WHY DO WE NEED MORE HOMES?

Wokingham Borough is an ever-popular place to live, with a strong economy and high quality of life. This popularity causes a huge challenge to provide the homes we need—including those that will make sure young people such as your children and grandchildren can find a home in the local area.

The Government is pushing for more housebuilding nationally and has committed to building 300,000 new homes a year across the country, with the need highest in the South East. This means we have to allocate more land for housing. Without an updated local plan we would be at risk of developers winning planning appeals against us across the borough, resulting in unplanned development.

Our share is calculated by a Government methodology that is designed to ensure the Government target of 300,000 per year is met, which is calculated every year using the latest data.

The Government currently calculates our need as 804 new homes per year in Wokingham Borough up to 2036. It is about 200 more new homes per year than we’ve been required to build in the past.

We have looked at the formula and believe it fails to reflect the local housing market in the borough. We have therefore put forward a case to have fewer homes than government policy would require. This reduces the requirement to 769 new homes per year.

WHAT ABOUT INFRASTRUCTURE?

We have nearly £1 billion in infrastructure investment, largely funded by developers as a result of concentrating development in four major development areas (Arborfield Garrison, Shinfield Parish, North and South Wokingham).

The approach to growth in the draft local plan concentrates development in a new garden town at Grazeley, which could accommodate a rail station and would include two new secondary and seven new primary schools, leisure and sport facilities, community centres, employment land, parks and open green spaces and a network of non-car transport links.
Grazeley Garden Town would be a self-contained carbon neutral town based on garden city principles with about **15,000 new homes** in Wokingham Borough and West Berkshire District.

It would have **cutting edge sustainable transport**, with a dedicated public transport ring road around the town with direct access to the new train station at Green Park and the existing station at Mortimer. In the long term, there is an opportunity for a new train station at Grazeley.

There would be **walking, cycling, and scooting greenways** to get residents from their homes to schools, medical facilities, local shopping centres with cafés and restaurants, community centres, libraries, cultural venues and sports facilities.

A variety of **well-designed energy efficient homes** of all types and sizes would be available for people of all incomes, with around 35% of the homes being affordable, such as social rent, shared ownership and key worker housing.

Grazeley Garden Town would have **a range of job and business opportunities** and a **vibrant town centre** with retail and service opportunities, giving residents a real chance to live, work and shop locally.

Grazeley Garden Town would be green, with **public green spaces** through the new town so that residents are never far from a park, wildflower meadow or other green space.

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**THE VISION**

*A cross-boundary project promoted by three councils and supported by the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership, for a new garden town.*

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**FORWARD FUNDING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE**

We are working hard to secure forward funding for much of the infrastructure. Wokingham Borough Council, West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council jointly submitted a business case for £252million to forward fund much of the infrastructure for Grazeley Garden Town, including roads, a dedicated public transport system, upgraded access to rail stations, a new bridge over the M4 and improvements to J11, new railway crossings, park and ride improvements, bus services, footways and cycleways, a secondary school and more.
OTHER SITES

In addition to Grazeley Garden Town and the already planned building at Arborfield, Shinfield and around Wokingham, the draft plan allocates a number of other smaller sites for housing.

National policy requires us to provide a number of small sites, less than the equivalent of 1.5 football pitches (1 hectare), as these can support small and medium independent builders, who may be based locally and build more bespoke houses.

WHAT DEVELOPMENT?

- Housing
- Employment land
- Grazeley
- Gypsy and Traveller pitches

Grey on map: towns and villages

These maps show the land that was proposed for potential development (left) and the land that is actually being recommended for new homes and other development in the new local plan (right).

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge that allows us to charge developers who are building in our area. This pays to support the infrastructure needed for the new homes, which can benefit new and existing residents alike. The figures are based on assumptions of the average CIL payments to date on our existing major developments. The CIL rate will be updated following adoption of the local plan update.
CLIMATE EMERGENCY

There is no bigger challenge to us than the environmental crisis we are now facing. The council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019 and has committed to play as full a role as possible in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030. To put this in a national context the UK has committed to being carbon neutral by 2050.

The council has a Climate Emergency Action Plan, which includes both ambitious projects and small changes to take us on our journey to net zero carbon. The council will consider the climate impact of all decisions it makes going forwards.

The draft Local Plan is one strand of our climate emergency action plan. Policies in the draft Local Plan seek to reduce carbon emissions by:

- Locating new homes in places that reduce car dependency
- Requiring all new major development to be carbon neutral and all buildings to be energy efficient
- Supporting renewable energy generation where impacts are acceptable
- Supporting electric vehicle charging and futureproofing for new technologies
- Establishing a carbon offset fund to support schemes to compensate for carbon emissions, such as tree planting

CLIMATE CHANGE AND FLOODING

The draft Local Plan requires developments to be resilient to the inevitable effects of climate change, by orientating buildings to maximise natural heating; planting trees to provide shading and reduce runoff of water; and including suitable drainage measures to combat the effects of flooding.

BIODIVERSITY

The draft Local Plan seeks to maintain, conserve and enhance biodiversity and nature conservation in the borough by:

- Achieving a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity across all development proposals by creating and enhancing suitable habitats
- Incorporating new or enhancing existing biodiversity features through smart design
- Providing or retaining buffer zones between new developments and existing sites and habitats
- Requiring ecological surveys to consider any potential impacts on biodiversity assets

VALUED LANDSCAPES

The plan aims to maintain, enhance and create new networks of wildlife habitats and green infrastructure.

SITES OF URBAN LANDSCAPE VALUE

These are open areas within our towns which contribute to local character, ecology and the environment, as well as provide opportunities for recreation and well-being.

The plan proposes six Sites of Urban Landscape Value, including four existing and two new sites at Cantley Park and Woosehill Meadows.

VALUED LANDSCAPES

The draft Local Plan proposes the designation of 11 Valued Landscapes across the borough (shown right). Each has particular importance due to a combination of special features, including wildlife and ancient woodland; heritage assets, such as listed buildings and conservation areas and perceptual aspects, such as a feeling of tranquillity.
TRANSPORT

Our roads are congested, as is the whole of the South East and the wider UK. We live in a part of the country where many want to live, and that comes with a cost. We have to plan for new homes and these new homes bring new residents who will have cars. The growing population is therefore putting ever increasing pressure on our roads and our public transport system. This presents us with a greater environmental challenge.

The draft local plan proposes new development which considers the car but also maximises the opportunities for people to walk, cycle, scoot and use public transport.

It is vital that new development promotes healthier lifestyles by integrating housing and transport, providing sustainable choices for how to get around. This should reduce the dominance of private cars.

HEALTHY STREETS

Through the local plan the council is considering endorsing the ‘healthy streets’ approach, developed by Transport for London and successfully implemented across the city.

The healthy streets approach aims to improve air quality, reduce congestion and make our communities greener, healthier and more attractive places to live, work, plan and do business. It puts people and their health at the centre of our decision-making, helping everyone to use cars less and to walk, cycle and use public transport more.

Developers will be required to consider the ten criteria in the image (left), to ensure the design leads to more attractive and healthier places for people to walk and cycle.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

We know that people will continue to rely on their cars to get around. We are therefore encouraging the use of electric and low emission vehicles by requiring charging points to be designed into new development schemes from the outset.

Electric vehicles themselves won’t necessarily mean lower numbers of cars on the roads.

MINIMISING THE IMPACT OF TRAFFIC

All new development will continue to be carefully assessed for any impact it would have on the transport network.

This includes our local roads, motorways and in some cases the rail network.

Development must mitigate against any impact—this could be improving an existing junction, building a new road, funding public transport, or paying to support borough wide improvement initiatives.
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Access to homes people can afford is a challenge for people living and working in the borough, particularly our young people as they are more likely to be on lower incomes and less able to secure a mortgage or pay high private rents.

The council require all new developments of over five homes to include a proportion of new affordable homes. In 2018 to 2019, 365 affordable homes were built in the borough. This included 198 for rent.

What is affordable housing?

Affordable housing is subsidised housing, which enables the purchase price or rent to be set below market costs.

- Affordable housing for rent: This can be either social rent or affordable rent for those who are not able to rent or buy a home privately
- Shared ownership: Where a new home is provided on a part rent/part buy basis. This allows buyers to ‘staircase’ to full ownership
- Key worker housing: Discounted housing for those in specific jobs that provide essential services, such as nurses and teachers.

How do we build it?

The draft local plan continues our existing successful approach to affordable housing—seeking at least 35% but up to 50% where possible of the new houses on development sites as affordable housing from all developments of 5 new homes or more.

This approach exceeds the national level recommended by government of seeking affordable housing from developments of 10 new homes or more.

Larger development sites will normally provide a mixture of the different types of affordable housing explained above. Grazeley Garden Town has the potential to provide over 5,000 affordable homes.

MIX OF HOUSING

It is important that all homes, regardless of whether they are affordable or market value homes, meet the needs of the people who will live in them.

The draft plan seeks to ensure that homes provided take into account a changing population in the borough, offering choice in terms of size and type. This means ensuring a wider mix of smaller flats, small and medium sized houses for couples and families, rather than accepting fewer, large and expensive houses only from developers.
RIGHT HOMES, RIGHT PLACES

DRAFT LOCAL PLAN
PUBLIC CONSULTATION

TIMELINE

- Issues & Options Consultation
- ‘Homes for the Future’ Consultation
- ‘Right Homes, Right Places’ Draft Plan Consultation
- Proposed Submission Consultation
- Submit to Secretary of State
- Examination

Adoption

Winter 2021

WE ARE HERE

- Aug 2016 — Sep 2016
- Nov 2018 — Feb 2019
- Feb 2020 — Mar 2020
- Sep 2020 — Oct 2020
- Winter 2020
- Spring 2021

The first stage of consultation on the plan, opening the discussion about what the local plan should contain. We asked a number of questions about different planning issues that should be dealt with and what you saw as the future for development in the Borough.

The second consultation provided a discussion document to help us move towards the strategy options for development. We asked for views on the suggested development sites, densities and employment areas. This consultation informed the draft plan.

The Draft Plan presents a proposal of where development should go and how it should be managed. This includes draft policies and proposed site allocations.

The Proposed Submission Document is the plan which the Council proposes to submit to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, for an independent examination. Comments on the plan, policies map, supporting studies and evidence base will be invited.

The examination is run by an independent planning inspector, who will consider all comments and evidence, then identify areas which they would like to investigate further. They will set specific questions and a programme to do this, and hold hearing sessions. Based on all of this they will then form a view on whether or not the plan is legally compliant and is sound.

TOPICS INCLUDED IN THE LOCAL PLAN

- Allocations for development
- A mix of types and sizes of housing
- Open space and local parks
- Retail and town centres
- Community facilities
- Affordable housing
- Highways, public transport and cycleways
- Green belt and countryside
- Historic environment and heritage assets
- Natural environment and environmental protection
- Employment and economy
- Local centres and parades
HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

ANSWER OUR SURVEY NOW!

Fill in our online survey at www.wokingham.gov.uk/consultations

You can also write or email us your thoughts LPU@wokingham.gov.uk.

Find the consultation document and all other supporting information and background information on our website

Whether you agree with the approach, or you have changes to suggest, tell us your thoughts before

5pm FRIDAY 20 MARCH 2020

WHAT’S NEXT?

♦ All comments received through this consultation will be reviewed.
♦ All opportunities and issues raised will be summarised and published on the council’s website after the consultation has finished.
♦ All your comments, alongside any new evidence, will help to inform any amendments or changes to the local plan.
♦ A ‘Proposed Submission’ version of the local plan will be prepared. This will be the version we believe is ready to submit to the Secretary of State for independent examination.
♦ We will invite further comments on the Proposed Submission local plan to ask whether you believe the plan meets the tests of ‘soundness’ set out in national policy.