrastructure have led to increased congestion in some parts of the borough. Once this work

has been completed and new junctions and relief roads are in place traffic will move around the borough much more easily.

New development will also have to provide upgrades to the existing road network. The Council will continue to work closely with surrounding boroughs and Highways England.

The Council works hard to promote sustainable forms of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport. New development would allow further investment into our cycle routes, green ways and pedestrian links to encourage people not to always travel by car. The Local Transport Plan looks at this in more detail.

Q. How will all this development maintain the sense of community in the borough?

A. All new development should positively contribute to the places in which they are located. Design is not just about how a development looks, but it is also about how well it works and meets the needs of users. Well-designed buildings, places and spaces help to create attractive environments that set the scene for a successful place and happy community.

Q. Can the water and waste water system cope?

A. The Council will engage with utility providers in the preparation of the local plan so that impacts on infrastructure are understood.

With regards to water and waste water, the Council is undertaking a Water Cycle Study which will specifically look at capacity issues. Where capacity issues are identified, the Council will work with the relevant provider to understand whether the system can be improved through investment and the implications that this has for potential development.

Q. Will development harm the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area?

A. No. Developments which are likely to have a significant impact on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA are currently required to include mitigation to ensure the heaths protection. This requirement will continue for future developments. Where impacts cannot be mitigated, it will not be possible to provide more homes. Where impacts can be mitigated these sites will continue to be considered along with others across the borough.

Q. Will the amount of development have a detrimental impact on our local wildlife?

A. Planning has an important and positive role to play in protecting and enhancing the Borough's biodiversity, including the conservation of protected species. The council is committed to maintaining, protecting and enhancing the nature conservation areas in the borough.

Q. What is CIL and what does it cover?

A. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge that local authorities can set on new development in order to raise funds to help fund the infrastructure, facilities and services - such as schools or transport improvements - which are needed to support new homes and businesses in the areas. It does not cover new doctors surgeries as these are controlled by the NHS and the doctors themselves.

Q. Can we claim CIL up front to pay for infrastructure or is there always a lag?

A. The levy's charges become due from the date of commencement of a chargeable development. When planning permission is granted, the Council will issue a liability notice setting out the amount of the levy and the payment procedure. Once a Commencement Notice has been received, the Council will issue a Demand Notice. This will detail who is liable for payment, confirm the amount payable as well as any reliefs or surcharges and it will also specify the dates and instalment amounts. The chargeable amount must be paid in full within 60 days of the notified or deemed commencement date of the chargeable development.