General Information Document on Town and Country Planning, including Neighbourhood Planning

This statement has been prepared to meet Regulation 4(3)(b) of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendum) Regulations 2012 (as amended)
1. **The Planning System**

The planning system manages the use and development of land and buildings with the aim of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. Without the system, development would not be managed and could take place anywhere, with considerable impact on people and the environment. It is through the planning system therefore that we as a society strike a balance between allowing development to support economic, social and environmental objectives.

The planning system has two main parts which are usually the responsibility of the local planning authority (the borough/district council, county council, or unitary council):

- **Plan making** – setting out proposals for development and policies to guide to development over time.
- **Managing development** – when planning decisions are made through the assessment of planning applications.

Not all forms of development require planning permission from the local planning authority, being permitted directly by national legislation. These are known as permitted development.

Where development requires planning permission from the local planning authority, Wokingham Borough Council is responsible for deciding whether the development should go ahead.

The starting point for decisions on planning applications is the development plan (currently comprising the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans), and any relevant made neighbourhood plan.

2. **National Planning Policy**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government’s planning policies and how these are expected to be applied in plan making and in making decisions on planning applications. It includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) supports the NPPF and provides further guidance on planning issues such as neighbourhood planning.

3. **Local Plans**

Local Plans are prepared by local planning authorities and set out the strategic policies for managing development for that area. Local plans form part of the development plan, the starting point for deciding planning applications.

Policies include those to deliver key development including homes and jobs required, the provision of retail and community facilities and infrastructure. Policies relating to protecting the environment and responding to climate change, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment are also included.

Local plans must be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. They must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national
policy in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The adopted local plans for Wokingham Borough are the Core Strategy (adopted January 2010), the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (adopted February 2014), the Replacement Minerals Local Plan covering Berkshire (adopted 1995 and updated in 1997 and 2001), the Waste Local Plan for Berkshire was (adopted December 1998). Additional information about the Local Plan for Wokingham is available on the following website:


The council is preparing a new local plans which will when adopted replace those listed above. Additional information is available via the following links:

www.wokingham.gov.uk/localplanupdate

https://www.hants.gov.uk/berksconsult

4. Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning was introduced under the Localism Act 2011. It provides an opportunity for local communities to play a direct role in shaping how the land in the areas in which they live and work is used and developed.

In parished areas, neighbourhood plans are produced by the parish or town council which are referred to as the ‘Qualifying Body’. The Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Arborfield & Newland Parish Council and Barkham Parish Council. There is a statutory process that must be followed to make a plan.

Basic conditions

Neighbourhood plans must meet certain “basic conditions” as set out in the legislation as set out below:

- Be appropriate to make the plan, having regard to national policies and advice;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan; and
- Not breach, and be otherwise compatible with, European Union and European Convention on Human Rights obligations.

How are they made?

A neighbourhood plan must be prepared through a process of consultation before being tested through an independent examination.

The key stages in producing a neighbourhood plan are:

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

It is the independent examiner’s role to check whether any modifications should be made to the plan and whether it should progress to the next stage in the process which is a referendum.

An independent examiner (Liz Beth) considered the neighbourhood plan in September and October 2019 and provided her report to the council in October 2019. Her report recommended that, subject to her modifications proposed, the neighbourhood plan should proceed to referendum. The council accepted and agreed all the modifications proposed and were subsequently satisfied that the neighbourhood plan met the basic conditions and all other legislative requirements. The council confirmed on 28 November 2019 that the neighbourhood plan could proceed to referendum.

What Does the Referendum Result Mean?

The Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan referendum will be held on Thursday 6 February 2020 from 7am to 10pm.

If more than half of those voting do so in favour of the neighbourhood plan, the local planning authority (Wokingham Borough Council) must make it part of the statutory development plan for the area to be used in determining decisions on planning applications.

Additional information in relation to neighbourhood planning is available on the following website: http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/