

# WOKINGHAM BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

‘Shaping our Future’

ISSUES & OPTIONS  
CONSULTATION DOCUMENT  
AUGUST 2016



## **Have your say in shaping our future**

Work is underway on an update to our local plan which will shape the future of Wokingham Borough, and we want you to join the conversation and have your say.

The new local plan will guide development in the Borough for the next 20 years. We know we have to plan for more housing – and we need to plan for how this will be accommodated along with the new employment, schools, roads, parks, shops and community facilities necessary to create places people want to live, work, and do business.

This consultation is your first formal opportunity to have your say in shaping the future of the borough for the next 20 years.

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## 1 Introduction and Opportunities

### Introduction

1.1 This Issues and Options paper is the first formal consultation stage in the plan making process.

### What is this consultation about?

1.2 This consultation is about seeking people's views on producing a Local Plan Update (LPU) for Wokingham Borough. It is a scoping and shaping stage to understand what should be included within the plan and set up a direction of travel. It will include a number of questions on different topics for you to give feedback on.

### What is a Local Plan?

1.3 The Council is responsible for plan making, which includes producing plans for how an area will develop over time as a guide to future development.

### How will the Local Plan Update be used?

1.4 In England, there is a 'plan-led' system, which means that all proposals for development that require planning permission will be considered in the first instance against the Development Plan for the Borough.

### **Why do we need the Local Plan Update?**

1.5 One of the key reasons for needing the Local Plan Update is that the Government has changed the way that we plan for development, particularly for new housing. Previously, numbers of new houses required were set at regional level (in a document called the South East Plan) for each authority. However, now it is the responsibility of individual local authorities to assess how much development is needed in its area and how much should be provided.

### **What will happen to the Council's existing planning policies?**

1.6 The Council already has two key planning policy documents that contain planning policies. These are:

- The Core Strategy (adopted 2010) – containing the overarching strategic policies (for example setting the number of new houses to be built to 2026)
- The Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (adopted 2014), which includes adding extra detail to the policies within the Core Strategy

1.7 The Plan period for the two above documents runs until 2026, whereas the Local Plan Update will need to look beyond that date. Because the Core Strategy and MDD only look to 2026, there is likely to be a need to replace most policies to ensure that there are up to date policies beyond that date. However, in some instances, the broad policy approach could still be continued beyond 2026.

### **How do I get involved?**

1.8 Consultation on the Issues and Options document runs from **Thursday 4 August to 4pm on Friday 30 September 2016**.

1.9 You can find all of the documents on the Council's website at [www.wokingham.gov.uk/localplanupdate](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/localplanupdate). Paper copies are also available at the Council's offices at Shute End. A leaflet has also been produced to highlight the key issues.

1.10 Please send us your comments via our online form, by email or by post. If you only wish to address certain parts of the consultation, please feel free to respond to only some of the questions.

- Online at: [www.wokingham.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/consultations)
- By email to: [LPU@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:LPU@wokingham.gov.uk)
- By post to: Land Use & Transport Team, Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1WR

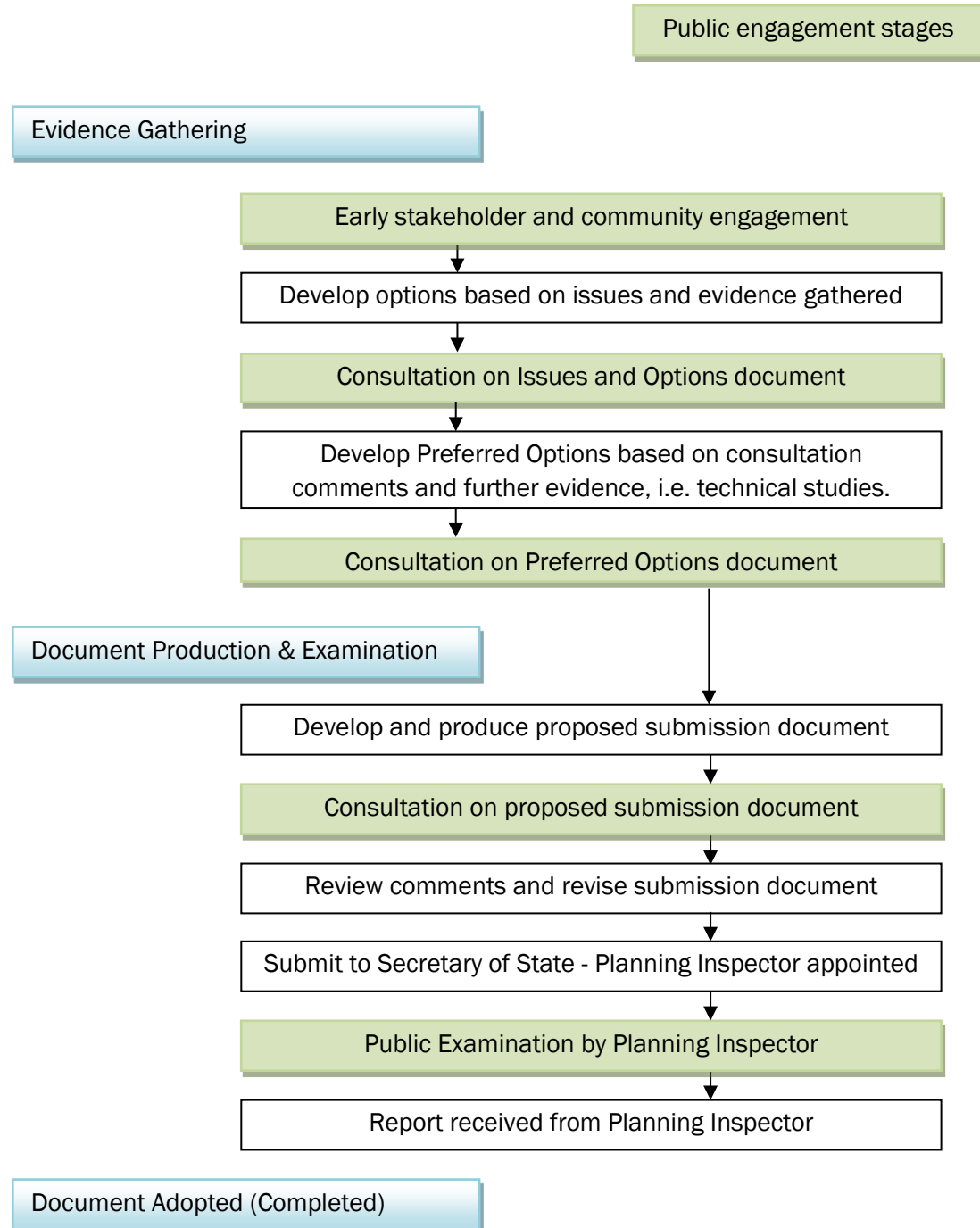
1.11 If you have any questions regarding the consultation, please contact the Land Use and Transport Team on 0118 974 6478 or by emailing [LPU@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:LPU@wokingham.gov.uk).

### **What happens next?**

1.12 Your comments will be published as part of the Local Plan Update process. These comments, along with the results of further technical studies, will help us to develop the 'Preferred Options', which is the next stage of the process. This stage will explain why certain options are preferred to others and will seek your views on whether you agree. Figure 1 shows the different stages of the Local Plan process. The plan is examined in public by an independent Planning Inspector who will consider comments made on the document. The role of the Inspector is to ensure that the plan is legally compliant and 'sound', the latter relates to whether the document is in essence the most appropriate strategy based on the best evidence. National guidance found in paragraph 182 of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#), provides further detail about what is meant by 'sound'.

1.13 The Government is considering making a number of changes to the planning system. These will also need to be taken into account as the plan is developed.

Figure 1: Local Plan Process





## 2 Where is Wokingham Borough? (The Spatial Portrait)

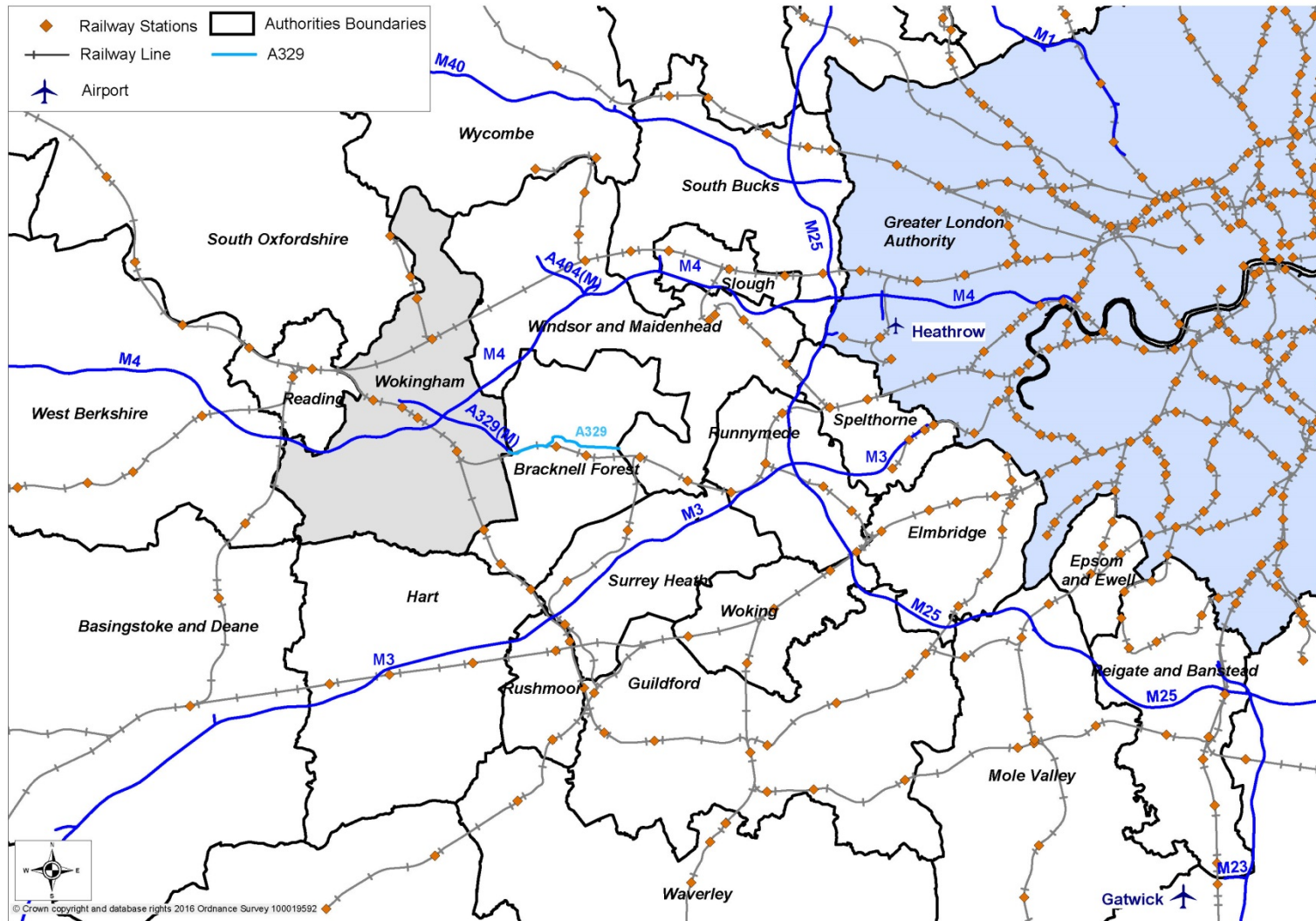


Figure 2: Wokingham Borough in Context

2.1 Wokingham Borough is located within the west of Berkshire. It is a great place to live, learn and do business with a good quality of life, helped by its excellent access to London and the key airports of Heathrow and Gatwick. It is continually growing, evolving, and diversifying playing a key role in the country's economy as part of the M4 corridor, as well as having European and international significance. To maintain our competitive edge we need to invest to progress as a place as well as an economy. A key element of this is ensuring that we are creating the places where our current and future workforces want to live, and businesses can thrive.

2.2 Wokingham Borough provides high quality high value residential areas set in attractive countryside settings focused around historic towns and villages. Development pressure in these areas is high due to good employment opportunities, great access to quality housing, education and services.

2.3 Wokingham Borough contains parts of the Green Belt that surrounds London, with approximately 16% of the Borough designated as Green Belt. The five purposes of the Green Belt are set out in paragraph 80 of [the National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#).

2.4 A number of rivers flow through Wokingham Borough meaning some parts are prone to flooding. There are other environmental and human constraints which restrict land for residential development in the Borough such as ancient woodland and gas pipelines.

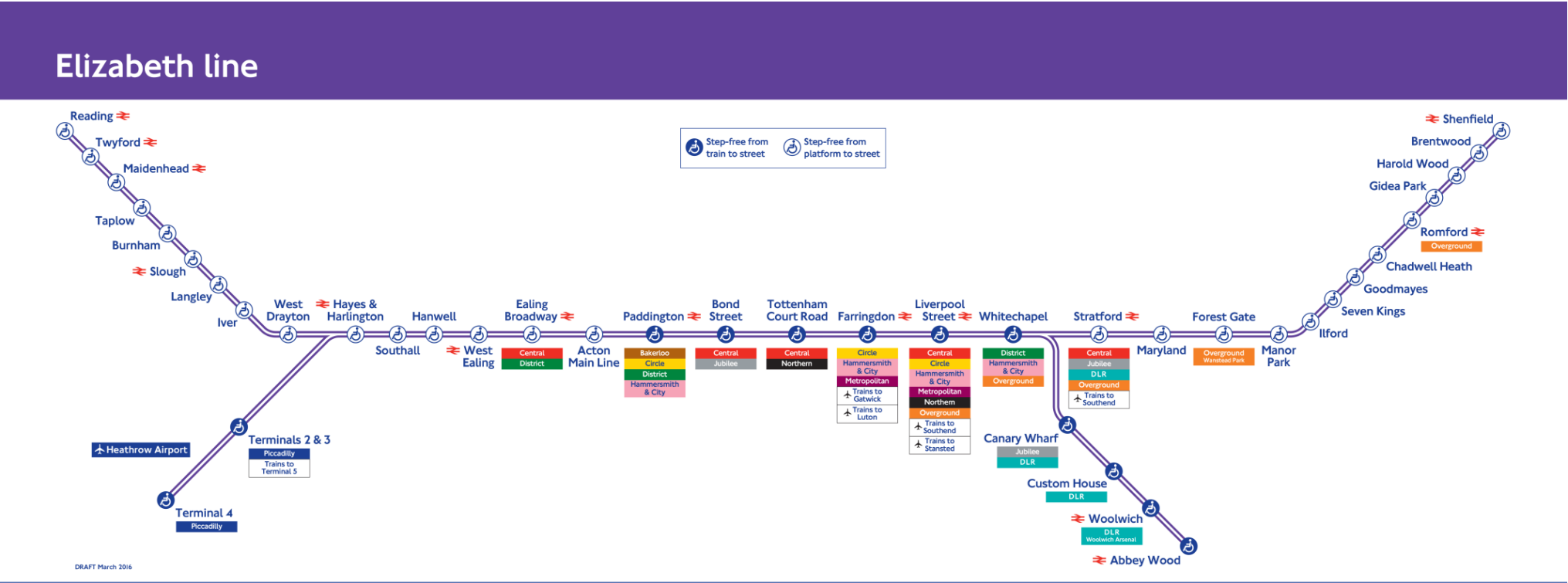
2.5 Wokingham Borough adjoins the Boroughs of Wycombe to the North; Windsor & Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest to the east; Hart and Basingstoke & Deane to the south and south west respectively; and West Berkshire, Reading and South Oxfordshire to the west.

2.6 The highly valuable natural environment, wildlife, biodiversity and heritage assets of the Borough all contribute to the Borough's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit.

2.7 The population of the Borough at the time of the 2011 census was recorded as 154,380. Wokingham, the administrative centre, is an old market town which retains its character but only houses one fifth of the Borough's population. Two fifths of the Borough's population live in the towns of Woodley and Earley which adjoin the Borough of Reading. The remainder of the population live in smaller settlements which are separated by areas of countryside that include extensive flood plains.

2.8 The Borough accommodates a stretch of the M4 motorway that connects London and South Wales and the A329M that connects us to Bracknell and Greater Reading. Railway links from Reading to London Paddington and London Waterloo run through the borough, as well as the North Downs line, connecting the borough to Gatwick airport. Further improvements are already planned to increase connectivity. This includes Crossrail (see Figure 3), which is a key piece of government funded infrastructure which will increase rail capacity between Reading/Heathrow, through central London and on to Shenfield/Abbey Wood, including the new proposed development at [Old Oak Common](#) to the west of London Paddington. Twyford is one of the stations where Crossrail will stop.

Figure 3: Crossrail Route Map



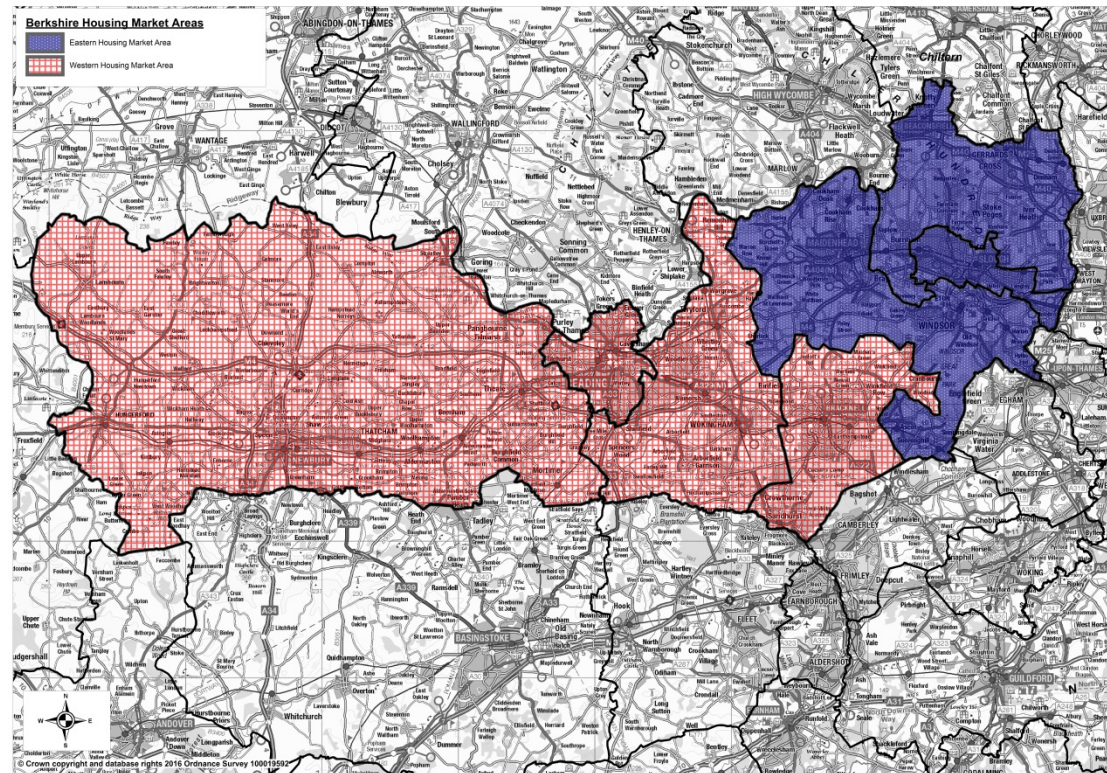
MAYOR OF LONDON





2.9 A key piece of evidence to underpin how we plan for the current and future needs of the borough is the [Berkshire \(including South Bucks\) Strategic Housing Market Assessment \(SHMA\)](#). Throughout this Issues and Options document, any reference to the SHMA relates to this evidence. The SHMA defines two Housing Market Areas (HMAs) by analysing where people choose to live and work. The Western HMA comprises West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell Districts / Boroughs as can be seen in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Housing Market Areas**



2.10 The Eastern Housing Market Area (shown in blue block colour in Figure 4) comprises the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough and South Bucks.

2.11 The [SHMA](#) also sets out the need for homes within the different Housing Market Areas (HMAs), which will help inform a new housing target to 2036. This need is known as an Objectively Assessed Need.

2.12 The housing target in the Core Strategy (up to 2026) is now out of date. The Core Strategy was adopted in 2010, prior to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which introduced the requirement for an Objectively Assessed Need (OAN).

2.13 The OAN in the SHMA identifies that the Western Housing Market Area (HMA) needs to accommodate 65,635 new homes (from 2013 – 2036) to deal with population growth, affordability, market factors, sustaining and improving economic growth and the impact of the growth of London. The annual housing need figures can be seen in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Housing Need for Western Housing Market Area (WHMA)**

Authority	Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) (Homes per Annum) 2013 - 2036
Bracknell Forest	635
Reading	699
West Berkshire	665
Wokingham	856
Western HMA	2,855

2.14 The four Councils must work together to provide these homes as part of what is called the Duty to Co-operate process. This means we will consider what opportunities there are to accommodate this growth across the west of Berkshire in a strategic and planned way.

2.15 The OAN for the Western Berkshire HMA is 2,855 dwellings per annum from 2013 to 2036. For Wokingham Borough, it would be 856 dwellings per annum (Figure 5). Our current housing

requirement for the Borough of approximately 661 new homes per year up to 2026. We are expected to deliver more than the 661 new homes per year up to 2026, in particular due to our four Strategic Development Locations coming through during the latter part of the current plan period. We will need to allocate further sites to 2036 to top up our current planned delivery of homes.

### Opportunities

2.16 The west of Berkshire area, comprising West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell has been a focus for growth over a number of decades and at times, this has resulted in ad-hoc development by planning appeal. This means an independent Inspector takes the decision to grant planning permission rather than local councillors. This chaotic, unplanned approach can often result in areas without adequate infrastructure investment.

2.17 The Council adopted an approach through the current Core Strategy of focussing development into four main areas of the Borough called Strategic Development Locations (SDLs). This approach provides the greatest opportunity for well planned communities to bring them the necessary infrastructure, such as new schools, roads, parks etc. to serve their needs. The [Community Infrastructure Levy \(CIL\)](#) is a charge on new development which enables us to pay for this infrastructure.

2.18 Historically, there was a regional approach to planning which has since been abolished by Central Government. This has given us the opportunity to work with the five other Berkshire unitary authorities, together with the **Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**, to understand our housing and employment needs and shape our future. A collaborative approach between the four Councils in the Western Housing Market Area allows us to plan strategically to meet the needs of both existing and future communities. This will maximise benefits and secure better outcomes than working in isolation allows.

2.19 By producing new plans, looking beyond 2026, we can continue to proactively manage growth. The plans will set out policies, which all proposals for development that require planning permission will be judged against. Without up-to-date Plans in place, development will come forward in an unplanned way, potentially in locations that are not appropriate and without coordinated infrastructure. The intention of the Local Plan Update will be to set a policy approach that runs beyond 2026.

#### ***Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)***

*This allows Local Authorities to raise money for infrastructure from landowners or developers carrying out new building projects in an area.*

#### ***Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)***

*For more information on this business-led partnership click here:*

<http://thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk/About/About-Us>

### 3 Vision, Objectives, Time Period for Plan and Spatial Strategy

#### Vision and Objectives

3.1 The purpose of planning is to help to achieve sustainable development. Sustainable development means “ensuring that better lives for ourselves don’t mean worse lives for future generations” ([National Planning Policy Framework](#)).

3.2 The NPPF, in defining sustainable development, is based around three main pillars or roles of planning as set out in paragraph 7. These are:

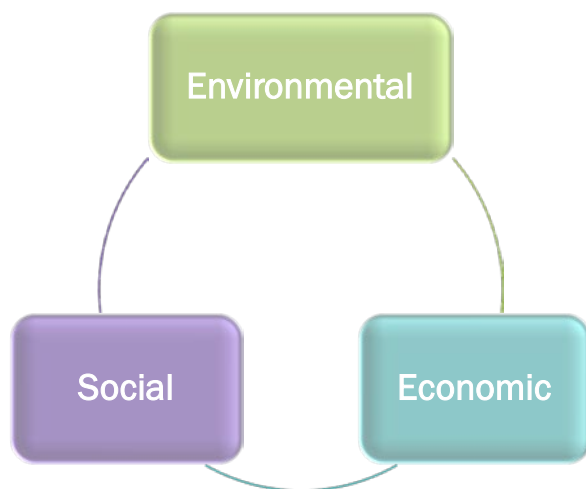
- “An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy
- A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities
- An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment”

3.3 The Council’s overarching vision for Wokingham Borough is for it to be a great place to live and an even better place to do business.

3.4 The Local Plan Update requires a succinct vision itself, to link to the Council’s overarching vision and to ensure we can deliver sustainable development. This Local Plan Update vision should define the optimal, desired future state of the Borough and provide guidance as to how we can best shape communities for both existing and new residents as well as for those who work and visit the area.

3.5 In order to achieve the vision for the Borough, we will need one clear set of measurable and meaningful objectives that support delivery of the vision. These objectives will set out the ‘how’ to achieve. They are our commitments and will be concise, realistic and measurable.

3.6 We consider that it would be beneficial to set objectives under the three pillars / roles of economic, social and environmental, as the Council has to have regard to the guidance in the NPPF. This will ensure we are helping to create sustainable communities.





**QUESTION 1:** Looking ahead to 2036 where Wokingham Borough is the best place to live and an even better place to do business. What does it feel like, what can you see and hear and what are you doing?

**QUESTION 2:** Considering these three pillars / roles, what are the most important things to you in creating the Wokingham Borough of the future?

### Plan Period

3.7 A Local Plan that covers housing needs to plan for at least 15 years after adoption, according to national guidance. This means that the Local Plan Update needs to plan up to 2033 at the earliest. However, much of the emerging evidence, particularly the Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment, provides information to 2036 and therefore we propose to plan up to this date.

**QUESTION 3:** Do you have any comments regarding this proposed time period?



### **Where should development go? (The Spatial Strategy)**

3.8 We need to consider carefully how we can accommodate the needs of both existing and future communities (sustainable development).

3.9 As development takes place, there will be a need to ensure that new services, community facilities and infrastructure are provided. This could include new roads, open space, primary and secondary schools, community halls and so forth.

3.10 The Council's current approach is to concentrate the majority of development in four Strategic Development Locations (SDLs). Prior to the SDL approach, which stemmed from the Core Strategy adopted in 2010, Wokingham Borough Council was receiving about £6,000 from developers on average for infrastructure for each new home built. This was often insufficient to ensure that new services, community facilities and other infrastructure could be provided.

3.11 The SDL approach has helped the Council to deliver new housing developments alongside necessary infrastructure including new schools, community facilities and transport links, which would not have been provided through more ad hoc development.

3.12 The SDL approach, coupled with CIL, has meant that we have secured, on average, £28,000 to £33,000 per home (as of April 2015). We have also ensured that about 35% of new homes built are affordable housing. This has meant that facilities are provided for both existing and future communities, which in essence is the very definition of sustainable development.

3.13 Early informal engagement on the Local Plan Update has indicated that this approach is working.



***SANGs** are new or existing open spaces designed to attract visitors away from the Special Protection Area (Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area) by providing an enjoyable natural environment for recreation such as dog walking.*


3.14 The recent introduction of CIL by the Council means we can secure funding towards infrastructure and services for the vast majority of developments including smaller schemes. Due to our SDL approach we have also been successful in bidding for government and other funding to support large scale growth that is not available for smaller schemes. This funding has included:

- £3.5m funding from Homes and Community Agency (HCA) - mainly funding the creation of the Delivery Team at the Council, including Planning, Transport, Legal and Flooding Officers, to ensure success of those major developments.
- £24m grant from the Government's Local Growth Fund for Strategic Road improvements
- £24.7m for Shinfield Eastern Relief Road (a loan granted by the Department for Transport)
- £4.6m 'Local Pinch Point' funding from central government which is intended to remove bottlenecks and improve congested roads/junctions e.g. Coppid Beech Junction, Station Link Road
- £1.5m Growing Places Fund loan from central government which is intended to support key infrastructure projects to unlock wider economic growth, which WBC have used towards providing extra car parking spaces, i.e. the decking of Carnival Pool car park
- Public Works Loan of £20m to help speed up the delivery of 1,500 pupil secondary school (cost £38m including land purchase), such as the Bohunt school in Arborfield.

3.15 The infrastructure that the SDLs will provide includes the following:

- New roads
- New **Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)** (eg. Rooks Nest Wood in Barkham), parks, open space and allotments
- New / improved sports facilities
- New primary and secondary schools
- New pedestrian / cycle links
- New district / neighbourhood centres, including retail and community facilities

3.16 Our approach to place shaping will be informed by a number of different considerations including legislation, government guidance; people's views, existing and emerging evidence. The



***Garden cities, towns and villages*** are planned holistically and aim to provide new communities with high quality housing and local jobs within an attractive environment.

government's recent emphasis on [garden towns and villages](#) also provides a key context for new development on a large scale. This reflects much of the successful approach we have taken to date on the SDLs.

3.17 These garden town and village principles call for holistically planned new settlements that are beautiful, healthy and sociable. This approach looks at meeting the needs of current and future residents, providing a place where people can live at all stages throughout their life.

3.18 We have currently identified the options below.

#### **Options for where development should go**

**Option 1:** Continue the approach of a small number of large developments that provide for their own infrastructure needs based on garden town/village principles

**Option 2:** A large number of smaller developments around the Borough

**Option 3:** Do nothing and let the market dictate when and where development will take place

**Option 4:** Focus development at existing larger settlements

**Option 5:** Focus development at existing smaller settlements

**Option 6:** A combination of some / all of the above approaches

***QUESTION 4a:*** Which option should the Council use for where development should go (its spatial strategy)?

***QUESTION 4b:*** Are there any other options that we should be considering?

## 4 Housing

### Meeting the housing needs of existing and future communities

4.1 We have the opportunity through the Local Plan process to take a plan-led approach to development. As set out in section 2, we need to consider how we can meet this need within the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area (HMA).

4.2 If we do not seek to accommodate the need within the HMA, then it is highly likely that a Planning Inspector, who publicly examines the Local Plan, will not find the plan to be legally compliant or 'sound'. This would mean that the Council would not be able to adopt the Local Plan Update and so would not be able to take a proactive approach to development and homes would be built in an unplanned way.

4.3 The NPPF requires Local Authorities to take a plan-led approach to development because "Local Plans are key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities" (paragraph 150, NPPF). Without an up to date Local Plan we are potentially at risk of successful planning appeals that result in unplanned ad hoc development without the accompanying services, community facilities and infrastructure that new housing needs.

**QUESTION 5a:** Do you agree that we should plan to provide for the existing and future housing needs of people as identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment?

**QUESTION 5b:** How should we best plan to provide for these needs?





## Mix of housing

4.4 To help build balanced and sustainable communities, we should provide a range of homes in terms of number of bedrooms, type of property and type of ownership (i.e. owner-occupied and private or social rented).

4.5 The SHMA (p.370 Table 140) has considered the range of homes likely to be needed by people in the years up to 2036. The following table therefore shows the recommended housing mix within the West of Berkshire.

**Figure 6: Table 140 from the SHMA – Recommended Housing Mix Western Berkshire HMA 1**

Type of ownership	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4+ bedrooms
Market	5-10%	25-30%	40-45%	20-25%
Affordable	30-35%	30-35%	25-30%	5-10%
All dwellings	15%	30%	35%	20%

4.6 To try to get a good range of housing types within the Borough we will need to have planning policies that require a mix of housing types to be built for developments over a certain size.

**QUESTION 6:** Do you think we should have a policy to ensure that a range of homes are provided? If not, what approach should we take?

<sup>1</sup> The percentage figures add up to 100% when the mid-point of the ranges given are taken and read across from left to right. The row 'All dwellings' refers to all new homes in the borough and provides the desired mix with the totals adding to 100%.



## Affordable housing

4.7 Affordable housing is provided to eligible people whose needs are not met by the market. This eligibility is determined by looking at incomes and local houses prices. Currently there are three different types of affordable housing: social rented, affordable rented and intermediate. Further information on these can be found in our [Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document](#).

4.8 Wokingham Borough has a significant need for affordable housing that will continue to be high through the plan period. The SHMA confirms that there is a net need for 441 affordable homes per annum in the Borough (2013 – 2036). This means that that the Council must continue to seek affordable housing wherever possible, subject to viability. For a scheme to actually be built, it must be viable. This means that the costs applied to development such as affordable housing, design and infrastructure contributions, must still allow a competitive return to the land owner and developer.

4.9 New government guidance recommends that councils do not request affordable housing on sites of less than 10 dwellings. The Council's current affordable housing thresholds are lower than this government guidance. As set out in the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery plans, we require affordable housing to be provided on sites of at least 5 homes. This approach was justified by the evidence of a need for it as well as the results of a Borough-wide viability assessment and approved at examination.

4.10 The percentage of affordable housing required varies according to where the site is located and whether it is a **greenfield** site or a site that has been **previously developed**.

### ***Previously Developed Land (PDL)***

Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, excluding agricultural or forestry buildings and private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments. ([NPPF glossary](#))

### ***Greenfield***

Land that has never been developed; it is not, nor has it ever been covered by a permanent structure. ([NPPF glossary](#))

***QUESTION 7a:** What policies are needed to ensure we seek to meet this need for affordable homes?*

***QUESTION 7b:** On what size schemes i.e. at least X, should we require affordable homes to be provided?*

### **Starter Homes**

4.11 In March 2015, the Government introduced the concept of Starter Homes, which are homes for first-time buyers aged under 40, and which are sold at a minimum 20% discount below market value for the first occupier only. This discounted sale price is capped at £250,000 outside of London.

4.12 The government has recently consulted on technical guidance for Starter Homes, which proposed that 20% of new housing on sites of 10 units or more be provided as Starter Homes across the country. The government's plans are still uncertain but this emerging policy could affect the amount of traditional affordable housing (see paragraph 4.7) that could be provided. It could also affect the amount of services, community facilities and infrastructure that could be secured. Starter homes offer limited opportunities through Section 106 planning contributions to secure necessary infrastructure and no opportunities through the CIL tariff system.

**QUESTION 8a:** *The Government is currently proposing that developments of 10 homes or more should provide 20% Starter Homes. If local authorities are given some discretion do you agree with this threshold or should we be looking to provide a different standard?*

**QUESTION 8b:** *If there is discretion for local authorities to set their own Starter Home policy, should land be allocated for Starter Homes or should they be integrated within new developments?*



### Self-build and Custom Build

4.13 The Government has recently published new planning legislation and guidance for providing for people who wish to build their own homes. This can include building a home yourself, getting others to build it for you or part of a community project ([see the Self Build Portal for further information](#)).

4.14 The Council maintains a register of people who wish to build their own homes. As at 6 June 2016, there were 43 individuals on the Self Build and Custom House Building Register. Where a house is considered to be self-build then there is no need to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy (tariff), which is used to help provide infrastructure.

***QUESTION 9a:** Should specific land be allocated for self-build plots or should they be integrated within new developments?*

***QUESTION 9b:** Should specific land be allocated for affordable self-build plots or should they be integrated within new developments?*



## Gypsies & Travellers

4.15 Local planning authorities must assess the need for gypsy and traveller accommodation in their areas and, if a need is identified, seek to provide sites for that need. Wokingham Borough Council undertook a [Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment](#) (GTAA) in 2014, which found a need for 52 net additional pitches up until 2029.

4.16 A Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan (GTLP) was being progressed and we had consulted on the Issues and Options stage of consultation in August to September 2014 and the Preferred Options stage in June to July 2015. However, as many of the processes to be followed to produce the GTLP and the Local Plan Update are similar, gypsy and traveller provision will now be dealt with through the LPU rather than producing an additional document. This will ensure that traveller provision is treated similarly to housing provision as per the Government's aims, whilst allowing for changes in national policy.

4.17 This Local Plan Update will therefore re-assess the options for gypsy and traveller provisions and allocation of sites. Please find the previous draft options consultation for the GTLP [here](#). These previous options considered the distribution, size, type, phasing and access to/provision of services and amenities for sites.

**QUESTION 10:** Do you have any further views regarding provision of gypsy and traveller sites?



Alexandra Place Extra Care Home

### Housing for Older People and Other Vulnerable Groups

4.18 The NPPF sets out that we should address the “needs for all types of housing and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families...)” (paragraph 159).

4.19 The SHMA indicates that the population of people aged 65 and older is expected to increase by 74.8% in the Western Housing Market Area between 2013 and 2036. This may also mean there is a need for additional specialist housing. In order to fully understand this older people’s housing need, the Council has commissioned a detailed review. This will give us information about the sorts of housing that are needed.

4.20 Specialist housing is needed for other vulnerable groups such as children and young adults leaving care and people with disabilities.

**QUESTION 11a:** Should the Council have a specific policy about accommodating Older People’s Housing Need?

**QUESTION 11b:** Should the Council have a specific policy which supports proposals for accommodation for other vulnerable groups?

## 5 Employment and Retail

### Employment

5.1 If we are to ensure that Wokingham Borough continues to be 'a great place to live, an even better place to do business' we need a balance between housing and jobs. The [SHMA](#) takes into account employment growth as part of understanding our housing need. A separate study called the Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) by the six Berkshire authorities, in conjunction with the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), has been undertaken to understand what need there is for employment growth in terms of jobs up to 2036 and how much land this might require. Please see our economic evidence page on the [Council's website](#) for further information.

5.2 The Council's current policy approach is that the majority of employment growth within the Borough will occur in Core Employment Areas such as Winnersh Triangle Business Park and Molly Millars Industrial Estate, and on other identified employment sites. This will include the [Thames Valley Science Park](#) in Shinfield, which will provide a significant number of new high tech jobs, helping to meet our identified employment needs in the area.

5.3 This approach is also very focussed on preserving certain types of employment uses based around offices, industry and warehousing (these are known in planning as 'B' **Use Classes**). However, other types of uses, that don't fall within 'B' Use Classes, also create jobs and could complement such uses, i.e. a café.

Different uses of land and buildings are split into various categories known as '**Use Classes**'.

For more information see:

[https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common\\_projects/9/change\\_of\\_use](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/9/change_of_use)



Green Park

**QUESTION 12:** Should the Council be more flexible in its approach to where employment growth should occur and the types of jobs that are considered to be employment uses?



Retail Space at Peach Place

## Retail

5.4 Retail development and main town centre uses, which include leisure, entertainment facilities, offices, arts, culture and tourism development, are currently concentrated in Wokingham Town Centre and other small town/district centres such as Woodley town centre, Twyford village centre and Lower Earley district centre. Guidance can be seen in the [Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document](#). An assessment is currently underway to find out how much need there is for additional retail or other main town centre uses.

5.5 Our current policy approach, in line with national guidance, is to protect and maintain the roles of all existing and new retail centres as well as local shopping centres. We are also currently planning to provide new local / district retail centres to serve existing and future communities by limiting new retail uses outside of these designated areas.

**QUESTION 13:** Do you think we should continue to apply the same policy approach to retail development? If not, how else do you think it could be delivered?



New bridge being installed over the M4

## 6 Infrastructure and Community

### Infrastructure Planning

6.1 In drawing up the Local Plan Update, the Council will need to consider which items of infrastructure, including roads, schools, open space, and healthcare provision are essential to support the development proposed. This is likely to be published in an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

6.2 The most recent Infrastructure Delivery Plan was produced in February 2015 to support setting the [Community Infrastructure Levy](#) (a charge on new development). The main headings in the IDP were Suitable Alternative Green Space (SANG), transport, education, green infrastructure, community/social infrastructure and public services. With a new development plan we will need to update this.

6.3 These new facilities and other infrastructure need to be maintained once in place and used by the community. The Council therefore requires contributions from developers for this maintenance for a set period of time. After this time, the cost of this must be covered by the Council tax payer. Whilst the Council has to be mindful of the financial burden on the developer, we need to balance this against the future local burden.

**QUESTION 14a:** What do you consider are the essential items of infrastructure necessary to support new communities?

**QUESTION 14b:** Do you consider that the Council should require developers to contribute towards maintaining infrastructure and over what time period?





Children's Play Park at Dinton Pastures

### Open space

6.4 The Council's current policy approach relating to open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, is still considered to be consistent with the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#).

6.5 Paragraph 74 of the NPPF (2012) states: 'Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss'.

**QUESTION 15:** Should the Council continue the policy approach of allowing the loss of open space, sports and recreational buildings and land as long as a suitable alternative is provided? If not, what approach should we take?

## 7 Flooding and Sustainable Urban Drainage



Swale: Shallow, grassy channels designed to store storm water run-off

7.1 When assessing planning applications for new development the Council must try to minimise the risk of flooding. Development should be guided towards areas of the lowest flood risk first, whilst also considering the vulnerability of the proposed use such as a nursing home or a small business.

7.2 Development proposals must be consistent with the guidance in paragraphs 99-104 NPPF as well as the National Planning Practice Guidance ([NPPG](#)). Paragraph 99 of the NPPF states:

7.3 'New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure'.

7.4 Sustainable drainage systems ([SuDS](#)) such as rainwater harvesting, green roofs and swales should be incorporated into new developments where practicable, to meet the long term needs of the development and to achieve wider social and environmental benefits.

7.5 The NPPG ([Paragraph: 079 Reference ID: 7-079-20150415](#)) states that: 'new development should only be considered appropriate in areas at risk of flooding if priority has been given to the use of sustainable drainage systems'.

**QUESTION 16a:** Do you agree with the current approach to flooding; minimising the risk of flooding and guiding development towards areas of lowest flood risk first? If not, what approach should we take?

**QUESTION 16b:** Do you think that the implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems should be required on all residential development including Minor applications for 1-9 dwellings? If not, what approach should we take?



## 8 Countryside



**NB.** Not all areas of countryside are designated Green Belt. See Section 9 below.

8.1 The Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) plans distinguish between built up areas and areas of the countryside using boundaries drawn around the Borough's towns and villages. Land outside these settlement boundaries is classified as countryside and policies are generally more restrictive. This approach has largely been successful in helping to shape places and managing development. Without such a mechanism in place, then it is considered that this could result in a loss of control leading to development in inappropriate and unsustainable locations.

8.2 Government guidance contained in the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states: *"assessing housing need and allocating sites should be considered at a strategic level and through the Local Plan process... However, all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas– and so blanket policies restricting housing development in some settlements and preventing other settlements from expanding should be avoided unless their use can be supported by robust evidence "* ([Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 50-001-20160519](#)). It is therefore up to local planning authorities to consider what is appropriate in terms of development within various settlements.

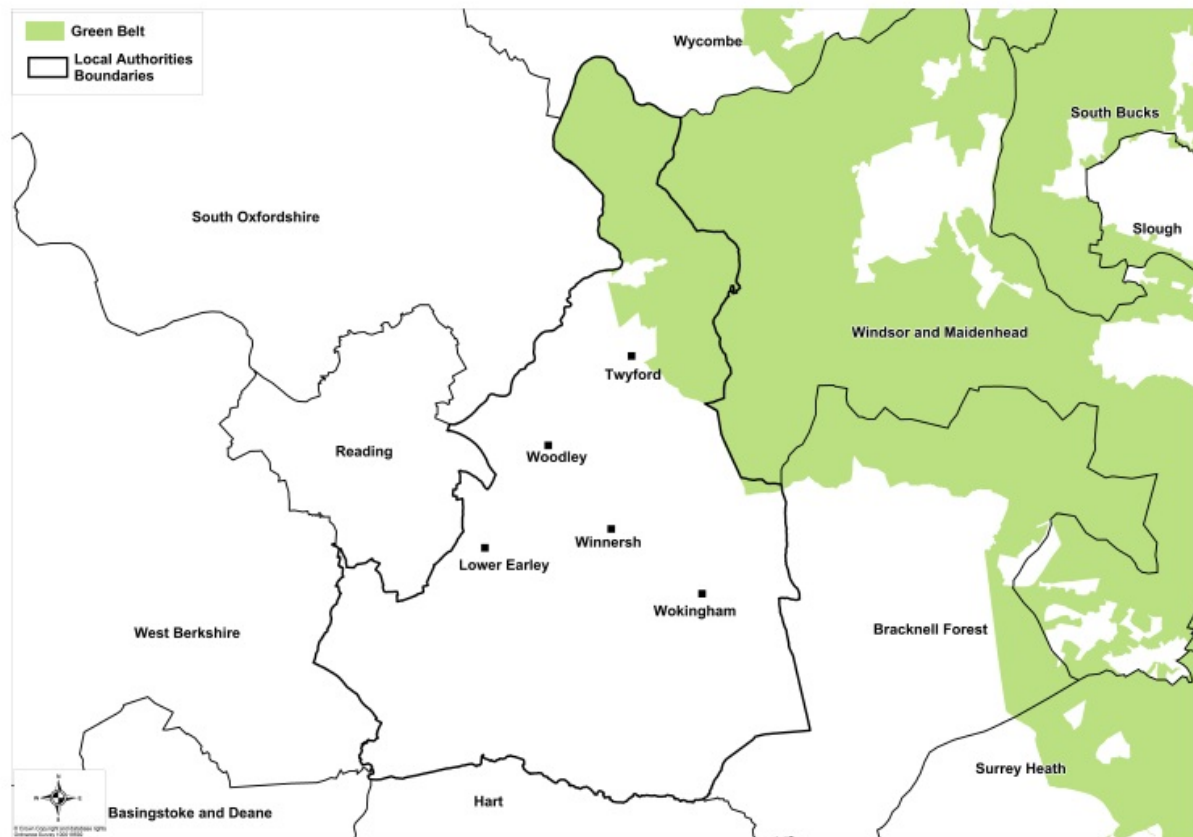
**QUESTION 17:** Should we continue to use our existing approach to managing development in the countryside? If not, what approach should we take?



## 9 Green Belt

9.1 The original purpose of Green Belt land, which has existed since the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, was about managing unrestrained urban sprawl – a consequence of housing growth. However, it is important to note that green belts were always seen as complementing the need for well-planned towns and cities, and this Act sat alongside the New Towns Act 1946.

**Figure 7: The Metropolitan Green Belt in and around Wokingham Borough**



9.2 Wokingham and Bracknell Forest Councils have jointly commissioned a review of their Green Belt land. The review seeks to assess how green belt land within the Boroughs of Wokingham and Bracknell Forest functions against the five purposes of the green belt, as defined in paragraph 80 of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#):

9.3 The Green Belt study concludes that within Wokingham Borough, Green Belt land makes at least a 'Contribution' to one or more of the five Green Belt purposes.

9.4 Paragraph 84 of the NPPF discusses the role of sustainable development when undertaking a Green Belt boundary review: *'When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development'*.

**QUESTION 18:** *Are there locations within the Green Belt for sustainable development that would warrant us looking at altering our Green Belt boundaries?*

## 10 Natural Environment

10.1 The [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) requires us to set out a strategic approach and plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure. Reasonable measures have to be taken to avoid, minimise and mitigate the impacts of development on the biodiversity of a site as follows:

1. To avoid significant harm;
2. If significant harm cannot be avoided, then provide mitigation;
3. If there is still significant harm, compensatory measures must be provided.

10.2 Sites that are designated as being of nature conservation importance at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. Sites of national or international importance include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and (located adjacent to the Borough) the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA). Sites of local importance include Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), Local Geological Sites and Ancient Woodland.



Nightjar

10.3 The Thames Basin Heath SPA spreads across a number of local authorities within the counties of Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire. The Heath provides a habitat for the Nightjar, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler, which are all protected species. Whilst Wokingham Borough does not include any of the TBH SPA within its boundaries, parts of the Borough do lie within the protected buffer zone of the SPA (between 5km and 7km) and therefore any proposals for development within the buffer zone must demonstrate that adverse impacts to the SPA are avoided and mitigated. The creation of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is advocated by Natural England (previously English Nature) as a way of encouraging the occupants of new development to visit alternate sites, taking visitor pressure away from the SPA.

**QUESTION 19:** Do you agree with the Council continuing this approach to protecting designated nature conservation sites? If not, what approach should we take?

## 11 Heritage & the Historic Environment

For more information on the Borough's Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings please see our website here:

<http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/development/listed-buildings-and-conservation-areas/>



The Bull Inn, Sonning, Grade II\* Listed

11.1 Wokingham Borough contains a number of designated heritage assets. The Nationally designated assets include Statutorily Listed Buildings (Grade 1, 2\* and 2), Scheduled Monuments and Historic Parks and Gardens. The locally designated assets include Areas of Special Character, Buildings of Traditional Local Character and some Locally Listed Historic Parks and Gardens. The Borough also contains 16 Conservation Areas, each of which has special architectural and historic interest and special efforts are made to preserve these areas.

11.2 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states: *'Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:*

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place'.*

11.3 When considering development proposals in areas of high archaeological potential, the Council consult with Berkshire Archaeology and with developers to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to protect preserve and record archaeological remains.

**QUESTION 20:** *Do you agree that we have got the right level of protection for our heritage assets? If not, what approach should we take?*




## 12 Sustainable Design

### Housing Standards

12.1 Central government has set technical standards for new housing for the following:

- Water efficiency
- Accessibility and adaptability / Security
- Internal living space



*For more information about water efficiency, accessibility & adaptability / security and internal living space, please see:*

<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-optional-technical-standards/>

### Water Efficiency

12.2 All new homes have to meet the required standard of 125 litres of water consumption per person per day under Building Regulations (a separate regulatory approach compared to planning). Where there is a clear local need, we can have new planning policies requiring new homes to meet a tighter Building Regulations optional requirement of 110 litres per person per day (through 'opting in').

12.3 Wokingham Borough is served by Thames Water. The geographical area covered by Thames Water is classified as an area of serious water stress in the publication '[Water stressed areas – final classification](#)' by the Environment Agency. The report states that efficient use of water is particularly important in this geographical area. The Council currently has a Local Plan policy, meaning the tighter requirement can be used.

### Accessibility and Adaptability / Security

12.4 The Code for Sustainable Homes, which was used to regulate accessibility, adaptability and security, is now obsolete. New minimum standards relating to security of homes are also included in the Building Regulations.

12.5 We are able to set higher standards than those in the Building Regulations, enabling us to provide safer and more accessible homes. Two levels of optional standards are set out in the Building Regulations, Category 2 and 3.

12.6 Category 2 (accessible and adaptable dwellings) deals with matters such as the dimensions and location of car parking, level access, internal dimensions and location of things such as switches and sockets.

12.7 Category 3 (wheelchair user dwellings) is more specifically suited to wheelchair adaptation and includes more detailed requirements, for example, provision of a lift shaft for homes of more than one level.

12.8 Local plans can specify what proportion of new housing should be within each of these categories.

### Internal Living Space

12.9 Central government has set out minimum living space standards in '[Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard](#)'. This contains a minimum amount of space for different types of rooms, internal storage and ceiling heights. The Council must 'opt in' through a Local Plan policy in order to apply these standards. The Council currently has a Local Plan policy meaning these standards can be applied.

**QUESTION 21a:** Should we 'opt in' to the tighter Building Regulations requirement for water efficiency? If not, please explain why.

**QUESTION 21b:** Should we specify what proportion of new housing should be within Categories 2 accessible and adaptable dwellings and 3 wheelchair user dwellings? If not, please explain why.

**QUESTION 21c:** Should we 'opt in' to central government's minimum living space standards? If not, please explain why.

## 13 Other policy areas

13.1 There are a number of other issues which are covered by existing policies that the Council may need to consider in the Local Plan Update. The overall scope can be seen in the 'Notice of Intention Scope of Local Plan' at the end of this document.

13.2 Other than those areas and the areas discussed in this document, there are no other major topics that we consider need to be addressed. However, if you think we should be addressing any additional policy areas, please let us know.

**QUESTION 22:** *Are there any other areas that you would like to see dealt with in the Local Plan?*



**Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004  
The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012**

**Regulation 18 Notice of Intention to Prepare a Local Plan Development Plan Document**

**Comments on the proposed scope and content of the Local Plan Development Plan Document (DPD) should be submitted during the 8 week consultation period running from Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2016 to 4pm Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016.**

Wokingham Borough Council is preparing a Local Plan Development Plan Document (DPD). The Council is required to notify specified bodies and persons of the subject of the DPD which it proposes to prepare and invite each of them to make representations to the Council about what the DPD ought to contain. The Council's proposals are set out below.

- The scope of the Local Plan Update (LPU) is to provide a spatial strategy, strategic objectives, strategic spatial and topic based policies, development management policies and site allocations
- The LPU will relate to the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council and will guide and deliver the sustainable growth of the Borough to 2036
- The LPU will include specific policies for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (now incorporating the Gypsy & Traveller Local Plan)
- The LPU will not include specific minerals and waste policies
- Consultation on the LPU will be guided by the Statement of Community Involvement and a Duty to Cooperate Statement
- A revised Local Development Scheme has also been published to set out the timetable for the adoption of the LPU

The Council will take into account any representations made to them in response to this invitation.

Further detail on the proposed content of the DPD can be found in the Issues and Options document following. Views are sought through this public consultation.

Local Plan Update Issues & Options  
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BOROUGH COUNCIL