

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036



Made Version  
April 2020

A plan for the community by the community

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## Contents

	<i>GLOSSARY</i> .....	4
	<i>FOREWORD</i> .....	5
<b>1.</b>	<b>Introducing Arborfield and Barkham</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Vision and objectives for the plan</b> .....	<b>11</b>
	<i>Policy Matrix</i> .....	13
<b>3.</b>	<b>Sustainable Development</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Identity and Rural Setting</b> .....	<b>17</b>
	<i>POLICY IRS1: PRESERVATION OF SEPARATION OF SETTLEMENTS</i> .....	19
	<i>POLICY IRS2: RECOGNISE, RESPECT AND PRESERVE IDENTITY AND RURAL SETTING OF SETTLEMENTS</i> .....	21
	<i>POLICY IRS3: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN SPACES</i> .....	23
	<i>POLICY IRS4: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF THE AREA</i> .....	27
<b>5.</b>	<b>Thriving Communities</b> .....	<b>30</b>
	<i>POLICY TC1: RETENTION OF EXISTING VALUED COMMUNITY FACILITIES</i> .....	32
	<i>POLICY TC2: PROPERLY PLANNED AND DESIGNED NEW FACILITIES</i> .....	33
	<i>POLICY TC3: CONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND AGRICULTURE</i> .....	34
<b>6.</b>	<b>Appropriate Development</b> .....	<b>35</b>
	<i>POLICY AD1: NEW DEVELOPMENT WITHIN DEVELOPMENT LIMITS</i> .....	36
	<i>POLICY AD2: PRIORITISE HOUSING FOR LOCAL NEEDS</i> .....	37
	<i>POLICY AD3: HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT WITH GENEROUS OPEN SPACE, PROPERLY LANDSCAPED</i> .....	41
	<i>POLICY AD4: ADDRESS LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT</i> .....	43
<b>7.</b>	<b>Getting Around</b> .....	<b>45</b>
	<i>POLICY GA1: MINIMISE ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC ON UNSUITABLE ROADS</i> .....	47
	<i>POLICY GA2: IMPLEMENT LOCAL NETWORK OF GREEN ROUTES FOR NON-MOTORISED USERS</i> .....	50
	<i>POLICY GA3: PUBLIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS WITH LONG TERM VIABILITY</i> .....	52
<b>8.</b>	<b>Project List</b> .....	<b>53</b>
	<i>Appendix 1 Maps</i> .....	55
	<i>Appendix 2 Acknowledgements</i> .....	56
	<i>Appendix 3 References</i> .....	57

## Annexes

The following annexes are part of the Neighbourhood Plan but are published separately at:

<https://www.arbarplan.com/html/documents.html>

- I. Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement
- II. Barkham Village Design Statement
- III. Residents' Survey (2016) Summary of Results
- IV. Sustainability
- V. Landscape and Important Views
- VI. Natural Environment
- VII. Heritage
- VIII. Community Facilities
- IX. Recreation & Open Spaces
- X. Briefing Note Neighbourhood Area Housing Need April 2017
- XI. Housing Needs Analysis
- XII. Flood Risk Management Statement
- XIII. Arborfield and Barkham Greenways Report
- XIV. Arborfield and Barkham Greenway Maps

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## Maps

The following maps form part of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan. They can be found on the Neighbourhood Plan website: <https://www.arbarplan.com/html/documents.html>

- A. Parish Boundaries
- B. Where People Live
- C. Landscape
- D. Important Views and Vistas
- E. Thames Basin Heaths- Special Protection Areas
- F. Natural Environment - Designated Areas
- G. Natural Environment - Tree Preservation Orders
- H. Natural Environment – Local Geological Areas
- I. Historic Heritage - Designated Sites
- J. Historic Heritage - Listed Buildings
- K. Locally Valued Natural or Heritage Assets
- L. Public Open Spaces
- M. Hydrology
- N. Public Rights of Way

## Statutory Documents

The following items can be found at <https://www.arbarplan.com/html/documents.html>

- 1. Consultation Statement
- 2. Consultation Statement Appendices
- 3. Basic Conditions Statement
- 4. Determination Statement on the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## GLOSSARY

ABNP	Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan
ACRR	Arborfield Cross Relief Road
ANVDS	Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement
BVDS	Barkham Village Design Statement
BVRA	Barkham Village Residents Association
Core Strategy	WBC Local Plan adopted in 2010
Development Limits	The identified areas within which development proposals would be acceptable, as shown in the WBC Core Strategy adopted 2010 and updated in the MDD adopted 2014
Brownfield	Previously developed land
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment published by WBC 2004, updated 2019
LPU	Local Plan Update
MDD	Managing Development Delivery (Supplements Core Strategy; adopted in 2014)
NMRE	Nine Mile Ride Extension
NMU	Non-motorised users
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework July 2018
NPSG	Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Plan Area	The approved Plan Area comprising the parishes of Arborfield & Newland and Barkham
PROW	Public Right of Way
REME	Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
s106	Section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act
SANG	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace
SDL	Strategic Development Location
SuDS	Sustainable drainage systems
TPO	Tree Protection Order
VDS	Village Design Statement
WBC	Wokingham Borough Council

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## FOREWORD

The Plan Area for the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan was approved by Wokingham Borough Council in July 2014. Initial progress was slow as uncertainties persisted relating to the redevelopment of the garrison site and then the proposed Arborfield Cross Relief Road. The Neighbourhood Plan was relaunched in 2016 with a reinvigorated Steering Group representing both parishes.

It has always been the intention throughout the process of preparing the Plan to encourage participation by residents of the two parishes, hence the strap line 'A plan for the community by the community' which has been widely used in publicity material. Participation has been achieved through a number of channels: focus groups, a dedicated web site, e-mail updates, social media postings, parish newsletters and three public events. Along the way, a number of topic papers were produced by the focus groups and professional assistance was brought in.

In June 2018, a public event was held as part of the Regulation 14 Consultation. In the light of comments received, the plan has been further revised. A main thrust of the plan is to reflect national and local policies, but to interpret how these can address specific local issues.

Other Neighbourhood Plans were reviewed. I would particularly like to thank Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council and their NP team led by John Darker, who provided much useful guidance. Their Neighbourhood Plan (which successfully passed its referendum earlier this year) has in many respects been used as a model. Ascot, Sunningdale and Sunninghill NP and Felpham NP were also sources of inspiration and reference.

The Neighbourhood Plan also builds on the excellent work of the Arborfield and Barkham Village Design Statements (see ABNP Annexes I and II), which were produced by residents in both parishes and were adopted by WBC.

Thanks must go to the large number of residents who have participated in the preparation of this plan including around 50 who contributed to focus groups and the many who responded to surveys and completed response forms at various stages of the process.

I would particularly like to thank the Steering Group who have attended a relentless series of meetings over the last few years and who put together three very polished displays for our public events. Special thanks to Rob Rowe who created an excellent website which has served us well and who has resolved the surprising number of IT issues encountered in putting together the various displays and papers.

Thanks also should go to the assistance from a number of people at Wokingham Borough Council, including James McCabe, Heather Read and Ian Church who have provided guidance and especially a big thank you to Katie Green who, with great patience, put together the various maps. The assistance of Andrew Mathison (NPIERS), whose 'Health Check' provided much food for thought, was crucial in taking the Plan forward. The considerable co-operation by Henry Street Garden Centre was most welcome, allowing the Steering Group to run some pop-up events and displays on their premises. Finally, the support of the Arborfield and Newland Parish Council, Barkham Parish Council and the Barkham Village Residents Association has been much appreciated.

Laurence Heath  
Chairman of Steering Group  
Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan



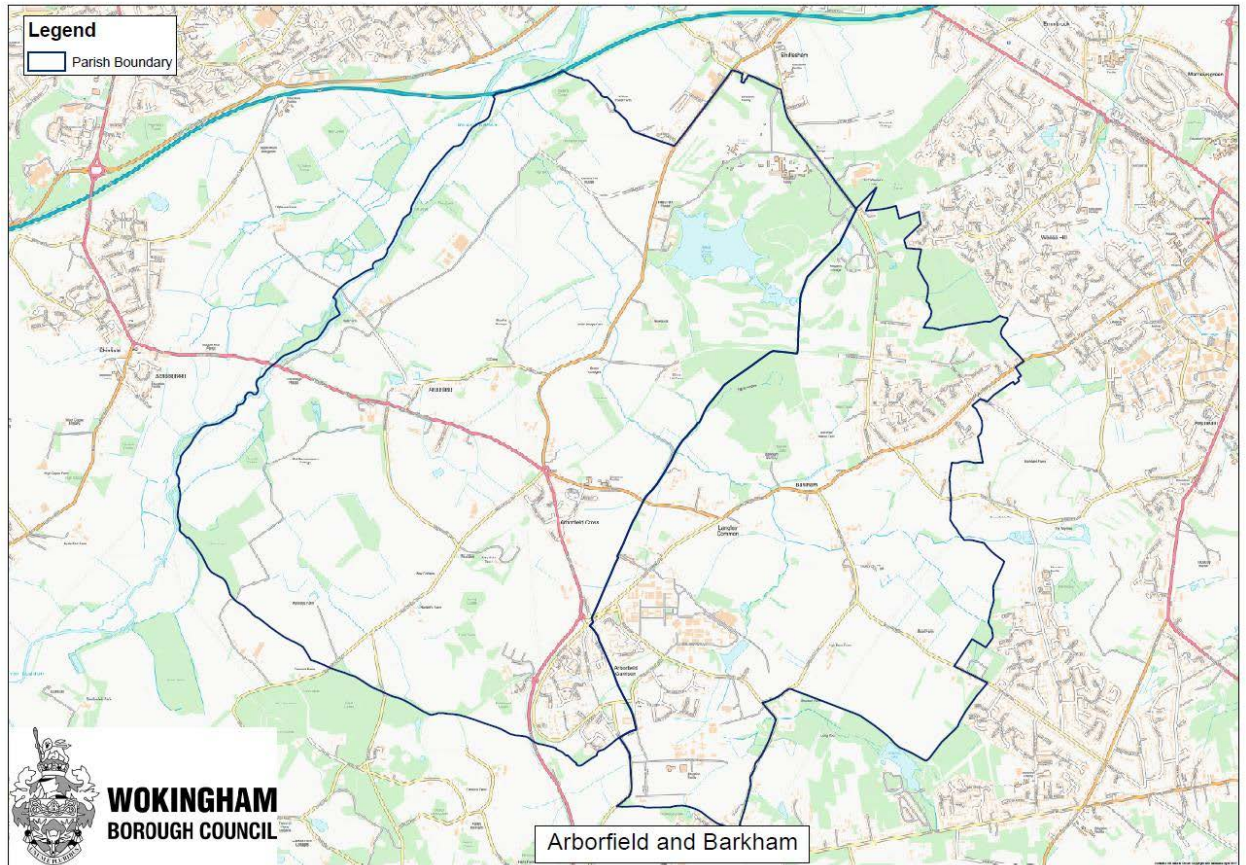
# 1. Introducing Arborfield and Barkham



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## 1. Introducing Arborfield and Barkham

Figure 1 Map of Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan Area



The Plan Area comprises the whole of Arborfield & Newland Parish and Barkham Parish. The boundaries of the two parishes are shown in the above map.

The two parishes are located to the west of Wokingham and south of the M4. The River Loddon forms the north western boundary of Arborfield. The eastern boundary of Barkham consists mainly of woodland, separating the parish from Wokingham Town. The boundary between the two parishes runs north east to south west, running across Bearwood Lakes Golf Course, The Coombes woodland and then through the former Arborfield Garrison (the majority of which was actually in Barkham).

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## Natural and historical background

- 1.1 Both Arborfield and Barkham are semi-rural Parishes in what was once a part of Windsor Great Park. Landscapes comprise historic farmland, wooded areas and ancient hedgerows, interspersed with residential areas of different ages and styles. Employment, traditionally, was farming or domestic service but residents now commute in all directions to work in modern technology and service industries.
- 1.2 The parishes have a rich and well-documented history with evidence of habitation from the Bronze Age. The earliest recording of Barkham, as Beorchamme, is in a Saxon Chronicle of 952 and both Parishes are referenced in the Domesday Book of 1086 – Arborfield as, then, part of Sonning and Barkham as Bercheham. The Bullock family of Arborfield, who for hundreds of years were the Lords of both Parishes, can be traced back to 1166.
- 1.3 The histories of Arborfield and Barkham have much in common. In 1220, the Rector of Arborfield was appointed as the Rector of Barkham and in 1330 the two Manors were united by marriage. In more recent times, they share a common war memorial erected at Arborfield Cross in 1919 and in 1974 the Churches of St Bartholomew, Arborfield and St. James, Barkham were combined. Despite having much in common, each parish nevertheless has its own distinct heritage and identity.

## Development from 1900 onwards

- 1.4 Both parishes were small rural communities until comparatively recently. A major change occurred in 1904 with the War Office acquiring three farms in Barkham to create the Remount Depot, supplying horses for military needs. In 1931 the population of the combined parishes of Arborfield and Newland was 947 while Barkham contained only 211 people. As transport links improved and as commuting to larger settlements such as Wokingham, Reading and London became easier, so the parishes absorbed an increasing dormitory population. Meanwhile Arborfield Garrison became the main base for the REME, including a training college. By 2011 the population of Arborfield had expanded to 2,860 and Barkham to 3,603. Map B Where People Live shows the main population areas.
- 1.5 Barkham began to expand in the 1920s, mainly as ribbon development, particularly along Barkham Road, Bearwood Road, Langley Common Road and School Road. This process continued, usually as individual houses and bungalows. This accounts for the wide variety of housing styles. Elizabeth Park, in the northeast of the parish, is a major housing development built in 1984-1989 so as to meet the Wokingham District housing target. The population of Barkham, consequently, has grown rapidly during the 20th century. The fifty years from 1921 saw population increase from 211 to 1,858 by the 1971 census. By the time of the 2011 census, the population had more than doubled to 3,603.
- 1.6 Arborfield housing began to increase after World War II. Anderson and Emblen Crescents were the first developments in the early fifties, followed by Link Way. Chamberlain and Melrose Gardens were added in the 1960s, and Harts Close in the early 1970s. The building of the Arborfield Garrison by-pass in 1968 caused a change in road layout and names, affecting the old main road through the garrison area. In the mid-1990s Whitehall Brick and Tile works closed, a business that was established in 1933. The land became available for development and Badgers Mount and Gerring Road were built. With the merger of Arborfield and Newland parishes in 1948, plus the growth in housing during the second half of the twentieth century, the population numbers had increased by 2001 to 2228. The early 21st century saw further expansion with the development of Penrose Park and Poppyfields in the first decade.
- 1.7 WBC's Core Strategy adopted in 2010 proposed the development of the Arborfield SDL on the site of the REME barracks which was imminently to close. The SDL is now under construction with completion initially planned for 2026. It is on a completely different scale from previous development in the parishes: the total development is planned for 3,500 dwellings of which some 1,800 will be within Barkham. Most of the balance will be in neighbouring Finchampstead.
- 1.8 This SDL, now known as Arborfield Green, is a brownfield site though roughly a half of the land available will not be built upon but used for SANGs and sports fields and amenity areas. This provides



## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

clearly defined open spaces within the SDL itself. Plans included a secondary school which opened in 2016. Two primary schools and a district centre are proposed and the area will be served by two new roads: the Arborfield Cross Relief Road (ACRR) and the Nine Mile Ride Extension (NMRE). Other than the secondary school and a short section of the NMRE, the remaining infrastructure is still in the planning stage, although work on the ACRR is well under way.

- 1.9 In addition to these open areas within the SDL, there is provision within Core Strategy Policy CP18(5) that the impact of the SDL itself on the local environment must be mitigated by ensuring open areas around the SDL are retained. During the review of the MDD (adopted in 2014), it was recognised that settlement separation areas should be preserved around the SDL, although the Inspector considered that the principle was adequately protected by development limits through Core Strategy Policy CP11.

### Creating the Neighbourhood Plan – the first steps

- 1.10 Arborfield and Barkham Parish Councils first considered developing a plan in the early part of 2012. A working group of parish councillors was set up in February 2012 to investigate matters and report back to the Parish Councils. A proposal to develop the plan was approved by the two Parish Councils in May 2012 and a steering group of parish councillors was formed. WBC encouraged the two parishes to join with a third parish, but this was not considered practical. The Plan Area was eventually designated by WBC at an Executive meeting on 31 July 2014. However initial progress remained slow as there were still many uncertainties while the plans for the SDL were in a state of flux. Eventually the plan was relaunched in the summer of 2016.

### A plan for the community by the community

- 1.11 It has been the intention throughout to encourage participation by residents of the two parishes, hence the strap line 'A plan for the community by the community' has been widely used in publicity material. Participation has been achieved in a number of ways:
- 1.12 An extensive programme of public consultation has been central to developing the plan. This has included a number of channels:
- a) **Focus groups.** A number of focus groups have examined key issues. Amongst these were the Sustainability Group and the Greenways Group, both of which produced in-depth reports.
  - b) **Website:** A dedicated website was set up at [www.arbarplan.com](http://www.arbarplan.com) in October 2016. This carries updates of recent activities, an explanation of the Neighbourhood Plan process, progress reports and key documents that users can download.
  - c) **Email updates:** A mailing list has been put together to enable the circulation of updates on progress and forthcoming events.
  - d) **Social media:** Similar bulletins have been posted on Facebook local interest pages, including the Arborfield Community, Arborfield Green Village Community and the Finchampstead & Barkham Community pages.
  - e) **Parish Newsletters:** Articles including progress reports and explanation of planning issues have been included in the local publications. These include the 'Arborfield News' which is produced by Arborfield and Newland Parish Council six times a year and the 'BVRA Newsletter' which is produced by the Barkham Village Residents Association and is distributed four times a year. In 2018 Barkham Parish Council also introduced its own in-house publication 'Village Info'.
  - f) **Public Events:** The NPSG has organised public events and participated in other local activities, as shown in the Consultation Statement. These events were used as opportunities to explain the issues to residents and to obtain feedback on the topics raised.

To date, there have been nearly a hundred meetings held to identify issues, review, analyse and agree the content for the plan. Research methods are outlined in Sections 3 to 7. See also the Consultation Statement for further details about community engagement.

## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.13 The Neighbourhood Plan builds on the excellent work of the Arborfield and Barkham Village Design Statements (see Annexes I and II), which were produced by residents in both parishes and adopted by WBC.

### Survey results

- 1.14 A residents' survey was carried out in 2016. Some of the main themes to emerge included:
- a) **Identity and setting:** The first major theme to emerge was that residents have a strong attachment to the rural and village character of the area. There was strong support for the proposition that the rural setting makes Arborfield and Barkham good places to live, with 98% of respondents agreeing. Meanwhile 91% strongly agreed and a further 8% agreed that the unique identity of the area is best preserved by retaining open spaces around the villages.
  - b) **A good place to live:** Other important reasons why Arborfield and Barkham are considered good places to live were access to motorways (63%) and good schools (35%). In the free format box, community spirit and village atmosphere were mentioned several times, which was nice to hear.
  - c) **Challenges facing Arborfield and Barkham:** Concern about development-related issues is widespread. The most important challenges faced by Arborfield and Barkham are traffic congestion (49%), protecting open spaces (29%) and absorbing development (18%). Unsurprisingly all three of these of these challenges relate to the rapid increase in new housing in the area.
  - d) . A more detailed analysis of the survey findings can be found in Annex III: Residents' Survey (2016) Summary of Results.
- 1.15 The plan has been developed around a number of themes which emerged from the public engagement. The headline topics include:
- a) Sustainability
  - b) Identity and rural setting
  - c) Thriving communities
  - d) Appropriate development
  - e) Getting around

These themes are expanded in the Vision and Objectives (see Section 2) and are followed in the commentary and policies (Sections 3 to 7).

### The Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.16 The 14 policies shown in this document form the main body of the Neighbourhood Plan. In addition to the policies, there are many papers, shown as Annexes, which have been prepared by the Focus Groups and other organisations. These provide additional background information about the parishes and supporting material and evidence relating to the policies.
- 1.17 Section 8 includes a Project List containing issues that the parishes intend to address. These are items beyond the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan itself, which is intended to focus on spatial planning and land use.
- 1.18 This Neighbourhood Plan, including the Annexes, is to be read as a whole. Development proposals will be required to fulfil the conditions of all applicable policies.

## 2. Vision and objectives for the plan



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## 2. Vision and objectives for the plan

2.1 The Vision Statement and Objectives shown below were drafted by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and are intended to reflect the inputs from residents via the survey, focus groups and feedback from public events.

2.2 **Vision** *‘A sustainable future for Arborfield and Barkham as a thriving and accessible community, managing development to be inclusive for all age groups and enhancing the identity and rural setting of the villages.*

### Objectives

2.3 *‘A plan for the community by the community’*

#### Protecting identity and rural setting of the villages

- Protect and enhance the countryside – new development should blend into the landscape, not dominate landscape views
- Retain separation of settlements to preserve their individual identities
- Protect and enhance heritage and natural environment and extend conservation designations where possible
- Enhance the natural and historic setting of Arborfield Cross village centre and Barkham Street

#### Thriving communities (includes community facilities and recreation)

- Provide full range of facilities – schools, leisure amenities, retail, medical
- Promote a strong rural economy

#### Managing development (housing, design, parking and flood management)

- Match housing to local needs including affordable homes for key workers
- Require high quality design incorporating efficient use of resources
- Address local flood risks

#### Accessibility (transport and greenways)

- Minimise traffic on unsuitable roads
- Expand the greenways network and improve other PROWs.
- Expand opportunities for sustainable transport

2.4 These themes are expanded in the following matrix. The items listed in the Policy Index are examined in more detail in Sections 3 to 7.



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## Policy Matrix

Policy Areas		Policy Objectives	Policy Summaries
Sustainability	Identity and rural setting	<b>POLICY IRS1</b> PRESERVATION OF THE SEPARATION OF SETTLEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preserve character and appearance of countryside</li> <li>Development proposals outside of the development limits will be required to comply with Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy</li> <li>Not lead to physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements</li> </ul>
		<b>POLICY IRS2:</b> RECOGNISE, RESPECT AND PRESERVE THE IDENTITY AND RURAL SETTING OF SETTLEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scale and density of the development</li> <li>The distinctive character and biodiversity of the area</li> <li>Outstanding views</li> <li>Comply with Village Design Statements.</li> </ul>
		<b>POLICY IRS3</b> PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN SPACES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No loss of biodiversity and normally to provide a net gain.</li> <li>Extend the network of landscape and wildlife corridors</li> <li>Measures that will help mitigate the impacts of, climate change</li> <li>Locally valued natural assets recognised, respected, preserved. .</li> </ul>
		<b>POLICY IRS4</b> PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF THE AREA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect and enhance local character:</li> <li>Arborfield Cross Conservation Areas</li> <li>Areas of Special Character: Chamberlain's Farm Area, Barkham Street Area of Special Character</li> <li>Locally valued heritage assets recognised, respected, preserved.</li> </ul>
	Thriving communities	<b>POLICY TC1</b> RETENTION OF EXISTING VALUED COMMUNITY FACILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retain existing community facilities, unless it can be evidenced that they are no longer required;</li> </ul>
		<b>POLICY TC2</b> PROPERLY PLANNED AND DESIGNED NEW FACILITIES,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility for present needs and future growth on the one site</li> <li>Inclusive, providing appropriate access for all</li> <li>Incorporate adequate off-street parking</li> <li>Appropriately designed for the prospective use and users</li> <li>Safe access on foot and bicycle should be facilitated</li> <li>Evidence of long term viability</li> </ul>
		<b>POLICY TC3</b> CONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND AGRICULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-use of lawful buildings that are vacant</li> <li>The scale is appropriate for a rural location, and</li> <li>Potential impact on neighbours and the natural environment addressed,</li> <li>Site access and parking are appropriate for the scale, nature of business.</li> <li>Retain best and most versatile agricultural land</li> </ul>
	Appropriate Development	<b>POLICY AD1</b> NEW DEVELOPMENT WITHIN DEVELOPMENT LIMITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposals for new housing will be supported within the Settlement limits, including the Arborfield Garrison SDL</li> <li>Use of brownfield sites will be preferred</li> </ul>
		<b>POLICY AD2</b> PRIORITISE HOUSING FOR LOCAL NEEDS,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Types of homes provided to contribute to a balanced mix of housing</li> <li>Meet the needs identified in the most current assessment of housing needs (Arborfield and Barkham Housing Needs Analysis 2018)</li> <li>Affordable homes prioritised for key workers locally</li> </ul>
		<b>POLICY AD3</b> HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT WITH GENEROUS OPEN SPACE AND PROPERLY LANDSCAPED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Density of any new development, internal space standards</li> <li>, Design in security</li> <li>Recognise local character, comply with Village Design Statements</li> <li>Layouts to encourage non-car travel for short journeys,</li> <li>Sufficient car parking, integrated it within landscaping</li> <li>Measures to minimise the use of energy and water resources</li> </ul>
		<b>POLICY AD4</b> ADDRESS LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The principles of flood risk management, including SuDS are fully addressed at the outline planning stage</li> <li>Use nature to provide measures to slow the rate of water runoff</li> <li>Adequate sewerage, drainage capacity to protect wider catchment area</li> <li>Encourage tree planting to reduce run-off rates</li> </ul>
	Getting Around	<b>POLICY GA1</b> MINIMISE ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC ON UNSUITABLE ROADS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development proposals must address their impact on the road system and its safety and implement mitigation measures if required</li> <li>Recognise deficiencies of unsuitable roads in the Plan Area.</li> </ul>
		<b>POLICY GA2</b> IMPLEMENT LOCAL NETWORK OF GREEN ROUTES FOR NON-MOTORISED USERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development proposals should not inhibit expansion of PROW network.</li> <li>Priorities include all weather routes, safer crossings of main roads, improved connectivity and opportunities for sustainable transport</li> </ul>
		<b>POLICY GA3</b> PUBLIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS WITH LONG TERM VIABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements to public transport will be supported</li> <li>Roads in SDL to be used for bus routes must have tracked, acknowledging likelihood of parked vehicles</li> </ul>
		<b>PROJECT LIST</b> WORK WITH HIGHWAYS AND OTHER WBC DEPARTMENTS ON PROJECTS THAT BENEFIT THE PLAN AREA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring forward traffic management measures for Arborfield village centre to be implemented as part of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road Scheme;</li> <li>Progress to completion the widening of Barkham Bridge and the Nine Mile Ride Extension</li> <li>Seek designation of identified natural and historic assets</li> </ul>

### 3. Sustainable Development



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## 3. Sustainable Development

### How this theme was researched

- 3.1 A Focus Group of 24 residents came together to consider what sustainability could mean for Arborfield and Barkham. These residents represented a wide range of backgrounds and skills, from across the two villages. The full report prepared by the group is shown as Annex IV Sustainability.

In parallel, flooding issues were studied by a resident who is specifically an expert on flooding. Her report is shown in the Flood Risk Management Statement (Annex XII).

### What does 'Sustainability' mean?

- 3.2 Sustainability is the 'Golden Thread' which runs through planning, according to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF suggests this should be achieved through a range of themes including a prosperous rural economy, sustainable transport, a wide choice of quality homes, and conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment. All these themes are relevant to Arborfield and Barkham.
- 3.3 All too often, development is driven by one particular need without fully considering the wider or future impact. Living within our environmental limits is one of the central principles of sustainable development.
- 3.4 The expression 'sustainability' is widely used in planning. In the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy a much-used definition is quoted:

**Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.**

- 3.5 Sustainability should reflect what choices people have in how they manage their everyday lives. One simple yardstick for sustainability could mean that residents are able to live normally without the need of a car.

Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide SPD June 2012 provides guidance as follows:

**If places are to be sustainable then the aim should be to create:**

- **Walkable neighbourhoods, with a range of facilities within 10 minutes walking distance of residential areas, which encourage people to travel on foot or by bicycle; or**
- **Neighbourhoods with sufficient density of development to support public transport services to provide access to facilities in centres**

A ten minute walk is generally considered to be 800 metres.

- 3.6 Sustainability is clearly a far-reaching concept that affects every element of development. Shoddy solutions may provide short term fixes but they will only create problems that will have to be resolved by future generations. The goal must be to create solutions that work not just for a plan period of 5-15 years, but ones that work for generations to come.
- 3.7 As sustainable development is a broad concept, it embraces a range of issues relating to the environment and the future:
- a) Places that are pleasant to live in now and in the future, whilst protecting heritage assets within their setting.
  - b) Managing the natural environment for current and future generations. This includes biodiversity and protecting the landscape – once it has gone, it has gone forever.
  - c) Preserving heritage assets, to perpetuate history and local distinctiveness for future generations.
  - d) Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
  - e) A thriving local economy, preferably one that is not totally dependent on the success or failure of one particular business sector.
  - f) An appropriate mix of housing.

## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- g) Recycling and renewable energy: avoiding waste that causes pollution and degradation.
- h) A transport system that allows a choice of modes that is both practical and convenient.

3.8 At its core, sustainability is an approach to development that looks to balance different, and often competing, needs. Our intention is to bring all the key sustainability themes together, weaving the 'Golden Thread' throughout the Neighbourhood Plan to address local concerns.

- a) How should sustainable development be reflected in the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan?
- b) How can the best balance between the environment, the local economy and social needs be achieved?
- c) What does the area need that is new and what should be protected or enhanced?

A number of the issues raised under the sustainability heading inevitably encroach on other headings within the Neighbourhood Plan. Indeed, it will be noted that the Policy Section does not include a specific sustainability group as the issues are absorbed in the other four policy groups on the principle that the 'Golden Thread' should reach all parts of the plan.

### Sustainability in Arborfield and Barkham

3.9 Sustainability poses a number of challenges in the local area.

- a) Residents enjoy the community spirit of the various settlements and their historical identities. It is a worry that large scale development will smother these existing communities.
- b) Rapid development is threatening to erode the natural attractions of the locality.
- c) There is a danger that infilling gaps between the existing settlements will create a kind of urban sprawl, hence the importance of retaining separation between settlements.
- d) Increasing urbanisation is likely to reach a tipping point where natural green corridors are eroded, threatening wildlife and biodiversity.
- e) Planning for growth has become problematic with approved sites not yet built.
- f) Unlawful development is a challenge.
- g) It is a sad truth that larger four and even five-bedroom houses predominate in new housing proposals, bringing in new residents, but failing to satisfy the needs of local people, young and old.
- h) There is significant employment in the two parishes which is seen positively.
- f) There have been proposals submitted for large scale renewable energy schemes, for example wind farms (in one of the lowest wind areas in the country) and solar parks. These proposals are unpopular with local residents and have been deemed to be inappropriate by WBC. However it is disappointing that less intrusive solutions have not been forthcoming, such as maximising discreet solar panels on large roof buildings.
- g) Transport and the associated congestion is without doubt the biggest challenge of all. Congestion means an inefficient use of energy resources (and will still do so in the age of the electric car) and time wasted in unproductive activity. The road system depends on lanes built for the horse and cart era. Many of these became residential roads during the 1950s and 1960s and with increasing development in the wider area they are now used as main through routes. Meanwhile the alternatives to journeys by car are very restricted: the bus service is limited in scope while sustainable transport opportunities (as opposed to leisure routes) are virtually non-existent.

3.10 Sustainability objectives are shown in the matrix in Section 2. Although objectives are divided into four groups based on the other themes, most if not all the specific objectives have a sustainability element.



## 4. Identity and Rural Setting



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## 4. Identity and Rural Setting

### Overview

- 4.1 The rural setting of Arborfield and Barkham defines the character of the villages. The attractive landscape comprising farmland and woodland is punctuated with small settlements, hamlets and individual dwellings which form the thriving parish communities. The 2016 Residents' Survey (Annex III) demonstrated a very strong attachment to the rural and village character of the area which reflects many of the goals as exemplified below: 98% of respondents agree that the rural setting makes Arborfield and Barkham good places to live (Q1) while 91 strongly agreed and another 8% agreed that the unique identity of the area is best preserved by retaining open spaces around the villages (Q2).
- 4.2 The NPPF cites the importance of character as a key objective for achieving sustainable development.
- 9 ... Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.**
- 4.3 The NPPF also goes on to highlight the importance of the natural and historic environment. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to apply these objectives to the local area in Policies IRS3 and IRS4 below.
- 170. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:**
- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
  - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland ...
- 185. Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:**
- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
  - b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
  - c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
  - d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.
- 4.4 Crest Nicholson, the lead developer for the SDL, has adopted the concept of rural living and a large hoarding proclaims 'Idyllic Village Living'. They have been true to the garden village concept. Similar standards will be expected by any other development projects in the area.

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

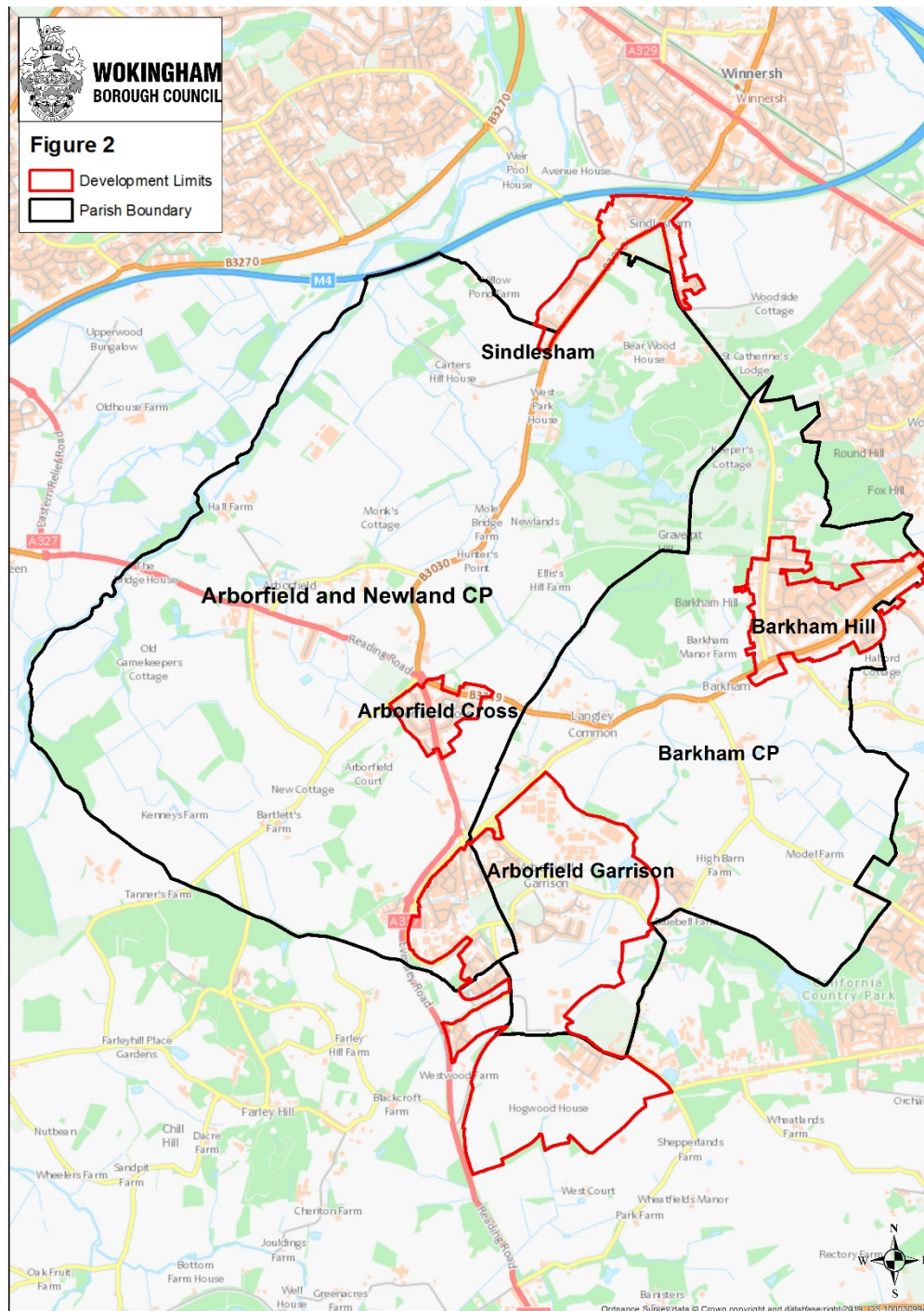
## SEPARATION OF SETTLEMENTS

### POLICY IRS1: PRESERVATION OF SEPARATION OF SETTLEMENTS

In order to protect the separation of settlements, development proposals outside of development limits designated in the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 will be required to comply with Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and:

- a) Preserve the character and appearance of the countryside; and
- b) Not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements.

4.5 The development limits are defined by policy CC02 of the MDD. The development limits are show in Figure 2 below:





## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

4.6 Arborfield and Barkham include a number of separate settlements:

- a) Arborfield Cross, stretching south of the war memorial roundabout is a distinct village in its own right with its own shop, pub and village hall.
- b) Arborfield village: the original centre of the village is around the old church, now a scheduled monument. It is near the river down the Chestnut Ave. The 'new' Victorian church is in Church Lane which has a number of more recent houses.
- c) Arborfield Green combines the SDL on the former garrison site (mainly in Barkham Parish), some ex MOD housing and some adjacent and more recent developments, often referred to collectively as Penrose Park.
- d) Barkham village, like Arborfield village is a small community around the church and along Barkham Street.
- e) Barkham Hill is the most populous part of Barkham, comprising some ribbon development from the 1930s through to the 1960s, along Barkham Road and Bearwood Road, along with a 1980s development known as Elizabeth Park.
- f) Langleigh Common, some mixed housing along Langleigh Common Road and School Road.
- g) Carters Hill, a small settlement of old buildings in the north of the Plan Area. Carters Hill House dates from the Queen Anne period while Cordery Cottage (formerly The Glen) dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

4.7 Each of the seven settlements listed above have their own individual identity and are physically separated from each other and neighbouring parishes. The great fear of residents is that uncontrolled development will see them all merged into a continuous urban sprawl creeping south from Reading and west from Wokingham.

The Core Strategy adopted in 2010 aimed to absorb the development into the landscape (para A7.4c) and identifies separation areas around the Arborfield SDL. The intention was indeed to retain the new development as a distinct settlement and to avoid coalescence with the neighbouring villages (Refer Core Strategy para A7. 5 and Key Diagram on page 128).

4.8 During the government planning inspector's review of the MDD (Adopted in 2014), it was recognised that settlement separation areas should be preserved around the SDL and the Inspector considered that the principle was adequately protected by development limits. In his final report dated 23 Jan 2014, he states:

**30 The MDD indicates that Settlement Separation Areas are related to the four SDLs to ensure their separation from other settlements, although the Policy does not clearly state this to be the case – that is left to the supporting text ... Whilst CC02 seeks to protect specific areas from development that would harm the physical and visual separation of settlements, it is difficult see why Policy CP11 would not achieve the same level of protection in that any proposal which would fail the CC02 test would also fail in terms of CP11.**

**34 This is not to deny that settlement separation is important and the previous Inspector supported the identification of 'critical gaps' in the SDLs on the CS Key Diagram ...**



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## IDENTITY AND SETTING

### **POLICY IRS2: RECOGNISE, RESPECT AND PRESERVE IDENTITY AND RURAL SETTING OF SETTLEMENTS**

1. Development proposals must recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements, with regard to:
  - a) Scale and form of the development
  - b) Density of the development
  - c) Materials used in the development to reflect local character
  - d) Tree and hedgerow planting that reinforces and reflects local biodiversity in the parishes and
  - e) The distinctive character of the varied landscapes of the area and outstanding views.
2. Applications should demonstrate how the design of new development complies with the guidance set out in the Village Design Statements for Arborfield and Barkham (Annexes I and II) or any document adopted by the LPA that updates them.

### **Village Design Statements**

- 4.9 The Arborfield and Barkham Village Design Statements provide guidance on items a) to d) of Policy IRS2.
- 4.10 **Arborfield Village Design Statement (Annex I)**
- a) Particular attention is drawn to design which reflects existing landscape and heritage assets. (Refs Pages 3,5,6 and 19).
  - b) Appropriate density aspirations regarding Building Lines and Street Scenes are demonstrated on pages 6 and 18.
  - c) The VDS expresses a desire for new development not to have a negative visual impact upon the landscape (page 19) and to reflect features of nearby housing (page 6)
  - d) Existing native planting should be valued and also applied to new development areas. Pages 8 and 9.
- 4.11 **Barkham Village Design Statement (Annex II)**
- a) Barkham Village Design Statement provides guidance for development with regard to infilling, landscaping, form and architectural features in its 'Impact on surroundings' section, and stresses the importance of diversity. (pages 14, 15 and 16)
  - b) With regard to density of development the Barkham VDS advises the need for development to 'blend with the rural environment' (page 15 point 7)
  - c) With regard to the mix of materials guidance, two different approaches are seen in the VDS; one for the established rural area, the other for the Garrison. (Page 17, point 14 and Page 15, point 7)
  - d) The need to retain and to care for trees is reflected in the VDS (page 18 point 19) while the need to 'Conserve Barkham's Greenery' is headlined (page 19).

### **Landscape**

- 4.12 The 2004 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was initially used as a basis for reviewing landscape characteristic (see Annex V). The LCA has been updated in 2019 and Annex V was also updated accordingly. Four main landscape areas were identified within the two parishes.

**A2 Loddon River Valley** This follows the course of the River Loddon along the Arborfield western boundary broadening into a relatively small area towards the south of the parish. The alluvial flood

## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

plain contains gravel beds and the boundaries tend to be well defined by changes in elevation. The area is characterised by irregular fields, mixed agriculture and natural wetlands. Most of this area lies over the parish boundary to the west.

**C1 Arborfield River Terrace** This area to the west of Arborfield runs along the Parish Boundary and is characterised by farmed fields. Over the centuries, these have increased in size at the expense of hedgerows and copses but sufficient remain to break up the landscape into varied and attractive areas. The subsurface is a combination of London Clay and gravel beds, allowing drainage into the nearby flood plains of the Loddon Valley. The area is farmed and many public right of ways make this an attractive area for walking and riding.

**J2 Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay** Most of the Parishes of Arborfield and Barkham fall into this category. Much of the area is intensively farmed, interspersed with housing of varying age, style and scale which range from the older housing around the Arborfield Cross Conservation Area and the Area of Special Character along Barkham Street to sizeable housing estates built towards the end of the 20th Century such as Elizabeth Park in Barkham, Penrose Park to the south of Arborfield Cross and developments that span both parishes near to the site of the former Garrison. These more substantial developments tend to be on the margins of the parishes and are screened so do not overtly impact the key landscape views of today. The topography of the area is also helpful in this respect. The Strategic Development Location on and around the former Garrison site, is transforming a brownfield area by replacing tired army buildings with, at least in part, a garden village style development. This includes 50% greening which is a significant contribution to mitigating the impact of such a large development.

**L1 & L2 Bearwood and Farley Hill Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills** Here, sand and gravel deposits overlie London Clay and the area is mostly wooded. By the nature of the terrain, development is limited and should be as the area is an important landscape feature which includes a local Geological Area of Interest because of the evident stratification. Much of the area provides outstanding opportunities for walking and enjoying the wildlife throughout the year. It contributes markedly to the landscape diversity of the two parishes and forms a useful barrier from the more intensive settlement to the north. There are two distinct areas:

- a) Bearwood Park which is Grade II\* listed and straddles the Arborfield-Barkham Boundary and originally provided a parkland setting for Bearwood House, now Reddam School, including an attractive man-made lake resulting from brick manufacture. Coniferous trees have been planted and the Rhododendron Drive along the adjacent Bearwood Road is a particularly attractive and well known feature.
- b) The Coombes, which is a woodland area which falls away in the south towards Barkham Manor which had its own parkland. The vast majority of trees in this area are deciduous.

### Landscape Views

- 4.13 In addition to Bearwood Park and The Coombes, there are many other wooded areas and copses across the two Parishes that are fragments and reminders of earlier times when the area was more heavily wooded before being cleared for cultivation.
- 4.14 Key to maintaining the rural nature of the area and the quality of the environment is to retain the separation areas around the individual settlements within the two parishes and other neighbouring parishes. These separation areas are protected by Core Policy CP11.
- 4.15 What really makes the landscape of Arborfield and Barkham so distinctive is the diversity that occurs in such a small area of just 1,800 Ha – riverside wetlands, trees and hedgerows, small copses, open fields and heavily wooded areas with many public rights of way – all offering great opportunities to those who want to enjoy rambling, cycling, photography, riding and the wildlife.
- 4.16 For the purposes of this policy, outstanding views are those considered as presenting an exceptional panorama of the landscape and including middle and distant features.

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### **POLICY IRS3: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN SPACES**

1. Development proposals should conserve and enhance the natural environment and green spaces of the area, specifically:
  - a) Ensure that there no loss of biodiversity and normally provide a net gain. Where there is likely to be a loss of biodiversity, development will only be acceptable if mitigation measures can be put in place to ensure there is no net loss of biodiversity, through the creation of like-for-like habitats.
  - b) Take any opportunities to protect, enhance and extend wildlife corridors between existing open spaces and habitats as a means of mitigating the impacts of development on biodiversity.
  - c) Conserve the environment for nocturnal species, through the avoidance of lighting and mitigating the impact of external lighting likely to increase night time human presence.
  - d) Contain measures that will help to mitigate the impacts of, and adapt to, climate change
2. Development on Public Open Spaces should enhance the use of the site for public open space or be consistent with paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework if loss of the space is proposed.. The following sites are designated as Public Open Space and shown on Map L:
  - a) Arborfield Park
  - b) Junipers Field
  - c) Rooks Nest Wood
  - d) Hazebrouck Meadows
  - e) Pound Copse
  - f) The cricket and rugby pitches within the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location
3. Locally valued natural assets have been identified within the plan as follows (see Map K) and development proposals should conserve and where possible enhance them:
  - a) The Coombes woodland and adjacent areas
  - b) The Holt woodland
  - c) Rhododendron avenue along Bearwood Road

- 4.17 This review follows an approach suggested by WBC's Ecology Officer, who directed the team to The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC). TVERC produced a report covering the biodiversity of Arborfield and Barkham. Follow-up was facilitated by the various public events.
- 4.18 Within the Plan Area there are several wildlife sites, copses, ancient woodlands and a bluebell wood. Specifically, The Coombes, The Holt and various smaller pockets are designated as a Local Wildlife Sites. There are some 400 locations where protected species have been recorded by TVERC. These include:
- a) Amphibians: 5 species including Palmate Newt, Smooth Newt, Great Crested Newt, Common Toad, Common Frog
  - b) Birds: 23 species including Gadwall, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Osprey, Kestrel, Hobby, Lapwing, Woodcock, Common Sandpiper, Stock Dove, Cuckoo, Barn Owl, Swift, Green Woodpecker, Willow Warbler, Skylark, Dunnock, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Whitethroat, Common Crossbill, Common Crossbill, Bullfinch

## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- c) Higher Plants: Juniper and 8 species of Flowering Plants including Loddon Pondweed, Good-King-Henry, Sharp Rush, Coralroot, Ghost Orchid, Bluebell, Butcher's-broom, Fringed Water-lily,
- d) Invertebrates –Stag Beetle and three species of butterflies
- e) Mammals - Terrestrial (bats): 9 species and series
- f) Mammals - Terrestrial (excl. bats): Eurasian Badger, West European Hedgehog, European Water Vole
- g) Reptiles: Grass Snake

4.19 Other (mainly non-protected) wildlife commonly encountered in the last year include, Badger, Brown Rat, Common Frog, Common Shrew, Common Toad, Field Mouse, Fox, Grey Squirrel, Mole, Muntjac Deer, Newts, Pipistrelle Bat, Rabbit, Roe Deer, Lizard, Grass Snake, Blackbird, Blue tit, Buzzard, Canada Geese, Chaffinch, Collared Dove, Crow, Jay, Robin, Sparrow, Magpie, Mistle Thrush, Green Woodpecker and Spotted Woodpecker.

4.20 Barkham Parish has by far the highest density of Veteran Oak Trees in the whole of Wokingham Borough.

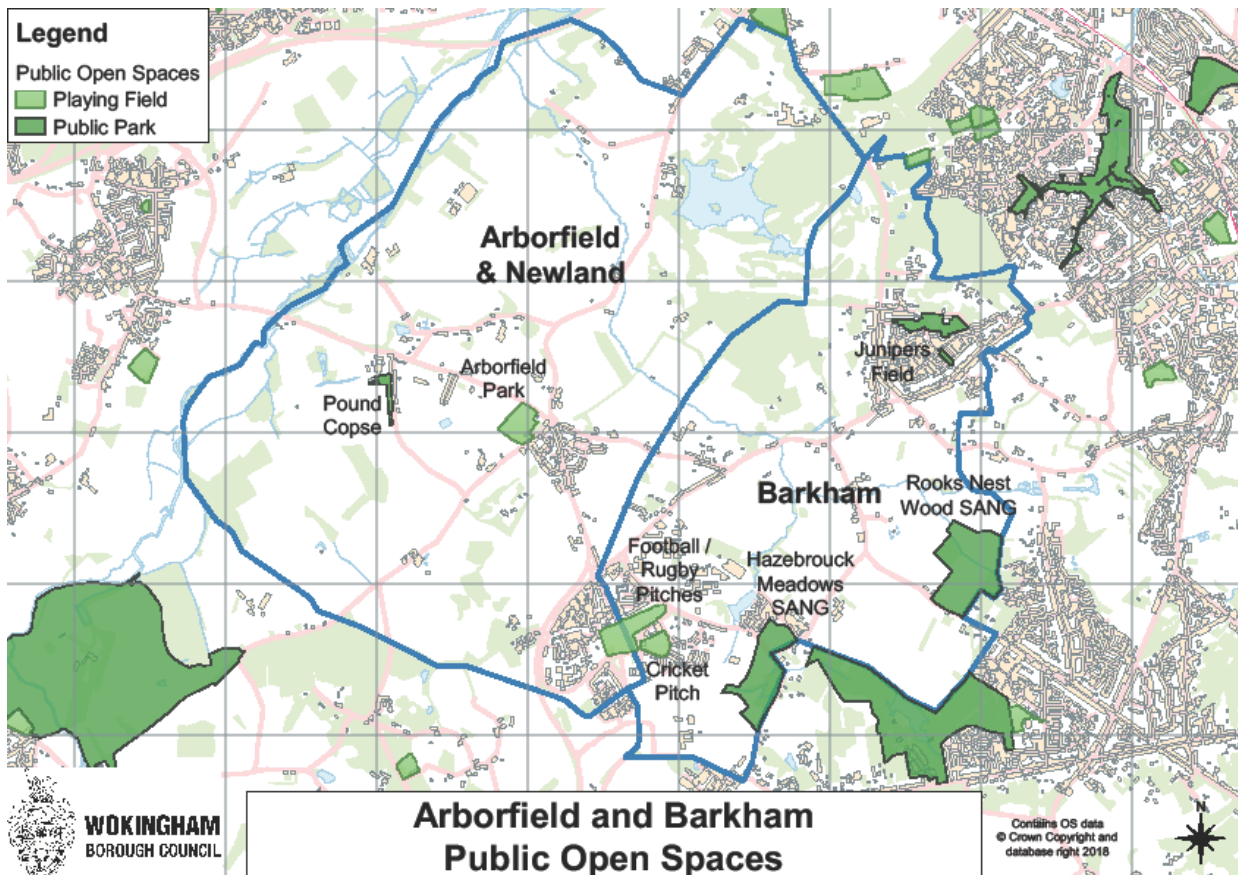
4.21 There are two areas of geological note which are designated as Local Geological Sites:

- a) The Coombes stratigraphy of London Clay, Bagshot Sands and overlying river terrace gravels.
- b) Iron Rich Streams, in the southern part of Barkham, towards Rooks Nest Wood.

4.22 The above features provide diverse, interesting and varied opportunities for walkers, nature lovers, horse-riders and photographers, and not just for local residents. It also provides relief for residents from around the Borough where development has already encroached on much of the countryside.

### Public open space

4.23 The areas of Public Open Space referred to in policy IRS3 are shown on Map L which is reproduced in Figure 3 below:





## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.24 All these Public Open Spaces have full public access and are used for recreation and formal sports. Note that the Junipers Field includes a playing field, some woodland and an open paddock. It also includes a small detached area nearby.

### Locally Valued Natural Assets

- 4.25 The following locations have been identified as Valued Natural Assets, as mentioned in Policy IRS3. These locations require special recognition. The aim is for these to receive formal protection within Wokingham's Local Plan.

#### The Coombes woodland



*The Coombes seen from the south*



*Coombes Lane*

- 4.26 The Coombes is a large area of deciduous woodland in what was once part of the Bearwood Estate. It is now in private ownership.
- a) The site is used as an amenity area especially as the network of PROWs make it very accessible.
  - b) Noted by the TVERC report is the wide variety of species of trees, some typical of Ancient Woodland. Furthermore, there are varieties of lower growing vegetation providing habitats for a number of Amber List birds, and the Bullfinch, which is on the Red List of endangered species.
  - c) The TVERC report also notes that the site has educational and scientific interest, being 'One of the few good examples of the younger Palaeogene beds in Berkshire'.
  - d) There are also a number of Veteran Trees recorded in the area worthy of preservation while WBC has extended TPOs over all of The Coombes woodland and along adjacent PROWs.
  - e) It is an important feature of the local landscape and views of The Coombes woodland are possible from many miles distant. From the highest points there are vistas of surrounding settlements in all directions, yet in spite of the elevated woodland setting it has an intimate, secluded feel. Towards the south there is a classic pastoral view above Barkham Manor, while to the north there are parkland views of the old Bearwood Estate and other vantage points of adjacent agricultural land.
  - f) The Barkham Village Design Statement supports the protection of more than just the wooded area of the Coombes, with its wish to 'conserve and protect the pasture in The Coombes' (page 7). The Neighbourhood Plan extends this ambition by defining the area to be protected more widely than simply the area of woodland in order that the views, environment and landscape character can be suitably preserved in the face of pressures on increased development.

It is considered important to protect The Coombes for all the above reasons to ensure the retention of the area's amenity value, biodiversity and its influence on the character of the area.

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

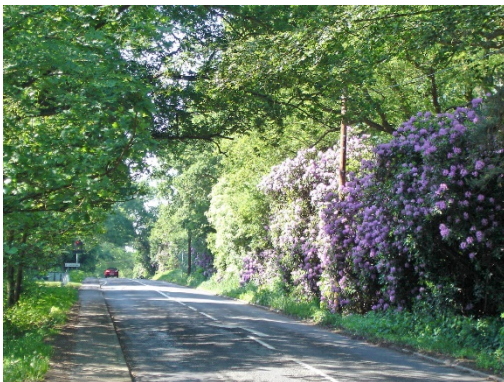
## The Holt woodland



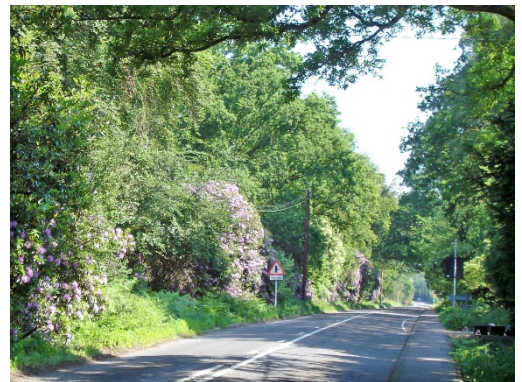
*View of The Holt with bluebells*

- 4.27 The Holt woodland is an area of woodland in the north of the Plan Area containing Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland. It is significant in a number of ways:
- a) It serves as a scenic buffer between the M4 motorway and the nearby settlement of Carters Hill.
  - b) The Holt has been known to flood on a regular basis. This reduces the rate of run-off in the immediate area which is important in protecting the local settlement of Carter's Hill and the lowland dairy farm adjacent to the site.
  - c) The area of the Holt site that does not stand within the floodplain contains six veteran trees; five Oaks and one Field Maple, which are worthy of extra recognition through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- It is considered important to protect the Holt in view of its influence on the landscape and character of the area, its role in local flood protection and its biodiversity.

## Rhododendron avenue along Bearwood Road



*Bearwood Road looking south*



*Bearwood Road looking north*

- 4.28 The rhododendron avenue was originally an avenue through the Bearwood estate, it offers a spectacular display of rhododendrons in May each year thus providing an iconic rural drive. In recent years it has suffered from fires and overzealous pruning. The avenue is important for two reasons:
- a) It is noted as a special landscape feature. With the largest volume of traffic passing along Bearwood Road, it is appreciated not just by residents of the local parishes, but by people across the borough and further afield.
  - b) The rhododendrons also have an important landscape importance as they screen the road from a scrap yard, a caravan site, a golf course and several residential properties.

## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

It is considered vital to protect the rhododendron avenue for both the above reasons to ensure the retention of the character of the area. If the avenue is allowed to deteriorate, it would be a great loss to the character of the wider area.

### HERITAGE

#### **POLICY IRS4: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF THE AREA**

1. Development proposals will need to demonstrate how they protect or enhance the historic and natural character of the area, specifically:
  - a) Arborfield Cross Conservation Area
  - b) Chamberlain's Farm Area of Special Character
  - c) The Barkham Street Area of Special Character
  - d) The local historic environment, including the setting of Listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments and other historically significant buildings
2. Locally valued heritage assets have been identified in the plan as follows (see Map K) and development proposals should protect and enhance them where possible:
  - a) The historic chestnut avenue in Arborfield, linking The Old Rectory to the remains of the old church.
  - b) The lime grove at Nashgrove Ride in Barkham.
  - c) Carters Hill
  - d) The granary in Barkham Street

- 4.29 Guidance was provided on the approach by WBC's Conservation Officer, and a number of sources were suggested. The issues emerging have been discussed with residents at a number of public events and the full Focus Group report is shown in Annex VII.
- 4.30 Despite much change, many important buildings and sites remain which depict events and styles from 1300 through to present times. Moreover, the setting for many of these locations has remained virtually unchanged and needs equal consideration. The designation of important sites should be continually reviewed as their contribution to the evolution of the local area is further understood (refer Maps I and J).
- 4.31 Although heritage is the past, it is also very much part of the future and should be used to reinforce local distinctiveness and contribute to the economic well-being of the area wherever possible.

#### **Designated areas of historic interest or of special character**

- 4.32 The Plan Area includes a Conservation Area and two Areas of Special Character.
- a) **The Arborfield Cross Conservation Area** is centred on the roundabout and extends to the south along the A327, Eversley Road. It includes Newland Farm to the north of the Cross, the former Swan Inn, The Bull Inn, Magnolia Cottage, The Old Post House and Birch House all of which are listed. There are also a number of Victorian buildings, the village hall, plus the war memorial commemorating the dead of Arborfield and Barkham.
  - b) **Chamberlain's Farm Area of Special Character** is located on Swallowfield Road, past The Bull pub. It was formally designated by Wokingham Borough Council as an Area of Special Character in 1994. It incorporates the listed farmhouse of Chamberlain's Farm and outbuildings in its rural setting and the listed buildings of Applemore Cottage and Yew Tree Cottage. This designation further illustrates the importance of the history that has shaped the character of Arborfield & Newland Parish.



## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- c) **Barkham Street Area of Special Character** centred on Barkham Street stretches from the original medieval centre of Barkham, marked by the church, a moated manor building that is still occupied and the village pond. It then extends along Barkham Street passing Barkham Square, The Bull Public House and Sparkes Farm, all of which are listed, towards Barkham Manor which dates from the late 1700s.

### Locally Valued Historic Assets

- 4.33 The following locations have been identified as Valued Historic Assets, as mentioned in Policy IRS4. These locations require special recognition. In the longer term should it is an aspiration for these to receive formal protection within Wokingham's Local Plan.

#### The historic chestnut avenue at Arborfield



*Chestnut avenue in spring*



*Chestnut avenue in summer*

- 4.34 The historic chestnut avenue at Arborfield connects The Old Rectory, adjacent to Church Lane, to the remains of the old church at Arborfield, which is a scheduled monument and some early buildings at Hall Farm including the original Arborfield Mill. Avenues were the invention of the Renaissance, when the rules of scientific perspective were being applied to garden design. In the centuries that followed, the approach to the villa or great house was always by way of an avenue of cypresses, oaks, limes or chestnuts. In this case the 'great house' would have been Arborfield Grange, the residence of John Ponsonby Conroy (1786-1854) who was the controversial and hated advisor of Queen Victoria as a young monarch. He is buried in the old Churchyard. Thus the avenue is important for two reasons:
- a) Its historic context in the original village of Arborfield
  - b) Its value as a landscape feature

#### The lime grove at Nashgrove Ride



*The lime grove*

- 4.35 The four-line lime avenue seems to have been planted at the behest of John Walter III who then owned the land, circa 1884-5. It was said that he wanted to create a grand route for his sons to travel



## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

along to Wellington College; it was however uncompleted. It is very unusual to find four lines of limes; it is not unusual to find limes and sycamore or limes and chestnut on either side of a private roadway, but the only other place known to have four lines of limes planted is at Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire which is over two miles in length. Thus the avenue is important for two reasons:

- a) Its historic context in the former Bearwood estate
- b) Its value as a landscape feature

### Carters Hill



*Tudor House at Carters Hill*



*Carters Hill House from the west*

- 4.36 Carters Hill is a small settlement in the northern part of the Plan Area, containing a number of old buildings. The Carter's Hill/Loaders Lane area, as defined by the names, was historically linked to the Mill at Sindlesham in that it was home to a number of large medieval barns. Arborfield Barn is now to be seen in the Chiltern Open Air Museum. From the 18th Century to the present day, in addition to farming, the area was associated with both the Bearwood Estate (The Times Newspaper) and the Simmonds family (Brewing and Banking). Thus retention of the avenue is important for three reasons:
- a) Its historic context
  - b) The contribution it makes as a landmark in the local landscape
  - c) The character presented by a group of old and unusual buildings isolated from other more modern development.

### Granary in Barkham Street



*The granary*

- 4.37 The granary is an interesting example of a grain store dating from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In order to keep the grain dry and protected from vermin, it is raised on mushroom shaped staddle stones to keep the floor above ground level. It has been kept in good repair by its current owner. Located on an open plot adjacent to a busy road, it is clearly visible to passing traffic. Preservation of the granary is important for two reasons:
- a) The granary is an unusual architectural feature
  - b) It is a significant component of the Barkham Street Area of Special Character

## 5. Thriving Communities



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## 5. Thriving Communities

### Overview

- 5.1 There are a number of well-utilised community facilities located throughout Arborfield and Barkham providing a wide range of services to a broad cross-section of residents. These work alongside other bodies such as pubs, religious organisations and local businesses to establish strong, vibrant and thriving communities (refer also to Annex VIII Community Facilities and Annex IX Recreation & Open Spaces).
- 5.2 The advent of the SDL has meant that some new facilities are available to the local communities, in particular Bohunt School, a state of the art secondary using an ex-military facility. Additionally new SANGs have been created at Hazebrouck Meadows, adjacent to the SDL.
- 5.3 The s106 agreement (2014) relating to the SDL includes provision of 35% affordable housing either on-site or off-site, connectivity and greenway links, PROW improvements, construction of two primary schools on the site, community centre, secondary school on-site, early years nursery, healthcare site, open space and allotments, retention of existing pavilion, sports pitches and gym and laying out SANGs. Separately, WBC proposes the building of a swimming pool in the SDL. The secondary school has been built and was opened in 2016.
- 5.4 The NPPF includes a number of objectives to achieve sustainable development. Amongst these is a social objective (NPPF Para 8 b) refers):
- ... to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities .... with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.**
- Policies TC1 and TC2 are intended to address these issues.
- 5.5 The NPPF seeks to support a prosperous rural economy, which is also the goal of Policy TC3.
- 83. Planning policies and decisions should enable:**
- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
  - b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
  - c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and
  - d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### **POLICY TC1: RETENTION OF EXISTING VALUED COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

Proposals for new development which involve existing community facilities, will be supported only if the proposal does not result in the loss of, or have an adverse effect on, the asset or facility concerned, unless

- a) Satisfactory alternative facilities are provided or
- b) It can be evidenced that such assets are no longer required; or
- c) They will provide sufficient community benefit to outweigh the loss of the existing facility.

- 5.6 There are a number of existing community buildings. These are well valued by residents as generally they are well used: facilities requiring advance reservations such as the two village halls are frequently fully booked. The existing community buildings include:
- a) Arborfield Village Hall: Used for a wide range of local activities including the Arborfield & Newland parish office and a doctors' surgery one day a week.
  - b) Arborfield Pavilion: Provides changing rooms for sports activities, also used as a meeting room and as a pre-school nursery.
  - c) Arborfield, Barkham & District British Legion includes a large hall, two bars, a games area and garden. It also houses a temporary library and has ample car parking.
  - d) Barkham Village Hall: Used for a wide range of local activities. The outside area means it is popular for social and children's events.
  - e) Arborfield Garrison Community Centre: Former military facility is used as a childcare centre and for other activities. Barkham Parish Office is also located in the building.
  - f) The Coombes School is an established primary and junior school with a long-standing tradition of outdoor learning and working with animals.
  - g) Reddam College is a private secondary school which was previously known as Bearwood College and originally was the Royal Merchant Navy College. The facilities, including the grounds and a modern theatre are often used for public events.
- 5.7 Outdoor recreation facilities and open spaces are valued by the local community. The proximity of these amenities is often cited as a reason for moving to the area. This is reflected in the number of users including ramblers, dog walkers, horse riders and off-road cyclists who can be observed in the various open areas. Children's play grounds are also well used with queues for the swings not unusual at peak times. The open spaces include:
- a) The Coombes: An extensive area of woodland. It is privately owned but with a network of public rights of way, including The Coombes Circular Walk. Originally this land was part of the Bearwood Estate. It has the status of Local Wildlife Site and Local Geological Site, and is appreciated for its fine landscape value and biodiversity.
  - b) Arborfield Park: owned and managed by Arborfield and Newland Parish Council, it includes a football pitch and a children's play area.
  - c) Pound Copse: owned and managed by Arborfield and Newland Parish Council, is a small attractive tract of ancient woodland, some 2.31 acres in extent. It is covered by a preservation order and is a Local Wildlife Site.
  - d) Rooks Nest Wood: a SANG owned and managed by WBC.
  - e) Hazebrouck Meadows: a SANG recently created and managed by Crest Nicholson.
  - f) The Junipers: owned by WBC, it includes a children's play area and is widely used by dog walkers.
  - g) Former MOD sports grounds at Arborfield Green, adjacent to Princess Marina Drive.
  - h) In addition there are a number of local play areas.
  - i) There is a considerable mileage of PROWs, though they do not function well as a network owing to a number of gaps and difficult crossings of main roads (See also Annexes XIII and XIV Greenways Report and maps).



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## PROPOSED COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### **POLICY TC2: PROPERLY PLANNED AND DESIGNED NEW FACILITIES,**

1. Proposals for new community facilities should :
  - a) Incorporate sufficient flexibility to allow for present needs and future planned growth to be accommodated on the one site.
  - b) Be inclusive and provide appropriate access for all generations.
  - c) Incorporate adequate off-street parking.
  - d) Be appropriately designed for the prospective use and users
  - e) Support and facilitate safe access on foot and bicycle.
2. Proposals will be considered more favourably where clear evidence of long-term viability is provided

5.8 A Village Centre is proposed as part of the SDL. This is covered in the s106 agreement (2014) which specifies provision of the following:

- a) Construction of two primary schools on the site
- b) Community centre
- c) Early years nursery
- d) Healthcare site
- e) Open space and allotments

Note that there is strong community interest in the provision of shops, medical centre and a community centre as priorities.

5.9 The development will also include extra care facilities of around 80 self-contained homes for older people with varying levels of care and support available on site. Outline permission has been granted for the extra care facilities but the details are yet to be decided.

5.10 New community facilities can be a great benefit to the local community. In order to maximise this benefit, it is important that new facilities provide long-term benefits to the locality. This includes utilising adaptable designs which provide flexibility of use to changing needs in the future, and/or through evidence of long-term viability of the proposed use. Applicants are encouraged to provide sufficient detail with proposals to establish their long-term financial viability.

### **Possible future use and management of community buildings:**

- 5.11 The old garrison swimming pool has now been demolished but it is expected it will be replaced with a similar sized resource for use by the public and the local schools. The library has yet to be decided upon but at present it remains as a resource for Bohunt school. The Gymnasium has been modernised and can now also be used by the public outside school hours. It includes provision for football, netball and tennis with 3G, floodlit all weather pitches. The old Horse infirmary is being extensively renovated but the precise nature of how it will be used is still under discussion.
- 5.12 There will be a requirement for developers to demonstrate that, where on-site provision is provided, it will be appropriately managed and maintained on a long-term basis.
- 5.13 Two new primary schools are proposed for Arborfield Green. The primary schools are not in the first phases of development, but will come as part of a later phase.

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## SMALL BUSINESSES

### **POLICY TC3: CONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND AGRICULTURE**

1. New or existing businesses in the countryside are encouraged to re-use lawful buildings that are vacant, derelict or unviable provided that:
  - a) The scale of the proposal is appropriate for a rural location, and
  - b) Proposals assess and address their potential impact on immediate neighbours and the natural environment, and
  - c) New or expanding activities do not cause excessive encroachment away from the original buildings, and
  - d) Site access and parking arrangements are appropriate for the scale and nature of the uses.
2. Best and most versatile agricultural land should be protected.

5.14 There are a number of successful businesses within Arborfield and Barkham, mostly based on horticulture and animal husbandry or of a relatively small scale, including home working.

- a) Reading University School of Agriculture, Policy and Development is a sizeable commercial farming operation, employing 147 staff, plus cleaning and ancillary workers.
- b) Reddam School, part boarding, has places for 500+ students in an historic parkland setting of over 125 acres. It also has about 60 professional members of staff.
- c) There are at least 6 restaurants.
- d) A major garden centre and a farm shop flourish
- e) Many stables with equestrian support services including livery and riding schools.
- f) Bearwood Lakes Golf Club. It provides Conference and Restaurant facilities, a stunning Wedding venue as well as providing an excellent golf course.
- g) Reading Football Club is currently building a world class Academy with many sports pitches and facilities for their athletes.
- h) There are a number of existing Commercial Units: the take-up is impressive with few or no vacant units left available.

The departure of the Army as a major employer in the area is being replaced by new sectors which draw on the natural assets of the area.

5.15 Small and medium business enterprises are common in rural areas and are currently subject to Government efforts to provide support. The importance of high speed broadband to encourage home working should be stressed. Although working from home is increasing and a large proportion of the local population is reaching retirement age, the vast majority of local people commute outside the local area to reach their places of work. This is discussed further in Section 7 Getting Around.

5.16 Unfortunately there are many locations where business is carried out without the necessary land use permissions, hence the requirement to specify re-use of lawful buildings only. Many of these sites have been the subject of enforcement action.

5.17 The rural nature of local business should be encouraged in the following ways:

- a) Support current businesses. In particular consider how new technology can be utilised to enable more people to work from home.
- b) Encourage expansion and development of new businesses that do not detract from the environment by utilising heritage buildings and integrating shared 'start-up' facilities.
- c) Maintain and protect existing farming activity. In particular encourage communities to consume fresh produce grown locally through access to allotments, community farms and local farm shops and markets.

## 6. Appropriate Development



## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

### 6. Appropriate Development

#### Overview

- 6.1 Arborfield and Barkham Parish Councils want to ensure that the needs of residents and the community are aligned with housing design to maintain community cohesion and ensure the development of desirable communities. The parish councils are working with developers to build homes that are in keeping with their surroundings, are visually interesting, provide sufficient attractive green areas and do not have a negative impact on neighbours.
- 6.2 These objectives reflect the intent of the NPPF, translated to reflect local needs in Appropriate Development Policies.
- 124. The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.**
- 6.3 The NP Steering Group initiated work on housing in two stages:
- Stage 1 was to commission planning consultants Bell Cornwell to prepare a review paper.
  - Stage 2 Based on the work done by Bell Cornwell, the Steering Group produced its own Housing Needs Analysis.

These studies are shown as Annexes X Briefing Note Neighbourhood Area Housing Need April 2017 and XI Housing Needs Analysis.

- 6.4 The housing needs analysis produced by the Neighbourhood Planning team, based on census data indicates a requirement for 899 homes by 2036. Using the formula suggested by the DCLG indicates a very slightly higher figure of 917 homes. Both of these calculations suggest the requirement to 2036 is roughly a half of what is already committed at the SDL for the period to 2026. It could therefore be argued that there is no local need for any additional housing. However recognising the wider pressure on housing, the following two policies are designed to permit a small amount of housing in suitable locations.

#### NEW DEVELOPMENT

##### **POLICY AD1: NEW DEVELOPMENT WITHIN DEVELOPMENT LIMITS**

- Where they meet other policy requirements in this Neighbourhood Plan and the local plan, the principle of new housing within the current Development Limits is supported, (including the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location). However the use of brownfield sites will be preferred.
- Applicants should demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community particularly with regard to design issues and are encouraged to:
  - Engage in early discussion with the local community and Wokingham Borough Council to clarify design expectations;
  - Incorporate, as appropriate, the views of the community in the design of proposals; and
  - Incorporate a Statement of Community Consultation with an application where appropriate.



## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

**Note** Development Limits apply to Barkham Hill and Arborfield Cross. The SDL boundary should also be treated as a settlement boundary, with the exception of land designated as SANG or other open spaces including sports field.

### HOUSING FOR LOCAL NEEDS

#### **POLICY AD2: PRIORITISE HOUSING FOR LOCAL NEEDS**

1. All proposals for new housing development must demonstrate how the types of homes provided will contribute to a balanced mix of housing and meet the needs identified in the most current assessment of housing needs – at the time of publication this is the Arborfield and Barkham Housing Needs Analysis 2019 (Annex XI).
2. In all new housing developments providing affordable housing, the purchase of affordable homes for sale is encouraged to be prioritised for key workers locally in the first instance, with the local connection proposed to be within the neighbourhood area firstly and then within the borough of Wokingham.
  - a) 'Key workers' refers to school teachers and medical staff employed locally.

### Housing Needs Analysis - Methodology

6.5 Methodology was based on Localities toolkit and used a six step approach.

- Step 1 Establish a baseline for the population of the two parishes.
- Step 2 Compare with national, regional and local age distribution.
- Step 3 Project forward 25 years, i.e. 2011 to 2036, including demographic adjustments to include replacement population for 0-25 year cohort and projected death rates.
- Step 4 Adjust to correct age profile imbalances. This adjustment will absorb growth to cover economic growth, migration and market pricing.
- Step 5 Convert population to household units.
- Step 6 Assess housing requirements by age group.

### Population and Area

6.6 A review of the 2011 Census information provides the following information for the two parishes.

**Figure 4 Arborfield and Barkham Census Information 2011**

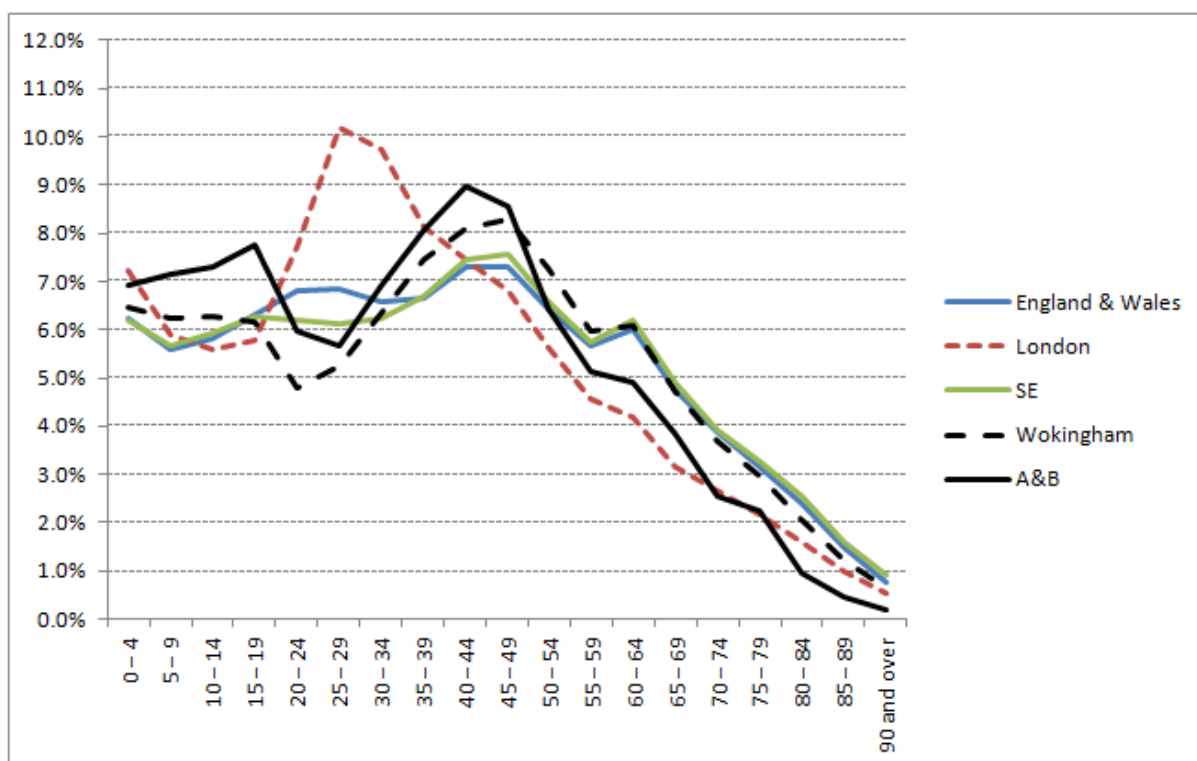
	<b>Arborfield</b>	<b>Barkham</b>	<b>Combined</b>
No. of Residents	2,860	3,603	6,463
Number of households	1,094	1,226	2,320
Average household size	2.56	2.69	2.63
Residents in households	2,797	3,295	6,092
Residents in communal living	63	308	371
Area (hectares)	1,116	677	1,793
Population density (per hectare)	2.56	5.32	3.60

- 6.7 Barkham has the larger population of the two parishes. A distortion is that in 2011, Barkham contained 308 residents in communal living, compared with 63 in Arborfield: these would primarily have been military personnel living in barracks accommodation. In the last few years this number will have been reduced due to the closure of the military premises concerned.
- 6.8 When taking into account the population figures, there is also the need to factor in the impact of the significant level of development already in the pipeline relating to the Arborfield SDL. The SDL is planned to deliver 1,800 dwellings in Barkham which will more than double the population of parish compared with the 2011 census baseline.

## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- 6.9 Using 2011 census data, the following comparison with national, regional and local age profiles was created.

**Figure 5 Comparison of age distribution at national, regional and local levels**  
(% of population by age group)



- 6.10 Significant trends identified include the following:

- The largest groups in Arborfield and Barkham are 35-39 (8.1%), 40-44 (9.0%) and 45-49 (8.6%). This reflects the fact that most new housing in recent years has been characterised by larger family homes with 3 or more bedrooms which currently would sell at £500,000 or more.
- The younger age groups 20-24 (6.0%) and 25-29 (5.7%), by contrast, appear to be under-represented. In part this is a natural trend as this age group moves away from home to go to university and to take new jobs elsewhere, especially in London. It is also likely to have occurred because of the lack of low cost housing in the area. The houses that have been built are outside the price range for younger buyers who would like to get on to the property ladder. In the age groups 0-19, Arborfield and Barkham share is significantly higher than those for the local authority (Wokingham), region (London and South East) and nationally (England and Wales).
- The 20-34 age group is under-represented for the two parishes and for the local authority. The London share, in contrast surges, especially for the 25-29 and 30-34 group. As explained earlier, this is in part because of life style choices with this age group often choosing to live in rented accommodation but it will also be affected by the lack of low cost housing available for purchase.
- The shares peak in the 35-49 group for all four geographies except London. The peak is most extreme in Arborfield and Barkham.
- From 50-79, the shares fall away for all the geographies. Arborfield and Barkham are the lowest except for London.

## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

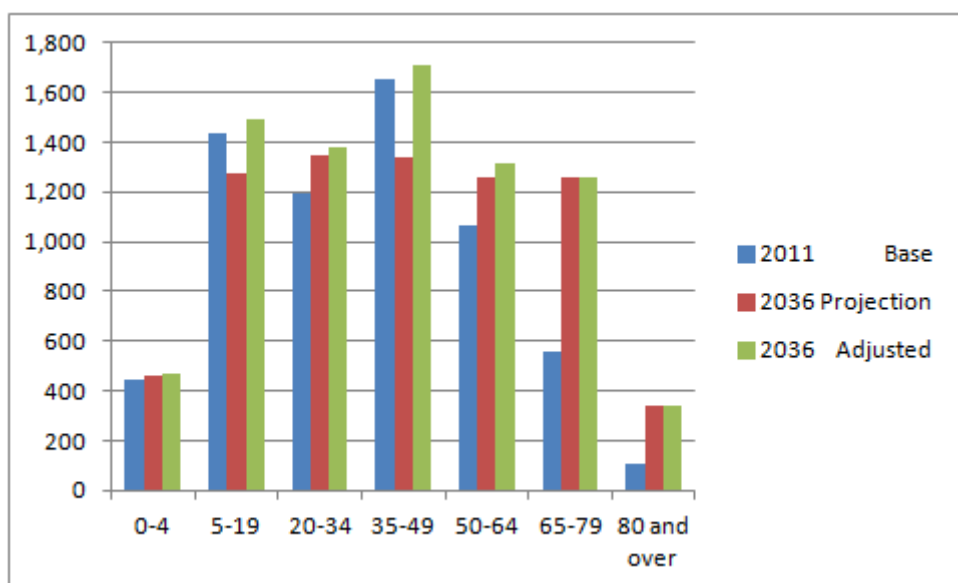
- f) The 80+ age group is a remarkably small proportion in Arborfield and Barkham. This would seem to be a reflection of there having been a large influx of family groups during the 1980s and 1990s who have not yet reached the most senior age group.

6.11 The population in Arborfield and Barkham was projected forward to 2036.

Birth rates have been calculated on the basis of the age group 25-44 fully replacing itself. Death rates have been derived from national statistics.

6.12 In the base projection, inward and outward migration are expected to compensate each other. This is a simplification as London and the South East generally have a very mobile population. However it is a reasonable judgement that the types of housing will see more or less a like-for-like replacement by age group. This is shown graphically in the next figure.

**Figure 6 Chart of Population Projections**



6.13 The following trends emerge:

- All the age groups from 55 upwards experience large increases in share, with 65-69 group doubling and groups over 80 more than trebling. The growth of these age groups results in relatively reduced share for younger age group.
- Age groups from 35 to 49 show a significant decline though, in absolute terms, these are actually the largest groups. This is a consequence of relatively low numbers in the 10-25 age groups in the base year.
- A decline also occurs in the 50-54 age group.
- The shrinking of these groups results in a reduction in the 5-19 age groups.

6.14 As just noted, the 2036 projection results in an age profile overloaded at the higher end of the population scale, with numbers in the lower groupings actually shrinking in the period 2011 to 2036. To achieve a more balanced age structure, additional growth in the age groups up to 59 has been assumed. The outcome is shown in the following table.

6.15 Average household size in Arborfield and Barkham is 2.67. This is weighted by the relatively small proportion of older people, the majority of whom live either alone or in two person households.

The national average is 2.51. This reflects a higher proportion of older people.

Based on the adjusted projection for 2036, household size in Arborfield and Barkham is projected to drop to 2.43.

## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- 6.16 Housing requirements have been calculated by applying average size of household by age group to the population projection.

**Figure 7 Housing Requirement by Age Group**

Age group	2011 Base	2036 Adjusted	Population increase	Population increase %	Household size	Housing units req'd
0-4	448	466	18	4%	NA	0
5-19	1,436	1,493	57	4%	NA	0
20-34	1,198	1,381	183	15%	1.75	105
35-49	1,655	1,707	52	3%	2.40	22
50-64	1,064	1,318	254	24%	2.40	106
65-79	557	1,261	704	126%	1.50	470
80 and over	105	342	237	226%	1.20	198
Total	6,463	7,968	1,505	23%	2.51	901

- 6.17 The additional housing units required in Arborfield and Barkham between 2011 and 2036 is 899. This is a half of the 1,800 already committed up to 2036 in the SDL. This means that any additional housing would be adopted to accommodate an influx of people from elsewhere, whether from neighbouring authorities, London or further afield.
- 6.18 On the face of it, the greatest requirement is for houses for the 60+ age group. However, it can be expected that the majority of this group will remain in family houses that they acquired in earlier years. Some of these houses could be released, but only if suitable accommodation is provided to permit downsizing. Besides space, the requirements of this group will include lower maintenance properties and premises adapted to allow easy movement in the event of disability. Specialist housing such as sheltered accommodation and high dependency units will also be necessary for the anticipated increase in the 80+ age group.
- 6.19 There has to be a major focus on smaller starter homes so that the 20-39 age group can more easily settle in the parishes.

### Government Consultation

- 6.20 In September 2017, the Department for Communities and Local Government initiated a consultation entitled 'Planning for the right homes in the right places'. This contained details of the number of new homes required by 2036 in each local planning authority area and a proposed formula to assess housing need for neighbourhood plans.
- 6.21 The proposed formula is simply to take the population of the neighbourhood planning area and calculate what percentage it is of the overall population in the local planning authority area. The housing need figure in the neighbourhood planning area would then be that percentage of the local planning authority's identified housing need. Applying this formula for Arborfield and Barkham produces the following result:

**Figure 8 Projection based on DCLG formula**

Populations	2011	2036
Wokingham (WBC) population	154,380	182,000
Arborfield and Barkham (A&B) population	6,463	7,969
A&B proportion of WBC	4.2%	
Wokingham annual housing need	876	
A&B annual housing need	36.67	
A&B projected housing need 2011-2036		917

- 6.22 The projection of 917 is very slightly higher than the NPSG projection of 901, but it is still only about half of the Core Strategy commitment of 1,800.



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## HIGH QUALITY DESIGN

### **POLICY AD3: HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT WITH GENEROUS OPEN SPACE, PROPERLY LANDSCAPED**

All new developments must reflect the rural character and historic context of existing dwellings within the Plan Area. New development must deliver good quality design. In order to achieve this, all new development must wherever possible:

- a) Recognise, in the design of developments, the distinctive local character of the area and contribute sensitively in order to create dwellings of a high architectural and rural quality, referring to the published Village Design Statements.
- b) Consider the density of any new development which must be in character with the surrounding area, respect the rural nature of the area and be designed to give an impression of spaciousness and variety with uniform houses and plots being avoided.
- c) Recognise possible impacts of climate change and consequently reflect sustainable development standards.

### **Building Styles**

6.23 With a long history, the parishes are blessed with a great variety of architectural styles which have evolved over the ages. Houses in Arborfield & Newland tend to sit in small, cohesive groups in terms of their style whereas Barkham's character reflects a scattered settlement pattern and lacks the usual nucleated structure of an English village. Some common characteristics define the character of the of the parishes:

- a) Low density housing with ample outside space.
- b) Variety of building designs.
- c) Properties set back from the roads.
- d) One or two storeys only in pre-1990 developments.
- e) Predominance of dormer style upper windows.
- f) Extensive use of local red brick amongst older properties.
- g) Development merged into natural green spaces.
- h) Green canopy of trees.

6.24 The Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement and the Barkham Village Design Statement should be used as a guide for achieving good quality design of properties in the Plan Area. In particular the following principles should be followed (relevant VDS Design Guidelines shown in brackets):

- a) Development should have regard to the surrounding landscape and neighbouring development, particularly where this is of unique local character (ANVDS 1 and BVDS 1).
- b) Diversity is encouraged where this would enhance the particular character of the street scene. Building design should thus be sensitive to the general design and features of nearby properties (ANVDS 2 and BVDS 4).
- c) Building lines should continue to be set back from the road, where this would maintain the character of the area (ANVDS 3 and BVDS 5).
- d) Any infilling should be appropriate in scale and mass relative to surrounding properties, and discouraged if a more cramped environment may result. Unsympathetic infilling can have a detrimental visual and spatial effect on adjacent properties, especially as residential gardens are an intrinsic feature of a rural community (BVDS 3).

## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- e) Parking: It is essential that new developments provide adequate off-road parking for both residents and visitors (ANVDS 4 a) and BVDS 17).
- f) Driveways: Driveway surfaces of natural materials such as gravel, pebble and shingle give a more traditional look than tarmac and provide better water soak away (ANVDS 4 b) and BVDS 18).
- g) All trees should wherever possible be retained and cared for. New tree planting should be encouraged so that the leafy appearance of Barkham is conserved and enhanced. In particular locally native broadleaf species should be planted (ANVDS 5 b) and BVDS 19).
- h) Hedges, fences (wooden, iron), walls and gates should blend with existing boundary features and should not dominate the building beyond. Natural frontages such as relatively low hedges are encouraged but boundaries should suit the style of building development and area character (ANVDS 5 c) and BVDS 20).
- i) Redundant agricultural buildings that are used for commercial purposes, including storage and parking facilities, should be adequately screened by planting evergreen or native broadleaf species of trees (ANVDS 6 and BVDS 22).

6.25 Development proposals should recognise possible impacts of climate change and so should reflect sustainable development standards that are appropriate to the character of the area.

- a) Sustainable/eco housing is welcomed in balance with the surrounding character of the development area (ANVDS 7 also refer to Sustainability Paper Annex IV 17.3)
- b) For new developments, such as the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location, it would be beneficial to consider alternative forms of heat capture such as ground source heat pumps or the use of design to increase solar gain and benefit from the passive stack effect to both heat and ventilate buildings. In larger developments, it may even be possible to consider the use of combined heat and power plans with possible district heating schemes. (ANVDS 7 also refer to Sustainability Paper Annex IV 17.1 ).
- c) Design all new buildings and/or developments with the security of the building and its occupants at the forefront in terms of personal safety, crime prevention and environmental efficiency Sustainability Paper Annex IV 17.1).
- d) Be laid out so as to encourage travel by means other than the car, for shorter journeys.
- e) Provide streets which encourage low vehicle speeds and which can function as safe, social spaces. (refer to Sustainability Paper Annex IV 16.5).
- f) Incorporate charging points for electric vehicles, and measures to minimise the use of energy and water resources (refer to Sustainability Paper Annex IV 17.3).

6.26 Given the increasing proportion of older people, as identified in the Housing Needs Analysis, it would be desirable if the needs of elderly and disabled people were considered in house design. By 2036 the over-65 age group will represent over 20% of the population in the Plan Area, having more than doubled since 2011 (refer para 6.13 and Figure 5 above). This requirement was also supported in the Residents Survey with 91% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing (Annex III Q18).

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE

### POLICY AD4: ADDRESS LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Planning applications for development must ensure that:

- a) The principles of flood risk management, including SuDS are fully addressed at the outline planning stage and, ideally, in pre-application discussions. This includes SuDS maintenance plans and funding for the lifetime of the development.
- b) Applications must show how they have addressed Wokingham Borough Council's SuDS strategy\* (and any replacement strategy) and have designed appropriate SuDS accordingly.
- c) Confirmation from the water company during planning that there would be adequate capacity in the sewerage system prior to occupation of new homes
- d) Provide measures to slow the rate of water run-off by adequate provision of swales, ponds and other SuDs measures.
- e) Encourage tree planting to reduce run-off rates. As an ideal a new tree should be planted to replace every one that is removed
- f) Account is taken of known local flooding problems (see 6.32 below).

\* WBC Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) strategy:

<http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/community-and-safety/emergencies/drainage-and-flooding/>

6.27 Policy AD4 is intended to translate the requirements of the NPPF to local conditions.

**149. Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.**

6.28 Flood management is a key part of sustainability. This was examined as a specific topic, led by a local expert on flooding who is a resident of Barkham. The key theme is an Integrated Catchments Approach (refer Map M Hydrology).

6.29 As a tributary to the Thames, any reduction in peak flows and water levels from the Loddon catchment will benefit the Thames. It is far cheaper to invest in simple improvements to control the flow in the upper reaches of the river than to invest in extremely expensive engineering projects downstream. The concept of using nature to help reduce flooding can be extended to surface water problem.

6.30 Thames Water encourages developers to use their free pre-planning service

<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/preplanning>

This service can tell developers at an early stage if there will be capacity in water and/or wastewater networks to serve their development, or what Thames Water can do if capacity is inadequate. The developer can then submit this as evidence to support planning applications. Thames Water can then prepare to serve the new development at the point of need, helping avoid delays to housing delivery.

6.31 In the past few years it is apparent that flood events are being experienced more frequently than used to be the case. Climate change is likely to make such events more frequent. Current protection measures cannot always cope.

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## Known Local Flooding Problems

- 6.32 Within the Parishes of Arborfield and Barkham there are a range of flooding problems. From roads that flood, to properties that flood from either surface water or river flooding.
- a) The Holt woodland stands within Zones 2 and 3 of the Floodplain, but it must be noted that this categorisation does not protect the whole site. The river which runs through the site is a tributary to the nearby Loddon River. The Holt has been known to flood on a regular basis and is therefore of value to protect the local settlement of Carter's Hill and the dairy farm adjacent to the site.
  - b) The area of Carter's Hill (a tributary to the Loddon runs through it, and the Loddon is known to 'back up'). Nearby flood plains could be adapted to increase flood storage and additional wet woodlands would be helpful.
  - c) Biggs Lane (within the SDL) has known flooding problems. Crest are addressing this by using swales and holding ponds. This needs to be done generally in the Plan Area, especially in areas with clay soil. Other possible solutions could include soil decompaction and planting long rooted plants.
  - d) Barkham Bridge can cause flooding especially as the small arch causes water to back up. It is planned to carry the road on a new, higher bridge on columns but it is proposed to retain the old bridge for pedestrian use. This may still cause water to back up, especially if a blockage occurs in the small arch as occurred in 2007.
  - e) Barkham Ride and parts of Barkham Road west of Bearwood Road, where water drains off adjacent fields.
  - f) There are properties in Barkham that flood which could benefit from 'greening the street' schemes which include permeable drives, water butts as well as converting front gardens into green spaces or converting areas of footpath into green areas. All of these approaches help increase the roof-to-drains time of rainfall and therefore reduce flood peaks.
- 6.33 The challenge for the Plan Area is to find integrated solutions that aim to work with the environment rather than against it. For example, 'slowing the flow' approaches should be adopted to reduce the speed that water enters the drains and onto roads. These approaches could include filter strips at the end of fields which are designed to slow the passage of water across them through a combination of careful planting and soil improvement. In addition, areas could be developed where water can be diverted and retained until the heavy rain passes whereby the flood water then slowly drains out or drains into the soil.
- 6.34 Wet woodlands and woodlands in general have a positive impact on flood risk and also have large positive environmental and biodiversity impacts. It is now a well researched fact that planting trees can help reduce flooding by slowing or holding back water, as with surface water, effectively reducing peaks flows. Note: care must be taken with the location of wet woodlands and the trees used (the right tree in the right place) to ensure that they don't cause flooding by backing up water in places where flooding will affect properties, and essential infrastructure nor generate woody debris in locations where it could be a flood risk. Trees not only add amenity and aesthetic value but also provide a flood risk reduction benefit.
- 6.35 Further supporting evidence and information is shown in the Flood Risk Management Statement (Annex XII).



## 7. Getting Around



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## 7. Getting Around

### Overview

- 7.1 Arborfield and Barkham is an area of dispersed settlements with complex travel needs. This results in great dependence on cars as the main means of transport as is shown by the following measures:
- a) The Residents Survey (Annex III) showed that 86% of respondents used the car to travel to work or education.
  - b) The survey also showed that only 3% of residents travel to work or education by bus.
  - c) Car ownership in Wokingham Borough is among the highest of any authority in the country, and has been so throughout recent decades. At 1.64 cars per household, as recorded at the 2011 census, ownership outstrips the national average of 1.1 cars/household by almost 50%.

Despite this already very high level, car ownership continues to grow at much the same pace as the national average, with little indication that any saturation level is being approached. The notion that car usage will be reduced by restricting car parking will not have the desired effect and to use artificially low trip rates is not recognising the real problems. In Arborfield and Barkham, where opportunities to travel by public transport are limited, reliance on the private car as the primary means of travel will remain high.

- 7.2 The Neighbourhood Plan aims to bring realistic expectations to transport planning in terms of the limited road network (Policy GA1) and to encourage effective promotion of non-motorised modes (Policy GA2) and public transport (Policy GA3). The NPPF shares similar values:

**102. Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that:**

- a) the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed;
  - b) opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;
  - c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;
  - d) the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains; and
  - e) patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places.
- 7.3 In 2013, a Transport Focus Group began to examine all aspects of transport provision, and smartly redirected its efforts to a review of the Arborfield Green transport proposals when they were published. This was quickly followed by a period of engagement with Wokingham Borough Council's work on the Arborfield Cross Relief Road. Through its analysis, the group expanded its appreciation of the issues and underlying causes, and some residential traffic surveys were prompted. The following documents may be found on the Neighbourhood Plan web site:
- Residential Trip Rate Survey  
Barkham Traffic Count Diagram
- 7.4 Another focus group has studied greenways in considerable detail, including surveys of rights of way and a questionnaire. Besides preparing a far-reaching report, the group also initiated some practical projects, in particular two signposted walks: the Barkham Way and The Coombes Circular Walk, both these projects being completed in 2017. The report of the group's findings is shown in Annex XIII.

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## TRAFFIC

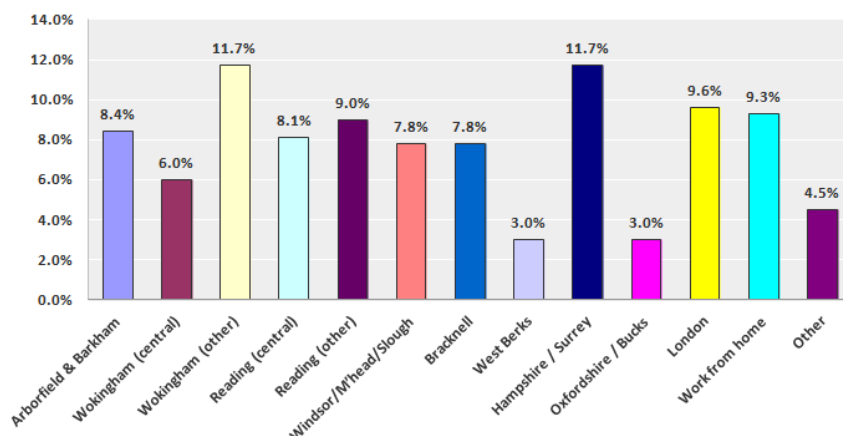
### POLICY GA1: MINIMISE ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC ON UNSUITABLE ROADS

1. Development proposals must consider, assess and address their impact on junctions and the roads and other PROWs that connect them, including road safety, and implement measures of mitigation as required. In establishing the capacity of individual roads, consideration must also be given to the general frontage land-use and its sensitivity to traffic.
2. Proposals should recognise and respond as appropriate to the fact that there are many narrow country lanes with no footway in the neighbourhood area, already under pressure from current traffic levels.

### Connectivity

- 7.5 The Plan Area is well-located for access to centres of employment and to the strategic road network, including the M3 and M4 motorways, and this is appreciated by local residents, 63% of whom cited motorway access as one of the factors that make the area a great place to live, and 86% travel to work by car. However, this is accompanied by frustration at the extent and level of traffic congestion – 49% of residents regard it as one of the major challenges facing the area.
- 7.6 Travel to work, not unexpectedly, produces a very complex picture with a wide spread of destinations, as is shown in the following chart.

**Figure 9 Residents' Survey Q3 – Where do you travel to get to work/education each day?**



The largest groups are Wokingham (other) and Hampshire/Surrey. Figures exclude the 'not applicable' group (mainly retirees). The free format box demonstrated the complexity of modern life, with residents working in more than one place, or who commute (presumably not on a daily basis) to overseas locations.

### Existing and Planned Roads

- 7.7 The local road network has developed over time but remains largely unchanged over the last century. No major improvements have been constructed, save for the Arborfield Garrison Relief Road in the 1970s, which realigned the A327 away from residential properties. Consequently, the network is struggling to cope with vastly increased levels of traffic, producing congestion and unwelcome traffic levels on unsuitable roads. Some roads are unsuitable because they have insufficient traffic-carrying capacity; others because traffic levels are incompatible with the residential and other traffic-sensitive

## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

development located alongside them such as schools and community facilities. Notwithstanding the planned Arborfield Cross Relief Road, there are concerns that traffic from the 3500 new homes at Arborfield Green will exacerbate the situation.

7.8 The following road improvements are planned in or adjacent to the Plan Area:

- a) **Arborfield Cross Relief Road.** This is now under construction and completion is targeted for 2020. This will relieve the village centre at Arborfield Cross of much of the through traffic passing along the A327, as well as most of the additional traffic emanating from the new development at Arborfield Green
- b) **Barkham Bridge.** Widening is in the planning stage with target completion in 2019. This will eliminate a single lane pinch point which causes considerable queuing and is a safety hazard. However it will contribute to further congestion at the Barkham Road/Barkham Street junction.
- c) **Nine Mile Extension;** a portion of this road has been built to access the Bohunt School. When complete it will connect the A327 to Nine Mile Ride.

Note that none of these improvements will increase capacity between the west of the Plan Area and Wokingham town centre.

7.9 Local residents have, for some time, been campaigning for lower and more consistent speed limits throughout the Plan Area, where many of the roads currently have 40 mph limits. Plans to reduce speed limits on certain routes are currently being considered, along with junction improvements.

### Some examples of roads not suited to additional traffic

7.10 The following roads in the Plan Area are narrow country lanes not wide enough for two way traffic

- a) **Church Lane, Arborfield.** This is a narrow lane passing through the settlement of Arborfield, close to St Bartholomew's Church. It has a number of narrow stretches not wide enough for two cars and several blind bends. The speed limit of 40 mph is unrealistically high, especially as the lane is used as a rat run for traffic coming from Shinfield towards Winnersh.
- b) **Church Lane, Barkham.** This is a narrow lane, only wide enough for a single car from Barkham Street to St James Church. Though it is not a through route, it is well used as the only access road for Barkham Village Hall as well as the church.
- c) **Commonfield Lane, Barkham.** A country lane with mature trees along both sides. It is narrow with passing places, it is well-used as a rat run from the Nine Mile Ride area of Finchampstead towards Winnersh and the M4. Particularly at the southern end, adjacent to the SDL, there is a long bend with poor visibility. The Greenway from Finchampstead to Arborfield Green happens to cross as about the midpoint of this bend. Speed is a problem as the national speed limit (60mph) applies.
- d) **Edneys Hill, Barkham.** Another narrow country lane which has a number of narrow stretches not wide enough for two cars and with several blind bends. Nevertheless it is well used as a rat run from Finchampstead Road towards Winnersh, the M4 and Reading, effectively providing an unofficial bypass for the congested town centre. Speed is a problem as the national limit (60mph) applies.
- e) **Greensward Lane, Arborfield.** This is a narrow lane, only wide enough for a single car for much of its length.
- f) **Park Corner Lane** is a single track road.

Note: The UK's best selling cars are getting broader and have increased in width by 17 per cent (28cm/11 inches) over the last 20 years, Direct Line research has found. It means narrow country lanes are becoming more difficult, as drivers are struggling to squeeze past each other without scraping or going off the side of the road. The AA has also observed that on narrower roads, more cars are hitting the kerb, adding to breakdown claims.



## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- 7.11 Roads where parking restricts two way flows
- a) **School Road, Arborfield/Barkham.** Officially part of the B3349, this is well used as a through route from Wokingham towards Shinfield and Reading. It has a number of bends with poor sight lines. As The Coombes School is located towards the Arborfield end of this road, visibility on bends is made much worse owing to large numbers of parked cars which can affect several hours a day. Pinch points and speed humps have been placed on the stretch of the road nearest to the school, although these are welcomed as a traffic calming measures, it does mean that the flow of traffic is significantly impeded. It should also be noted that the junction with Langley Common Road is at an acute angle with poor sightlines looking west: this makes turning west extremely difficult.
- 7.12 Country roads not wide enough for large vehicles to pass and with difficult topography and/or bends
- a) **Mole Road** is below standard width, has no footway for much of its length, and has a number of tight bends and hills. As it is heavily used as a route towards the M4, traffic is fast; this makes crossing by non-motorised users, especially horses, at a well-used byway (AN4 Gravelpit Hill Lane and Copse Barnhill Lane) very hazardous.
  - b) **Swallowfield Road** is a country road which for much of its length is less than two vehicles wide.
  - c) **Barkham Street** includes the original Barkham village, an area designated an Area of Special Character, though the road is signed as being restricted width (2 metres) except for buses. There is only a very narrow footway on one side of the road, just 75cm wide in places. As part of the informal western bypass for Wokingham, in particular serving traffic from Finchampstead heading towards the M4, traffic tends to be fast-moving. It has been particularly apparent that traffic along Barkham Street and Barkham Ride has increased substantially in the last five years as drivers seek to avoid congestion elsewhere.
  - d) **Barkham Ride** is also part of the informal western bypass. It has many bends and has no footways, making this road effectively out of bounds for non- motorised users. Like Barkham Street it is signed as being restricted width (2 metres) except for buses.
- 7.13 Residential roads that have already become busy and where the environment for residents in being impaired.
- a) **Barkham Road** is the main road through Barkham. It is the main artery into Wokingham from the west. It begins at a very busy level crossing and has congested junctions with Bearwood Road and Barkham Street. It was recognised as having inadequate capacity as long ago as 1974 in the Inspector's report for the Woosehill enquiry and even in the First World War, horses were driven along the road at night from the station sidings to the Arborfield Remount Depot due to the congestion by day.
  - b) **Bearwood Road** (southern section) forms part of an informal western bypass for Wokingham.
  - c) **Langley Common Road** is the westward continuation of Barkham Road.
- 7.14 It is encouraging that a circular was published in 2013 by the Department of Transport (Circular 01/2013) which seems to be more accommodating in recognising the practical difficulties of vulnerable users and other environmental issues. The circular actively encourages 20 mph: zones, though primarily in urban areas. The following extract is illuminating with regard to walking cycling, walking and riding:
- 32 Different road users perceive risks and appropriate speeds differently, and drivers and riders of motor vehicles often do not have the same perception of the hazards of speed as do people on foot, on bicycles or on horseback. Fear of traffic can affect peoples' quality of life and the needs of vulnerable road users must be fully taken into account in order to further encourage these modes of travel and improve their safety. Speed management strategies should seek to protect local community life.

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## GREENWAYS

### **POLICY GA2: IMPLEMENT LOCAL NETWORK OF GREEN ROUTES FOR NON-MOTORISED USERS**

Development proposals should not inhibit the delivery of the wider network of Greenways and other PROWs. Proposals should where possible support:

- a) The achievement of a network of all-weather routes.
- b) The provision of safe crossings for the benefit of non-motorised users, wherever PROWs meet primary routes.
- c) Better connectivity throughout the Plan Area, including the new developments proposed in the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location-
- d) Creation of opportunities for sustainable transport including safe routes to schools.
- e) Provision of better access to the countryside and surrounding destinations for amenity purposes.

- 7.15 The following priority projects are identified in the Arborfield and Barkham Greenways Report (Annex XIII Section 2)
- a) Greenway suitable for cycling from Arborfield Cross to the SDL (safe route to school). (Section 8 route 1)
  - b) Greenway suitable for cycling from Barkham to the SDL (safe route to school) and extension to Wokingham centre (commuting). (Section 8 route 2c and Section 9)
  - c) Improved crossings at various locations including Barkham Road adjacent to Barkham Bull, Edney's Hill and Pegasus crossing in Mole Road. (Section 14)
  - d) Ensure proposed greenways in SDL are fit for purpose, in particular adequate crossings provided for main roads, specifically Biggs Lane, Shearlands Road and the Nine Mile Ride Extension. (Section 17)
  - e) Signs for existing footpaths, e.g. The Coombes Circular Walk, Barkham to Rooks Nest. (Section 19)
  - f) Plans for longer leisure routes, e.g. Bearwood Circle connecting The Coombes, Woosehill. Sindlesham and Carters Hill. (Section 19)
  - g) Loddon Path. (Section 18)
  - h) Develop circular routes for horse riding especially in The Coombes and Carters Hill area. (Section 11)
  - i) Bridge over Arborfield bypass (Section 14)
  - j) Reclaiming quiet lanes, specifically. Church Lane (Arborfield) and Edney's Hill (Barkham) (Section 16)
  - k) Promotion of greenways including maps and websites (Section 19)
  - l) Maintenance arrangements for stiles, kissing gates and ensuring adequate drainage to facilitate all weather usage. (Section 20)
- 7.16 Arborfield and Barkham have an extensive network of rights of way, including public footpaths, bridleways and byways (refer Map N Public Rights of Way). This network is well used as an amenity, including walks in The Coombes and cross-country routes from Arborfield towards Farley Hill, Barkham to Rooks Nest Wood and around Carters Hill. Surfaces are poor and can be almost impassable in prolonged wet weather.
- 7.17 The Greenways Survey carried out at the Arborfield Fete in June 2015 indicated that there is great enthusiasm for walking, primarily for leisure and exercise. Dog walking was popular and organised rambling groups were also well supported. There was a split verdict in the Residents' Survey as to whether or not connectivity of footpaths and pavements is adequate (51%/49%).

## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- 7.18 Horse riding is popular in the parishes with a relatively large number of livery stables and riding schools. However there is a general feeling that the bridleways have two serious shortcomings: the lack of circular routes and the difficulty of crossing main roads.
- 7.19 Cycling in the parishes is limited. This is partly because the road network is considered too dangerous, while the off-road routes do not have suitable surfaces. The Residents' Survey indicated that the proportion of residents cycling at least monthly is less than 20% though there is a hard core of commuters (2%). Cycling, whether for leisure or work, would be encouraged by dedicated cycle ways (72% of respondents felt this) or roadside cycle ways (38%).
- 7.20 A major concern is the lack of safe walking and cycling routes to school. Specifically the Bohunt School draws students from Arborfield and Barkham and also from Finchampstead. In theory there are roadside footpaths from all three parishes, but given the distances involved, there is really a need for all-weather cycle routes, an aspiration shared by residents and councils in all three parishes.

### Current and Proposed Greenway Projects

- 7.21 A greenway has been completed along the Barkham/Finchampstead boundary, using bridleway BR14. This will connect to a greenway through the SDL which is already under construction and which will ultimately lead to the existing Pegasus crossing on the A327 near Baird Road. This in turn leads to a bridleway towards Farley Hill. This will eventually create a route all the way from Finchampstead to Farley Hill, a distance of 5 kilometres. The greenway portion of this route (from Finchampstead to the A327) will use a flexi-pave surface suitable for walking, cycling and riding. Safe crossings of various main roads are yet to be resolved.
- 7.22 Barkham Parish Council has initiated two 'branded' walking routes; The Coombes Circular Walk and The Barkham Way (from Barkham Road to Rooks Nest Wood). These now have improved signposts and are supported by online maps and other publicity.
- 7.23 There is a strong desire for a Pegasus crossing of Mole Road in order to link bridleways on either side.
- 7.24 A footbridge across the Arborfield Cross Relief Road is proposed. This will utilise footpath AN17 and will be future-proofed by being built to full greenway standard.
- 7.25 Wokingham Borough Council has a long-term plan to create additional greenways including an east-west route that will connect Wokingham to Arborfield Cross via Barkham and The Coombes, and routes from the SDL to Wokingham and from the SDL northwards towards Shinfield.
- 7.26 Another WBC long term project is to create a Loddon Path along the banks of the river.

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

### **POLICY GA3: PUBLIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS WITH LONG TERM VIABILITY**

As a general principle, improvements to public transport will be supported, recognising that schemes must have the prospect of long term viability.

- 7.27 There is good evidence that there are increased resident numbers using the recently improved bus services. Development proposals within Arborfield and Barkham include a number of additional measures to encourage use of alternative travel methods, which the parish councils positively encourage, to help relieve traffic congestion. Unfortunately many key roads lack the infrastructure to permit safe walking and cycling even though they form walking routes to local schools. Many busy roads lack suitable pedestrian footways.
- 7.28 Planners of the major developments have envisaged a shift away from private car use to alternative methods of transport. The Parish Councils will work with Wokingham Borough Council to achieve the key aims of Wokingham's Local Transport Plan 3, which include:
- a) Policy AT1: 'Actively encourage integrating walking and cycling routes and facilities into key destinations'.
  - b) Policy AT2 – 'Improving access to public open space and country parks will help to encourage walking and cycling as a leisure activity'.
  - c) Policy AT3 – 'Provide walking and cycling opportunities that are inclusive of residents with mobility, visual and hearing impairments and other disabilities.'
- 7.29 It is disappointing that there is little sign of a shift away from car use with only small numbers of residents walking, cycling or going by bus to work or education. This is a consequence of the complex travel patterns with such a wide range of destinations, and the absence of safe walking or cycling routes for many journeys. Walking and cycling are covered also in the Greenways section.
- 7.30 Commuting by bus applies to a very low proportion of residents (3%) but nearly a quarter of residents (23%) use buses at least monthly. The proportion is higher for Arborfield residents (28%) where there are more frequent bus services available to Reading, three times hourly. The equivalent proportion for Barkham is much lower (18%), where the lower frequency, hourly service is clearly less attractive.
- 7.31 The survey responses indicate that different improvements are required in Arborfield and Barkham to encourage bus travel. For Barkham residents the priority is frequency (41%) while more direct routes (29%) and fares (24%) are more of a factor in Arborfield. 20% of respondents in either parish would never use a bus in any circumstances.



## 8. Project List



## Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

### 8. Project List

The following list includes a number of topics which have emerged during the preparation of this plan but which are not land use issues appropriate for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan policies. The two parish councils will endeavour to progress these items as the opportunities arise. (Relevant Policy Groups shown in brackets.)

- a) Task force of residents to recommend environmental improvements in centre of Arborfield Cross, taking opportunity to improve traffic management on completion of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road. (IRS/GA)
- b) There are potential Areas of Special Character under review at Carters Hill and at Hall Farm including Hall Farm House, the Old Rectory (listed) and neighbouring buildings. (IRS)
- c) Targets for additional designation include: (IRS)
  - The Coombes woodland and adjacent area.
  - The Holt Woodland.
  - The Rhododendron avenue along Bearwood Road.
  - The historic chestnut avenue leading to the remains of the old church at Arborfield, which is a scheduled monument
  - The lime grove at Nashgrove Ride in Barkham.
  - An area at Carters Hill and at Hall Farm including Hall Farm House, the Old Rectory (listed) and neighbouring buildings
- d) The Parish Councils will work with the developers, the Borough Council and other stakeholders on the planning of the new Village Centre at Arborfield Green.
- e) Superfast broadband to be made available to all houses and businesses. (TC)
- f) Management of allotments. (TC)
- g) Encourage shared use of community facilities e.g. school/public use. (TC)
- h) Ensure long term viability of community facilities by developing business plans. (TC)
- i) The Parish Councils will participate in the development of plans for progressing a suitable and viable use of the historic infirmary stables. (IRS/TC)
- j) Maintain and protect existing farming activity. (TC)
- k) The Parish Councils will work with the Highway Authority on the following; (GA)
  - Bring forward traffic management measures for Arborfield village centre, to be implemented as part of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road Scheme; (see also a) above
  - Progress to completion the widening of Barkham Bridge and the Nine Mile Ride Extension
  - Reduce speed limits to 30mph (or less) along all residential roads.
  - Reclaim quiet lanes by providing appropriate traffic management schemes.
  - Provide safe footways along busy roads.
  - Provide safe crossing areas on major roads by managing speed limits and ensuring good sight lines.
  - Improve crossings where existing Public Rights of Way cross main roads.
- l) Create additional signposted walking routes on the lines of the Barkham Way and The Coombes Circular walk. (GA)
- m) Review effectiveness of public transport to enhance local services. (GA)

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## Appendix 1    Maps

Maps which are part of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan are published separately at <https://www.arbarplan.com/html/documents.html>

# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## Appendix 2 Acknowledgements

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(A) Resident of Arborfield

(B) Resident of Barkham



# Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## Appendix 3      References

2011 Census

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