

More major developments will be coming to Wokingham Borough: this is an honest guide about the need for more homes and the real choices we face about where and how to provide them.

The Council must have a Local Plan that sets out where developments can and cannot take place. We are currently producing a Local Plan that will guide development in the borough in the years up to 2036.

This guide sets out the issues and how you can get involved.

Homes for the future

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.

This guide is about how we could provide these homes for the future in the right way - and with your involvement.

New housing is a controversial and complex subject; we all want homes for our families and ourselves but, let us be honest, we do not always want houses built near us.

The Council understands that concern. The prospect of more housing causes worries about traffic congestion, school places, loss of green space, difficulty getting a GP or hospital appointment and other vital issues. Some of us are suffering with those issues now, as a result of historic under-investment in infrastructure that we have only just started to put right in the last ten or so years.

Foreword from Cllr Stuart Munro and Cllr Wayne Smith

We understand that this is a difficult time for a lot of people in Wokingham Borough. We are facing traffic congestion and an intensity of development that can feel overwhelming.

At the same time, we have high house prices and services that are struggling to cope with Government funding cuts - and we are being forced to plan for another round of new housing at the same time.

We understand the problems; we share your frustrations; and we are working on your behalf.

What are we doing:

- Lobbying for a fair deal on housing and funding from Central Government
- Building new roads, schools, sports centres and the other things needed to cope with more people - and making sure the developers pay for them
- Planning to ensure the homes we will need in the future are built in the right locations and actually provide places local people can afford to live

But we cannot do this alone. In the past, we have been accused of not listening to you and we want to put this right. So, we are sending every household in the borough this Homes for the Future document, which sets out the position we are in as clearly and honestly as possible.



We will continue to lobby for funding to build vital infrastructure early in development. We will also be applying to the government for funding for much needed improvements to our road network.

More homes will come to the borough because there is a need, there is nothing we can do about that. But that does not mean you have no influence over how and where they are built. This document includes details of how to get involved: go to one of our eight consultation events (details on page 12), take the online survey (details on page 4) and register online for our electronic newsletter (details on page 12).

Please read this document **Homes for the Future**, it is vitally important for the future of our borough.

Cllr Stuart Munro

Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning

Cllr Wayne Smith

Deputy Executive Member for Strategic Planning

Wokingham Borough Council's position

- More homes need to be built in Wokingham Borough because too many people (especially the young people who we need for our future success) are struggling to find a home for themselves. Many of us moved here for work, and there will continue to be a need for more homes to support the jobs that make our local economy strong
- These homes must be carefully planned by democratically accountable local representatives working with our residents to produce a Local Plan
- With the right plan we can provide the right homes in the right places that people need while improving the high quality of life that our residents rightly expect

This guide sets out:

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Get involved ...now

The most important call in this guide is to **Get Involved**. The system for planning where homes and other development will take place in the future is complicated but the key messages are simple and we are determined to help as many people join the conversation as possible.

Why get involved:

- **More homes** will be built in the borough whether we like it or not - there is no alternative because of the need
- If we **plan properly through a Local Plan**, these homes will bring **massive infrastructure investment** to make sure our children have school places, our roads are not gridlocked, we continue to have access to health services and community facilities and there are jobs near where we live. The alternative is to not plan properly and have developers win the right to build houses wherever they want on appeal, with little infrastructure and overcrowding in existing areas
- To plan properly, **we must have your views**. No decisions have been taken on where or how new homes should be built but those decisions will be taken in the next year or so - **so get involved now while you still have the chance**

Have your say

... In the Homes for the Future consultation

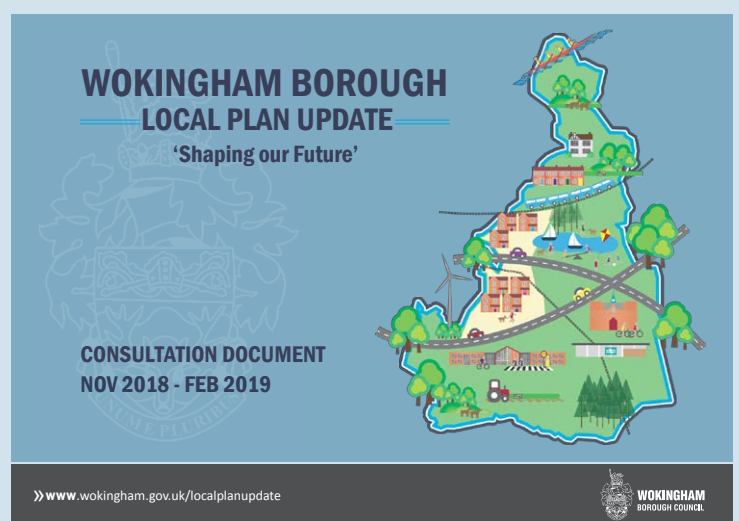
The consultation runs from 12 November 2018 to 15 February 2019. All documents are on the Council's website. Paper copies are available at the Council's offices at Shute End RG40 1BN.

----- www.wokingham.gov.uk, search '**Local Plan Update**' -----

The Local Plan Update will direct where and how growth will take place in the borough in the years up to 2036.

The survey includes questions about where you think development should go - concentrated in new communities or spread throughout the borough - and whether there are locations suitable for higher densities.

There are also questions about land for new employment centres. You will be able to see all the land being put forward for development as part of this process* and provide comments on its suitability.



* ONLY A SMALL PORTION OF LAND PUT FORWARD WILL BE ALLOCATED FOR DEVELOPMENT

Why more homes

... will be built in Wokingham Borough?

Our population is growing: predictions vary but all point to more people living here regardless of factors such as the impact of Brexit.

Ultimately, we have no choice because the Government is determined to increase house building, particularly in economically successful and popular areas such as ours. And, of course, we still need to do what's required of us by Government.

But, even without this Government diktat, a controlled number of carefully planned new homes will bring the great benefits below:



Homes for our CHILDREN

New homes will make it far more likely that your children and other young people, who are struggling to find places to live locally, will get a home here.



Booming ECONOMY

The businesses we rely on for our economy need a good range of homes for their employees if they are to expand and take advantage of opportunities such as Crossrail.



Massive infrastructure INVESTMENT

If planned properly, the new homes will bring massive investment in schools, parks, roads and community, sporting and health facilities.



Homes we can AFFORD

35% of new homes built across the borough are affordable homes. These range from one and two bed flats to two, three and four bed houses at low rents and for shared ownership (part rent/part buy).

How many new homes do we need?

The Government's method for working out how many homes an area should take shows our target to be about 750 to 850 homes per year. **We think that is too high.**

We will argue for a lower number that will still ensure local people - in particular those young people struggling to find a home - can find and afford somewhere to live in the borough and that our economy can continue to flourish without damaging our quality of life.

We believe it is important to provide homes people can actually afford so that we have fewer people living in crowded bedsits or stuck living with their parents well into adulthood. One of the things we have done to achieve this is set up our own housing companies that can build the range of housing people want.

Planned vs Unplanned Development

Planning for development is difficult because, in the end, it means telling some people that housing is going to be built in their town or village or on nearby farmland. It would be far easier for us to bury our heads in the sand and shout **NO** - but not only would that be a pointless position to take, it would lead to significant problems in the future.

Unplanned development: No Local Plan



There would be no local control or real influence over where or how the housing is built. The housing will come anyway, but it will either come through a plan imposed by Government or a free-for-all of planning applications from developers that we won't be able to successfully refuse or restrain overall numbers.



You would have no say at all over where the new housing is built. People living near you would be more likely to sell off their back gardens for cramped developments and other poor housing locations - with no thought to impact on local roads or schools.

Developers will be free to submit applications for anywhere in the borough with legal protections that would result in the borough council being forced to grant planning permission unless the negative impacts "significantly and demonstrably" outweigh their benefits, with the background of a Government with a strong house building agenda.



We would likely end up with more housing being built overall if we don't have a plan to limit the numbers. We also won't have any policies to protect the countryside and our existing towns and villages, so we could end up with high density apartments on the edge of towns and villages and other inappropriate development.

We would not know where housing development is going to take place and so will not be able to plan for its impact.



Without planned infrastructure alongside development, there will be huge pressure on places in existing schools, roads and other community facilities

It would be impossible to fund the infrastructure and facilities needed to cope with the new homes.



By the time we know where these pressures are, it would be too late to plan for them and we will not have got money from developers to pay for them.

THE END RESULT: CHAOS

The impact is impossible to fully predict - because **it will be chaotic** - but just some of the potential effects are:

- Your children may not get a place in a local school - or perhaps any school in the borough
- You'll have even more difficulty getting a GP appointment or other health service
- Our roads will be even more congested - quite possibly reaching gridlock in places
- Your local football team, other sports, youth and community clubs will have difficulty finding places to play or meet

So instead we are planning for housing and other development by producing a **'Local Plan'** to set where homes and the accompanying infrastructure will be built in the future. This table explains why we are planning in this way, and what the advantages are for you.

Planned development: Local Plan in place



Democratically accountable councillors make decisions on where and how homes are built following consultation with local people. This will be agreed in a document called a Local Plan.



You can influence where and how the new homes are built to meet our needs.

We do have to follow national policy and so do not have complete control.



We will not pretend this is a completely free choice - there will be differences of opinion, tough decisions and compromise. But the more people get involved, the better chance we have to reflect local views.

We will have an up-to-date Local Plan that meets our housing needs.



We will be able to successfully defend against speculative developers who want to build in unsuitable locations.

Once it is planned, we will know where housing is going to be built and so can plan where new infrastructure and facilities are needed.



New schools; roads and other transport improvements; parks and play areas; and sport and community facilities can be provided where they are needed so that the impact on your quality of life is limited.

Housing developers can be made to pay for the necessary infrastructure and facilities.



Local taxpayers do not have to pay for the new infrastructure, yet will still have access to it.

With a plan in place, we have far more chance of making successful bids for Government funding for infrastructure.



We can build infrastructure before many houses have been built so it is ready for new residents.

Developers can be made to fund infrastructure that supports growth of the area where they are building (we cannot get money from them to fix existing problems).



Some issues, in particular congestion, are getting worse year-on-year whether there is development or not. The money we get from developers cannot change this and we must seek other solutions.

THE END RESULT: SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

The borough will be busier with more people who will drive more cars, need more school places, more GP appointments and more community and sport facilities.

But these extra needs will be met through new infrastructure so you will continue to get school places locally and access to other services. Our roads will continue to be busy but, with the massive investment that properly planned new homes bring, we will be able to keep the network going.



Why plan for more houses ...now?

We must produce a Local Plan, it is a legal requirement. The bottom line is that Central Government considers our **Local Plan** to be in need of updating and requires that we have a new one.

Wokingham is a great place to live

We realise that we are trying to talk to you about more housing in the future while the intensity of current building and road works make this a difficult time for many.

This is a prosperous and popular area that people want to live in - think how many people you know have moved to this area for good jobs or for good schools - and so there has always been development.



The Good & The Bad

What we are seeing now, with new schools, major roads, community and sports centres opening for the first time in decades, is the borough playing catch-up on historic under-investment in these things. This catch-up has only been possible because we now have a plan in place.

But the current plan will soon be regarded by the Government as in need of updating and we must update it so we do not fall back into the trap of allowing unplanned development with no infrastructure investment.

There is a lot of building taking place across the borough and, although most developers and contractors are responsible, we know some do not keep to the rules.

Some common problems we've experienced are:



Roadworks due to utilities installation and upgrades



Out-of-hours working



Construction traffic arriving on site too early



Construction traffic using the wrong roads

TOO MUCH NOISE, DUST AND DIRT ON NEIGHBOURING ROADS

We understand the frustration these issues cause and would urge any residents suffering from them to get in touch with the Council directly or with your local ward councillor.

If necessary, we will take enforcement action against developers that continually break the rules, but this is a slow process and we often find working with developers to resolve issues gets a better result for residents.



**Contact details: (0118) 974 6000
email constructionproblems@wokingham.gov.uk**

What is happening now?

infrastructure alongside housing

INFRASTRUCTURE

SCHOOLS

£98m

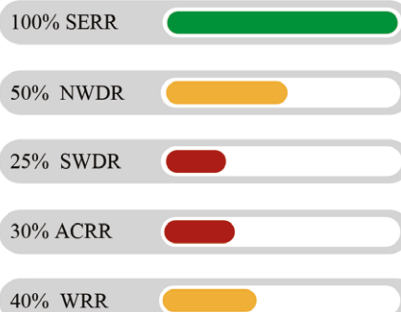


7 Primary & 1 Secondary

We have opened a new primary at **Montague Park** and a new secondary at **Arborfield**. We just completed a new primary school in **Shinfield**, although it isn't open yet, and are just beginning one each in **North Wokingham** and **Arborfield**. And, we have 3 more primary schools to come.

MAJOR ROADS

£250m



5 Major New Roads

Shinfield Eastern Relief Road (SERR) opened earlier this year. **North and South Wokingham Distributor Roads (NWDR & SWDR)** and **Winnersh Relief Road (WRR)** are being built in phases and are currently under construction. **Arborfield Cross Relief Road (ACRR)** is in for planning now. Other road improvements include **Barkham Bridge, Station Link Road, Coppid Beech Roundabout**, improvements to the **cycle network, footpaths, bridleways and public transportation**.

PARKS & PLAY AREAS

£170m*



Parks

110 hectares of new **public open space, play areas and parks** have already been opened to the public (that's equivalent to about 150 football pitches) with another 130 hectares still to come (180 football pitches).

About **40 new children's play parks** will also be built across the major developments as well as other open space. There will be about 12.5 hectares of **community allotments**, with at least 400 plots.

A **Greenways** network of 20 miles of new/upgraded routes will connect the new developments to each other and other locations across the borough.

* This amount appears high as land values are included

This level of investment in schools, roads and community facilities is possible because we have infrastructure improvements -- one of the highest rates in the UK.

One of the most important fears people have over new housing is that our infrastructure and services will not be able to cope. We completely understand that concern and it is why the houses currently being built have so many new facilities.

DELIVERY

TOTAL £994m



been successful in getting developers to pay for it. We get about £45,000 per new home for

Have your say

How to get involved:

Visit our web pages at www.wokingham.gov.uk and search 'Local Plan Update' for more information.

There, you can:

- Find a link to the online survey, which is the most important thing you can do to have your say about where the new homes will go. The survey will be open until 4pm on 15 February 2019
- Sign up for the Local Plan Update newsletter
- Find an FAQ about the Local Plan Update
- Find all other background and supporting documents

PLEASE DON'T IGNORE THIS GUIDE: it is about homes for young people and for the coming generations, about the roads you drive on now and in the future, about where your children and grandchildren will go to school, play, get health care and work. We have to plan for more housing—it is not an option not to—so do it with us and help us make it as good as we can.

Consultation events across the Borough

This is your opportunity to come and look at the sites that developers and landowners have put forward for development across the borough. Council officers and local councillors will be available to answer questions and discuss the process of preparing the local plan update including what happens next and how to make your voice heard.



WINNERSH

Tuesday 4 December 2018
7pm to 9pm

Winnersh Community Centre
New Road, Winnersh
RG41 5DU



WOKINGHAM WITHOUT

Monday 7 January 2019
7pm to 9pm

The Howard Palmer Room,
St Sebastian's Memorial Hall,
Nine Mile Ride RG40 3BA



TWYFORD

Thursday 10 January 2019
7pm to 9pm

Loddon Hall
Loddon Hall Road, Twyford,
Reading RG10 9JA



WOKINGHAM

Wednesday 16 January 2019
7pm to 9pm

Wokingham Town Hall
Market Place, Wokingham
RG40 1AS



SHINFIELD

Tuesday 22 January 2019
7pm to 9pm

Ryeish Green Sports Centre,
Hyde End Road RG7 1EP



ARBORFIELD

Wednesday 30 January 2019
7pm to 9pm

Henry Street Garden Centre
Swallowfield Rd, Arborfield
RG2 9JY



EARLEY

Wednesday 6 February 2019
7pm to 9pm

Trinity Church, Chalfont Close,
Earley RG6 5HZ



WOODLEY

Tuesday 12 February 2019
7pm to 9pm

Oakwood Centre
Headley Road, Woodley,
RG5 4JZ