



Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan

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A note about this document

The Localism Act 2011 requires a Neighbourhood Development Plan document to include a number of statutory appendices. This document covers the policies and evidence.

This document has been revised following public consultation, carried out between June and September 2015 and as a result of an independent examination carried out in June 2016

- 1) View or download at www.shinfieldplan.org
- 2) Access a printed copy of the additional documents for viewing at:
 - a. Shinfield Parish Council office, School Green, Shinfield;
 - b. Wokingham Borough Council Planning Department, Shute End, Wokingham;

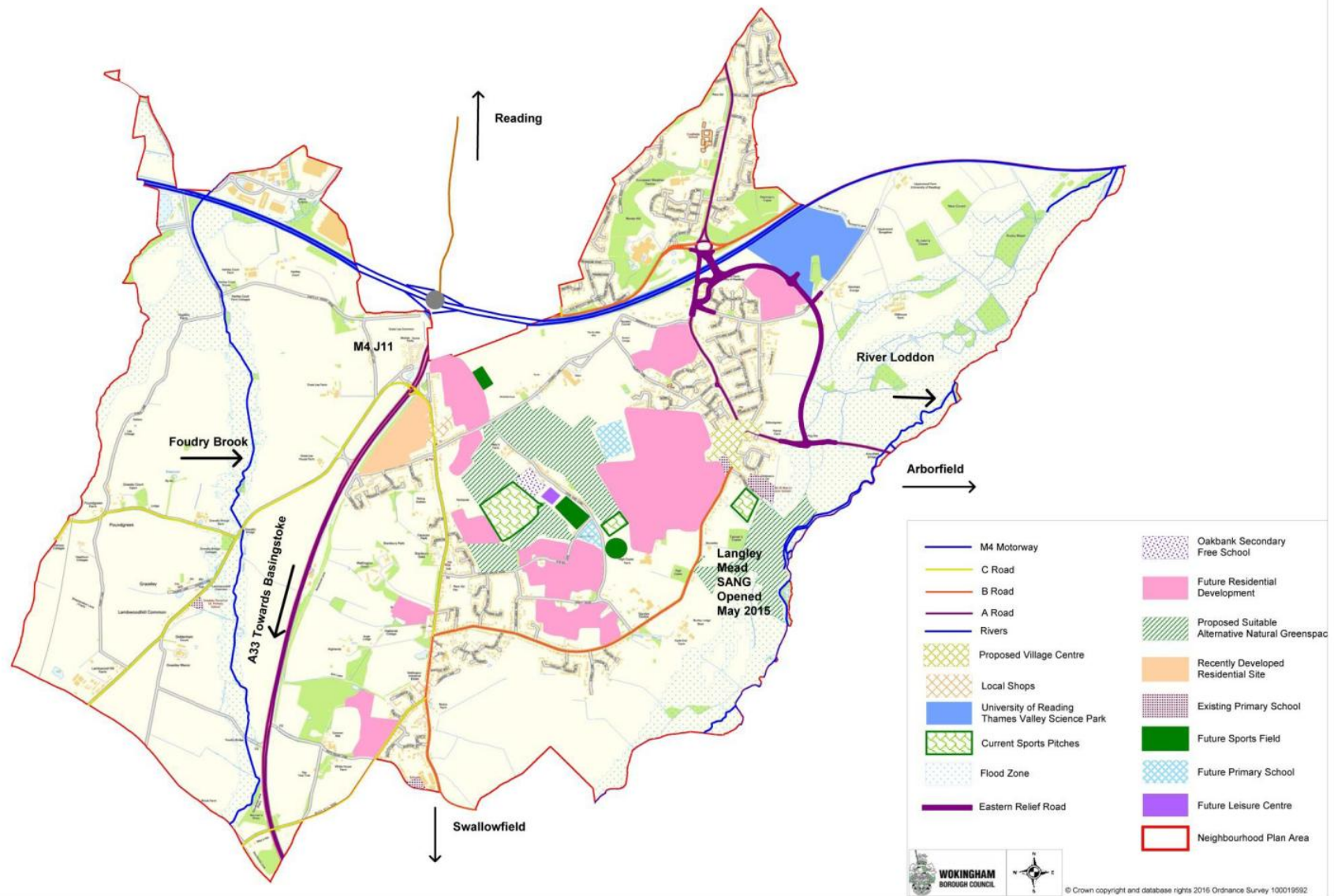
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The coalition government, under the Localism Act 2011, introduced the concept of Neighbourhood Development Planning to allow local communities to have greater involvement in planning decisions and land use within their individual areas.
- 1.2 Shinfield Parish Council believes that, by developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan, it can play a much bigger role going forward in helping to shape new development. The parish council can have greater influence in obtaining the additional infrastructure improvements that we consider are needed to allow the parish to accommodate additional homes and continue to make this a desirable place to live.
- 1.3 The Neighbourhood Development Plan covers the period from 2016 through to 2026, which is the period of growth outlined in the South of M4 Strategic Development Location (SDL) Supplementary Planning Document (May 2011) produced by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC).
- 1.4 A Neighbourhood Development Plan is specifically about use of land, and therefore, our policies must take this into account. The plan must take account of both strategic national and local planning policies and will allow us to strengthen local policies where we feel they are not sufficiently tailored, or robust enough, for our locality.
- 1.5 The process of developing this plan has allowed us to build stronger ties with both WBC and local housing developers, helping to ensure that local residents' voices are heard.
- 1.6 Figure 1 is a map of Shinfield Parish showing the Strategic Development Location (SDL) area, existing settlements and infrastructure. The map shows the approved development for the parish, expected to be delivered during the lifetime of the plan (to 2026).

Figure 1 -Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan Context Map



2 How can you find out more?

- 2.1 Drop into the parish council office at School Green to find out more about progress with the Neighbourhood Development Plan, or speak to your local parish councillor for an update.

3 Creating the plan

- 3.1 Shinfield Parish Council 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 council. A proposal to develop the plan was approved by Shinfield Parish Council in May 2012 and a steering group of parish councillors was formed under the chairmanship of Parish Councillor, Peter Hughes.
- 3.2 The Neighbourhood Plan will build on the excellent work of the Shinfield Parish Community Plan (*see appendix W*), adopted by the parish council in 2011, following the publication of the Village Character and Design Statements for Shinfield School Green, Ryeish Green, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross. These can be found on the Shinfieldplan.org website or viewed at the parish office.

4. What happens next?

- 4.1 The Neighbourhood Development Plan was consulted throughout the local community within Shinfield Parish between Mid-June and September 2015.
- 4.2 Alterations were made to the plan, taking account of the comments received from this consultation. The plan has undergone an independent examination in 2016 and changes, as recommended by the examiner, have been incorporated into the plan.
- 4.3 The examiner has recommended that the plan proceed to referendum. A majority voting in favour of the plan will make it a legal part of planning considerations for all development within the parish.

5. Visions and objectives for the plan

5.1 Our Vision:

‘People working together, respecting our local history, building a vibrant community now and for the future’

5.2 Our Objectives:

‘To ensure the new developments enhance the character of existing settlements’

‘To develop a vibrant and prosperous neighbourhood by encouraging development that supports a good range of housing, schools, shops and services that meets the needs of local people and protects the quality of the local environment’

‘To provide new and diverse leisure and recreational activities in order to promote healthy and crime free lifestyles for everyone’

- 5.3 The first public meeting was held on 5 July 2012. Six focus groups were initially established to look at particular aspects of the plan that the steering committee felt it necessary to address. An open invitation to join these focus groups was sent to all residents via the parish council’s summer newsletter, delivered to all households in the parish.
- 5.4 To date, there have been more than sixty meetings held to collect issues, review, analyse and agree the content for the plan.
- 5.5 The focus groups worked initially to list the issues that were raised at both public events and through focus group discussions. This ultimately led to the creation of a ‘19 Questions Survey’, produced in the summer of 2013. The survey asked residents for their views on the key issues from each focus group. More than 700 responses were received, highlighting the strength of community concern over these issues. An analysis of the responses was published on www.shinfieldplan.org and this plan aims to tackle these issues.
- 5.6 Full details of the community involvement can be found in the Consultation Statement.

6. Planning Policy

6.1 In creating policies for the Neighbourhood Development Plan, it is necessary to take account of existing national and local policies (those adopted by WBC). A full list of the documents reviewed can be found in appendix X. Our plan will add to these national and local policies to make them more robust or to deal with specific local issues.

7. Our Plan

7.1 The following twelve policies form the main body of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. In addition to the policies, there are many appendices documents which include:

- Additional background information about the parish;
- Supporting material and evidence relating to the policies;
- Survey data carried out for the plan;
- Aspirations for the future of the parish, not directly covered by the plan policies.

8. Background information and data

- 8.1 Shinfield Parish, covering an area of 1,813 hectares, is made up of many villages and settlements, each with its own identity and local community. It extends from the urban community north of the M4 motorway, through Shinfield village south of the M4, to Spencers Wood in the south west and from the banks of the River Loddon in the east, through Ryeish Green and Three Mile Cross to the rural communities of Grazeley, Mere oak, Great Lea, Hartley Court and Pound Green in the west. The parish has a long history stretching back to the Domesday Book of 1078, and has a wealth of historical features, including areas of ancient woodland, more than thirty listed buildings and a designated Area of Special Character. (*See appendix B for maps of the parish*)
- 8.2 The parish is dissected by the M4 motorway, offering access to the UK trunk road network, fast train services into Central London and access to Heathrow airport. Coupled with its proximity to high quality employment within the many national and international companies that have settled in the Thames Valley, excellent shopping, leisure facilities and a good choice of schools, there can be few places in the UK so appealing.

Shinfield Parish Population

- 8.3 In the past fifteen years or so, there has been extensive development within the parish, both north and south of the M4 and east of the A33. In 2001, the population was 8,136 living in 3,200 households. By 2011, some 11,198 people (an increase of 37%), were living in Shinfield Parish, in 4,403 households. This represents 76% of the overall rise in new residents across the whole of Wokingham Borough in the same period. Of these homes, 66% (2,949) were privately owned and the remainder rented and in shared ownership. Shinfield Parish has some 12.3% of Wokingham Borough's social housing stock and a greater proportion of rented housing than any other part of Wokingham Borough.
- 8.4 The area of Shinfield Parish south of the M4 motorway is one of WBC's four strategic development locations (SDL) and to date, over 3,000 new homes now have planning permission to be built in the parish by 2026 (*see appendix N*).
- 8.5 Projecting over the period of the plan to 2026, it is expected that the population will rise to within the region of 19,000 residents. This is based on average occupations for the approved and received planning applications for developments of five or more dwellings as at December 2015 (*see appendix N*).
- 8.6 No account has been made in the figures for dwellings converted to Homes in Multiple Occupation since the 2011 Census, nor for small developments of less than five dwellings built, or approved, since 2011.

- 8.7 Given the location of the parish relative to transport links and employment opportunities, including the proposed University of Reading Thames Valley Science Park, it is expected that further development of residential dwellings, in significant numbers, will come forward before the end of the plan period.

9. What infrastructure will be delivered?

- 9.1 Along with the housing, there is a planning requirement for the Development Consortium (the University of Reading, Taylor Wimpey and David Wilson Homes and other developers) to deliver amenities for the new community. Naturally, some of these infrastructure improvements will serve the existing community as well. Additional projects, developed by the parish council and WBC, will enhance the facilities available to everyone.

Shinfield Eastern Relief Road

- 9.2 This will run from Arborfield Road, skirting round the eastern side of Shinfield, crossing the M4 over a new motorway bridge and will join the Black Boy roundabout on a newly built spur. This new road should take traffic travelling to, and from, Arborfield and beyond, around Shinfield Village.

Other highways changes

- 9.3 Modifications are currently planned for key junctions within the parish, including the junctions of Hyde End Road and Basingstoke Road and Church Lane and Basingstoke Road.

Alternative travel

- 9.4 Development proposals also include the provision of new pathways for use by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians, which will enhance the existing network, and provide an alternative to car use.

New bus service

- 9.5 Additional bus services will be running at an early stage of the Shinfield and Spencers Wood developments. These will connect the three key points of Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood and Shinfield, and run a frequent service into central Reading.

Park and Ride

- 9.6 A new Park and Ride facility has been constructed at Mere Oak, adjacent to the A33, providing spaces for over 500 cars, with a bus service to Reading.

New schools

- 9.7 Two new primary schools are planned to meet the needs of families expected to move into the new housing. These new schools are proposed for sites in Shinfield and Spencers Wood.

- 9.8 Wokingham Borough Council has recently approved plans to meet the need for additional secondary school places, with a new school at Arborfield, scheduled to open in September 2016. This will provide more secondary school places for the parish in addition to Oakbank Free School. There is currently no provision of post-16 education within the parish.

Community centre

- 9.9 A new community centre will be built in Shinfield, on the site of the now closed Royal British Legion building. It is intended to create a focal point and provide a broad base of facilities to serve the enlarged population.

A new village centre

- 9.10 A new village centre is planned for Shinfield, alongside the existing health centre at School Green. The plans include a medium-sized supermarket, smaller stores and parking. It will be accessed from a new road off the School Green roundabout. The parish council is working in partnership with WBC and developers to integrate the parish hall, the British Legion site and School Green, in to this new village centre, to create an open, car-free area, allowing safer access to Shinfield Infant and Nursery School.

Sports and recreation

- 9.11 The sports proposals grew from research conducted for the parish and borough council by Ploszajski Lynch Consulting. A sports hub, offering facilities for both the general community and existing organised sports clubs, is proposed for the playing fields at Ryeish Green.
- 9.12 The parish council is working with existing sports clubs in order to provide the best facilities possible. In the longer term, the parish council aims to provide a wide range of sports and recreation facilities to cater for all age groups and abilities.

Green spaces

- 9.13 Under the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2010, suitable alternative natural green spaces (SANGs) must be provided close to new developments. These SANGs are intended to provide green spaces for people to use for general recreation, such as dog walking.
- 9.14 Each area will be grassland, edged with, and crossed by, hedgerows, trees and footpaths. Other wildlife friendly features such as ponds, scrub and log piles will be included.

The four newly created green spaces will be:

Langley Mead SANG (opened May 2015): Fields and watercourses on the south side of Hyde End Road with raised pathways.

Ridge SANG: A green area separating the Shinfield West development from Ryeish Green and new housing north and south of Church Lane in Three Mile Cross.

Five Acre SANG: This area extends from Ryeish Lane to the top of the hill at the back of the playing fields in Ryeish Green.

Mays Farm SANG: This area extends between Three Mile Cross and Ryeish Green, south of Church Lane.

10. Housing

- 10.1 Shinfield Parish Council wants 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 council will work with developers to build homes that are in keeping with their surroundings, homes that are visually interesting, that provide sufficient attractive green areas and that do not have a negative impact on neighbours.
- 10.2 The parish council will support the early development of formal residents' associations in new developments, to ensure integration within individual developments and with the wider community.

Retention of the individual identities of the settlements within the parish

- 10.3 Wokingham Borough Council adopted its Managing Development Delivery (MDD) local plan in February 2014, following examination by a government planning inspector. The MDD allocated sites for residential development in the borough. It used figures from the Core Strategy document, adopted by WBC in 2010, as the basis for its identified housing need of 13,230 homes. The document identified an allocation for the South of M4 SDL of 2,500 homes.
- 10.4 Wokingham's Core Strategy recognises the importance of the separate identity of the various settlements that form Shinfield Parish. Section A7.17 states: "The area to the south of the M4 is characterised by existing small settlements set within a rural context, which has thus far been retained through the formal allocation of green gaps. This sets it apart from the area to the north of the M4, which is perceived as being more closely aligned to Greater Reading. The character of the area is considered worthy of retention as it forms part of the identity of the Borough. **New development must therefore seek to balance the demand for new housing with the prevailing settlement configuration and setting**".
- 10.5 During the government planning inspector's review of the Core Strategy (Adopted in 2010), the housing allocation for the South of M4 SDL was reviewed, and the following wording is taken directly from the inspector's report:

The number of dwellings proposed for the South of M4 SDL accords fully with the confirmed projected target in Policy WCBV3 of the South East Plan (SEP), footnote 4, which refers to 2,500 dwellings that will contribute to the delivery of housing to serve the needs of Greater Reading. In essence the SDL would involve urban extensions of three villages. The consortium of developers involved in this proposal argue that the area has capacity for 3,000 dwellings in addition to the 700 already committed, suggesting an appropriate Core Strategy (CS) target of 3,500. However, to achieve this number would rely on a higher density than the Council's proposed 30-35 dph and/or a narrowing of the gap between Shinfield and Spencers Wood.

Development over a wider area than shown on the Concept Diagram in Appendix 7 is likely to prejudice the key objective for this Strategic Development Location (SDL) of maintaining the separate identities of the three villages concerned. I consider it would also be inappropriate to plan for densities at a significantly higher level than the housing areas of the villages.

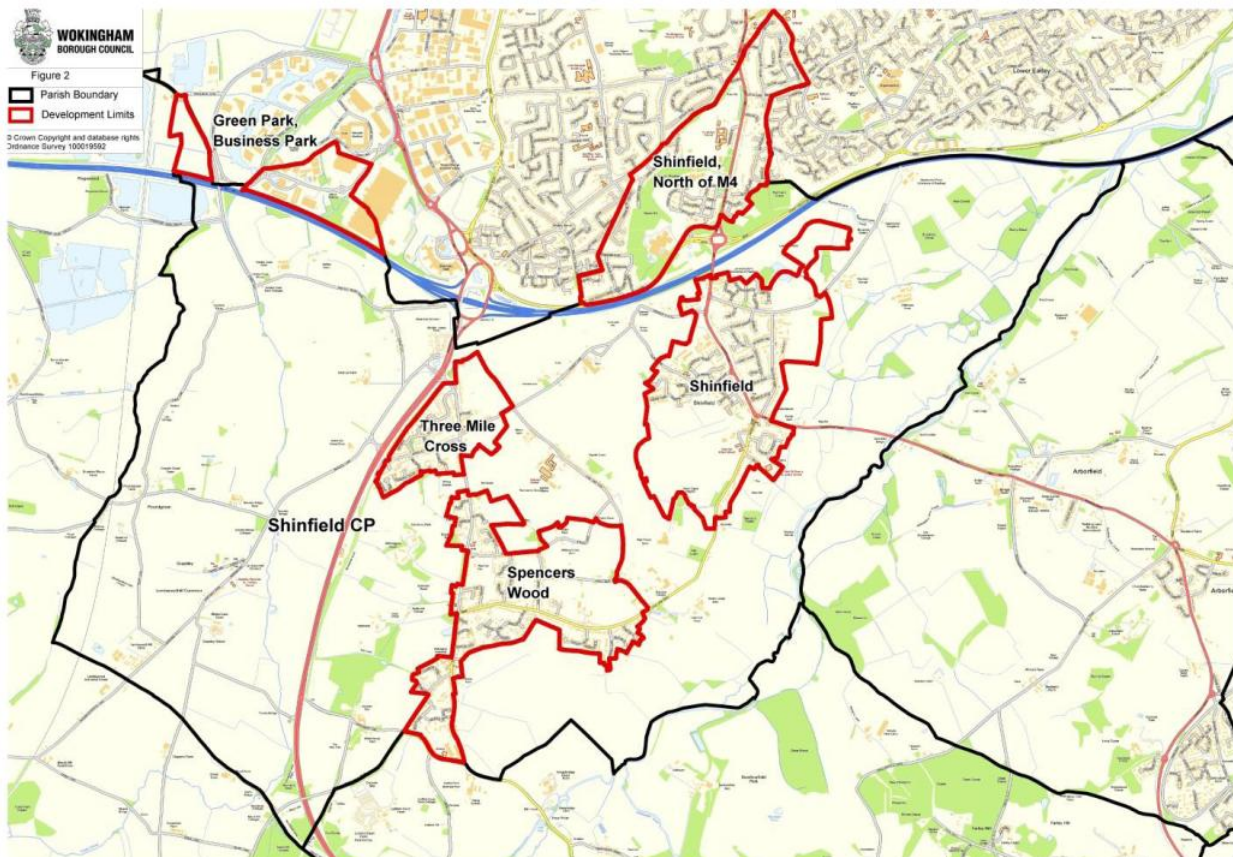
While the provision of more dwellings near to Reading and transport links has benefits, these have to be balanced against the need to protect the local environment and the aspirations of the existing communities. The overall density of the SEP of 40 dwellings per hectare (dph) applies to the whole region, including much denser urban areas, unlike the SDL environs.

The exact locations of new parcels of development will be finalised at the detailed master planning stage. The eastern part of the SDL area is within the floodplain of the River Loddon. Taking into account this constraint, the illustrative plan for development of 3,500 dwellings indicates that the width of the SANG and playing fields separating the new development at Shinfield and Spencers Wood would be just 300m, with some parts of the gap between new and existing development at Ryeish Green much narrower. Although I recommend the deletion of Gaps Policy CP13 below, I endorse the commitment to maintaining the separate identities of the three settlements, which received strong support in principle from virtually all those who commented on the CS at all stages in its evolution. I am therefore not convinced that the capacity of the SDL could be increased without undermining this important objective [D61].

- 10.6 Throughout the consultation on development within the parish, there has always been a strong support amongst residents to retain the boundaries between, and the identities of, the separate villages. Responses from the '19 Questions Survey' showed that over 89% of respondents supported this (see appendix A). The parish council strongly supports the aspiration to maintain the separate identities of the three villages as an aspect of the historic environment that contributes to the relationship between people and place and the need to integrate new development with the natural, built and historic environment.
- 10.7 It is important that new development respects the local landscape quality, ensuring that natural and historic views and vistas are maintained wherever possible. Whilst the landscape represents the interplay of human influence and the natural world we recognise that the characteristic, and often attractive, features are the result of thousands of years of human intervention and management. As such, many views take in positive features that are historic as well as, or rather than natural. Historic views, such as the view of a church steeple across open farmland or the characteristic arrangement of historic buildings on a village street or seen across a village green, are a distinctive feature of many villages and their landscapes (see appendix E).

Policy 1: Location of Development

In Shinfield Parish, development within the Development limits (as illustrated in Fig 2), will be supported; development adjacent to the Development Limits will only be supported where the benefits of the development outweigh its adverse impacts.



11. General Design Principles

11.1 Housing is the major building type within the parish. There is no single housing design or feature that dominates. It is a mixture of ages and styles and this mix should be maintained. Further details on the styles of housing located within the villages can be found in the Village Character Statements, which form part of the appendices to this plan.

11.2 The wide variety of property styles within the parish include:

- Detached and semi-detached houses from Victorian times, with tile or slate roofs, gabled and hipped - sloping to each elevation of the building. Development from the last century includes detached and semi-detached houses together with terraced properties, bungalows and chalet style houses;
- Typically houses are two storey;
- Feature brickwork is a sign of Victoriana and can also add interest to a modern building;
- A mix of architectural features including dormer windows, deep rounded bay windows, splayed and square bays all appear in village properties;
- Original porches and later additions may be gabled or lean-to;
- Whilst many houses in this area are constructed in red faced bricks, Shinfield has its fair share of smooth rendered houses, while some are pebble-dashed and others roughcast usually to the upper elevations;
- The centres of Spencers Wood and Ryeish Green are characterised by late Victorian and early Edwardian red brick buildings, some patterned with silver and cream bricks, typically with sash windows, tiled roofs and decorative eaves boards. In these areas the buildings provide a unique character to the locality; and
- In Three Mile Cross, the oldest part of our villages, stone buildings are typical, some colour washed. Other individual properties with these characteristics are present throughout the parish.

11.3 The '19 Questions Survey' found that 78% of respondents felt it was important to have a diversity of housing styles in the new developments (*See appendix A*). Respondents also raised concern around young people economically being unable to remain in the area and older residents being unable to downsize.

11.4 Wokingham Borough Council's Core Strategy recognises the anticipated growth in numbers of older residents, and the need to find effective ways of caring for these members of the community, in their own homes, with the necessary accessible care and support.

Policy 2: General Design Principles

In new residential developments, provision of an appropriate mix of size, built form and garden size, including style, design and character, will be supported in order to provide variation within a scheme, as long as this respects local distinctiveness and creates safe and sustainable environments. This can be achieved through the use of locally distinctive materials, differing layouts and positioning of dwellings, and the retention of existing trees, and provision of new trees, within new gardens and in the public realm.

Development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the following criteria within scheme proposals:

- 1) Use of quality materials that complement the established built environment around the development site;
- 2) Compatibility with the scale and features of existing buildings in the locality;
- 3) Creation of suitable site layout that provides sufficient spacing between buildings to maintain privacy and amenity for any new and existing residential properties;
- 4) Allowance of appropriate space for hard and soft landscape works, particularly at settlement boundaries, in the public realm and along designated green routes and green route enhancement areas;
- 5) Provision of appropriately high quality and high specification sustainable landscape works and tree planting, particularly at settlement boundaries, in the public realm and along designated green routes and green route enhancement areas (existing and proposed);
- 6) Where appropriate, provision of suitable and unobtrusive storage facilities for refuse and recycling; and
- 7) Design of road and service layouts to ensure the sustainable retention, where appropriate, of existing landscape features, including trees and historic landscape features, and to allow space for new sustainable landscape works without the need for maintenance and upgrades to services damaging landscape works, as they mature.
- 8) Relevant adopted Village Character or Design Statement
- 9) Designing out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour.

Developments designed to aid independent living for older residents, such as homes that are easier to adapt over the lifetime of the resident, or extra care housing, will generally be supported.

12. Sustainable Development

- 12.1 Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures, published in March 2014, found that annual household spending on energy had increased by 55% above inflation, from an average annual figure of £828 per household in 2002 (a figure adjusted to 2012 prices) to £1,272 per household in 2012. Additionally, the level of household disposable income spent on energy rose from 3% in 2002 to 5% in 2012 (*see appendix AB*).
- 12.2 In November 2013, The Guardian Newspaper reported projections from the Citizens Advice Bureau, that the big six energy suppliers had increased energy prices by 37% between October 2010 and December 2013 (*see appendix AC*).

Policy 3: Sustainable Development

All development within the parish should seek to achieve the highest standards of sustainability. Development must meet the strategic sustainability priorities set out by Wokingham Borough Council.

Shinfield Parish Council positively encourages the use of:

- 1) Renewable and low-carbon or zero carbon technologies;
- 2) Techniques such as passive solar design, choice of construction materials and standard of construction, as well as aspect and orientation of layout, such as south-facing roof slopes to maximise the use of solar photovoltaic panels, to encourage energy efficiency.
- 3) Steps to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport – including walking, cycling and public transport.
- 4) Demonstrate how the development will facilitate the use of, and recycling of, all resources including water.

Developers will be required to demonstrate that there is adequate network capacity for all utility provision, for the site, to serve the development and that it would not lead to amenity impacts for existing users. In some circumstances this may make it necessary for developers to carry out appropriate studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing network infrastructure. Necessary infrastructure improvements will need to be provided ahead of occupation of the developments

13. Transport and access

- 13.1 With the M4 motorway running through the northern portion of the parish, the A33 running along the western fringe and the A327 running through Shinfield, the parish is well connected and well served by major routes. This makes it an ideal residential location, with access to a varied range of employers across a wide geographic area. Construction of the Eastern Relief Road and a new park and ride at MereOak, alongside the A33, are part of a number of improvements designed to improve traffic flows across the Borough and within Shinfield.
- 13.2 Both the Reading Borough and Wokingham Borough Local Transport Plans (LTP's) show a dominance of car travel in south 'Greater Reading' – an area which, by public perception, incorporates the parish of Shinfield.
- 13.3 Throughout the development of this Neighbourhood Development Plan, residents have continually raised concerns about the levels of traffic congestion, both current and anticipated. Whilst the A33 relief road is dual carriageway, many of the local roads crossing the parish are narrow country or residential roads, and main junctions regularly see congestion at peak times. The parish council anticipates that this congestion will further increase.
- 13.4 There are concerns that the proposed development of a further 3,500 new homes at Arborfield will detrimentally impact our parish, as many of these new residents will travel through the parish to destinations such as Reading, the M4 motorway and beyond. There is good evidence within Shinfield that there are increased resident numbers using the recently improved public transport facilities. Development proposals within Shinfield and Arborfield include a number of additional measures to encourage use of alternative travel methods, which the parish council positively encourages, to help relieve traffic congestion.
- 13.5 Many of our local primary routes were constructed many years ago when the parish was a more rural collection of villages. They were not built to a size fit to cope with the volumes or size of modern vehicles. For example, Hyde End Road, a key access road connecting Shinfield village to Spencers Wood, has barely sufficient width for two commercial vehicles to pass at key bends. Many key roads lack the infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling; stretches of Church Lane, Hyde End Road and Arborfield Road, all of which form walking routes to local schools, lack suitable pedestrian footpaths.
- 13.6 Local residents have, for some time, been campaigning for lower and more consistent speed limits throughout the parish, 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.

Vehicle ownership and travel habits

- 13.7 Vehicle ownership within Wokingham Borough is one of the highest in the UK. The 2011 Census indicated that the 4,403 dwellings in Shinfield used 7,211 vehicles (1.637 per household, on average), compared to an average of 1.1 per household across England (see *appendix AD*).
- 13.8 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Road Transport Forecasts published in 2013 reviewed the growth in car ownership and usage. The report shows that with rising economic growth and rapid fuel efficiency improvements significantly decreasing the fuel cost of driving, traffic is expected to rise by 19% from 2015 to 2025 (see *appendix O*).
- 13.9 Planners of the major developments have envisaged a shift away from private car use to alternative methods of transport. Shinfield Parish Council will work with Wokingham Borough Council and neighbouring parishes to achieve the key aims of Wokingham's Local Transport Plan 3, which include:
- Policy AT1: 'Actively encourage integrating walking and cycling routes and facilities into key destinations'
 - Policy AT2 – 'Improving access to public open space and country parks will help to encourage walking and cycling as a leisure activity'
 - Policy AT3 – 'Provide walking and cycling opportunities that are inclusive of residents with mobility, visual and hearing impairments and other disabilities'

See Appendix F: Local Transport Plan 3

- 13.10 It is recommended that all developers engage with the parish council to identify specific local issues affecting the parish prior to submitting planning applications.

Policy 4: Accessibility and Highways Safety

All development proposals should demonstrate appropriate levels of accessibility and highway safety. The following issues should be considered:

- 1) Restricting traffic speed through traffic calming measures such as the use of chicanes within residential streets, restricted speed limits within development roads and pedestrian priority zones.
- 2) Make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling to schools, work places and local amenities, through measures such as (but not limited to):
 - The provision of additional pedestrian footpaths and cycle routes
 - Accessibility improvements to bus stops from existing developments,
 - Real time travel information at bus stops
 - Practical walking routes from developments to public transport, schools, work places and local amenities with proper footpaths, street lighting and safe crossing points.

- | | |
|----|--|
| 3) | Steps to actively encourage the integration of walking and cycling routes and facilities into key destinations within the parish |
| 4) | Provision of safe routes for equestrians |

14. Parking

- 14.1 Wokingham Borough Council introduced revised parking standards for new developments in 2012 and these new standards have been incorporated into Wokingham's MDD Local Plan (February 2014). The parish council recognises that recent housing developments within Shinfield Parish have been built under the previous parking standards, resulting in a reduced level of off-street parking provision and the many problems associated with this. Shinfield Parish Council endorses the parking standards required within the MDD Local Plan.
- 14.2 In 2014, Shinfield Parish Council carried out a survey of some 1,500 homes which were constructed over the previous 15 years or so (*see appendix G*). All of the homes surveyed were built using the older parking standards. The 387 responses received indicated that 761 vehicles were owned or used from properties which had a total of 631 off-road parking spaces (including garages and car ports). This shows that at least 130 vehicles are regularly parked on the street, assuming that all off-street spaces are used. In reality, further vehicles are parked on the street, even where off-road parking does exist, because it is either in the wrong location, or it is deemed inconvenient. Parking provision on the Gloucester Avenue development of 74 dwellings of mixed sizes was used, as an example. This demonstrated the current parking requirements would have added, an additional 42 parking spaces over those provided when this development was constructed (*See appendix AA*).
- 14.3 Other evidence collected from the parking survey suggests the following:
- The vast majority of residents with garages do not regularly use them for parking a vehicle, due to the space either being used for storage or being too small to accommodate their vehicle;
 - Parking laid out in tandem is often not always fully utilised;
 - As there are so few car free households, there should be a minimum requirement for at least one designated off-street space for every single dwelling; and
 - On-street parking can cause access issues for buses and service vehicles.
- 14.4 Roads intended for bus routes through residential and commercial developments should look to maintain a clear minimum running width of 6.1 metres. Parking Management Strategies to provide this should be required as a condition of any new development identified as incorporating, or potentially incorporating a bus route.
- 14.5 The parish council will continue to monitor levels of on-street parking, as occupation of the new developments commence.

- 14.6 Conversions of dwellings to multiple occupation and sub-divisions generally intensify the use of the property and can increase demand for parking because of the greater number of adult occupants living in the property. There may also be a greater demand for visitor parking than if it were in single family occupation.
- 14.7 The required level of parking provision may vary depending on the location and the specifics of the proposal. However, the minimum should be for the provision of one parking space per bedroom either on-site or on-street depending on the parking capacity available in the area, unless otherwise justified by providing details, for example, as to what measures will be taken to deal with anticipated traffic impacts of the scheme. Applications will normally be expected to include a parking survey where onsite parking cannot be fully accommodated.

Policy 5: Parking

- 1) Garages should meet the minimum internal dimensions of 7 metres long x 3 metres wide, to allow sufficient space for a modern vehicle and provide some storage and to also be considered as cycle storage. However, for garages built at a minimum size of 6 metres long x 3 metres wide, additional storage facilities such as a secure garden shed must be provided, for bicycles and other items. Where garages are not provided, then suitable secure accommodation and access must be provided for the storage of bicycles and motor cycles. The distance to the highway boundary from the face of the garage or car port should meet current WBC standards set out in the borough Design Guide, Parking Standards Study and Core Strategy.
- 2) Garage door dimensions must, at minimum, be 2.4m wide by 2.1m high, for a single or tandem garage, as set out with Wokingham Borough Council's MDD parking standards, Borough Design Guide and Parking Standards Study.
- 3) Communal car parking areas in residential schemes should be close to buildings where there is appropriate natural surveillance.
- 4) Developers should indicate measures that they will introduce to stop parking on pavements or grass verges. For example, the use of square edged Conservation kerbs and strategic shrub planting on grass areas has proved to be of assistance to discourage parking on pavements and verges.
- 5) Proposals for conversions and extensions that require planning permission which reduce the overall level of off-street parking available at the time of development should demonstrate that the retained levels of parking are appropriate for the use/size of the dwellings.
- 6) Development proposals that add additional habitable rooms to a dwelling, must be able to meet the additional parking requirements (as determined by Wokingham Borough Council's MDD parking standards) on site, unless sufficient on-street parking is readily available.

Policy 5 continued:

- 7) For sub-divisions of houses or conversions of office or other non-residential accommodation into apartments that require planning permission, the standards will be as per the Residential Parking Standards set out above. Planning applications will normally be expected to include a parking survey where on-site parking cannot be fully accommodated.

Parking Surveys

- 8) Parking surveys are required for all new HMO development and Unit conversions where on-site parking cannot be fully accommodated.
- 9) The Parking Survey shall be accompanied by a scaled plan (in the form of a dimensioned sketch) annotated to indicate private accesses, on-street parking bays, unmarked roadside parking, waiting restrictions (single yellow lines), provision of suitable barriers to prevent parking on pavements or green verges and public car parks up to 100 metres distance from the development. The plan should also indicate areas unsuitable for parking within this distance.
- 11) The information submitted with the parking survey will also need to include:
 - A) The likely levels of car ownership amongst occupants;
 - B) An assessment of parking activity in an identified vicinity of the application site. The Parking activity would need to be recorded at an agreed frequency between the hours of 6am and 11pm, covering week days (including a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) and a weekend day for up to one week . The survey is to be undertaken by an independent assessor;
 - C) The results of the survey would be required to provide mapped records of the parked vehicle locations at each regular count interval and vehicle identities and would need to be at a time unaffected by seasonal variation (not in school holidays, or leading up to Christmas, for example); and
 - D) Proximity and access to public transport.

15. Natural and Historic Environment

- 15.1 The environmental and long-established cultural heritage of the parish is based within individual village settlements that are currently separated by open countryside. The Village Character Statements give description and some design guidelines for the natural and built environment. Historic buildings form the basis of the character of the parish, amply demonstrated by the 15 listed buildings in Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross, 11 across Shinfield village and Shinfield North and 8 in the Grazeley area (*see appendix Y*). These buildings and their surroundings are significant in the history of the Parish, and any nearby development should be of appropriate scale and style and not obscure or affect the settings of these buildings. Parts of Three Mile Cross, predominantly consisting of the residential housing and buildings along the east side of Basingstoke Road, make up one of five areas across the borough designated by Wokingham Borough Council as an Area of Special Character, which affords it a greater degree of planning protection. Similarly, the character of the Parish is largely determined by the valleys of the River Loddon on the south-east and Foudry Brook in the west. A ridge of high land separates these valleys running south through Shinfield North (marked out by part of the A327), turning west from School Green to Ryeish Green and south again between Spencers Wood and Grazeley. The ancient churches of St Mary and St Michael are on this ridge which otherwise is mostly clear of development. *Appendix D* gives detailed examples of the significant natural environmental features, which are usually small arable fields with wide hedgerows and belts of trees or woodland. The extensive network of lanes and roads are bordered by grass verges, some with ditches. Old hedgerows contain a wide range of native species of shrubs and trees. There are many by-ways such as Woodcock Lane, as well as footpaths and bridleways that are also bordered by old hedgerows, veteran trees and drainage ditches criss-crossing open countryside and linking the settlements.
- 15.2 The wildlife dependent on this range of habitat includes many diverse animal types including deer and small mammals such as bats, as well as bird life such as owls, cuckoos, woodpeckers, nuthatches and sparrow-hawks. The majority of the parish lies within the 5 – 7 km avoidance and mitigation zone for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. This seeks to protect ground nesting birds in the Bramshill area.
- 15.3 Small woods and copses occur where agriculture has been difficult, such as on the steep hill slope down towards Grazeley from Spencers Wood. There are many mature trees, which have been surveyed as part of the Wokingham Borough Veteran Tree Project and are listed by Wokingham and District Veteran Tree Association and Thames Valley Environment Records Centre (TVERC).
- 15.4 The semi-natural grasslands include a meadow on Clares Green Road, a field in Spencers Wood known as “The Common”, the field north of the avenue of Wellingtonia trees leading to Wellington Court, the small field at the end of Yew Tree Lane, and the separated cemetery off St Mary’s Church, Shinfield. Although detailed surveys have yet to be

completed on some of these fields they are known to be rich in native flora and have not been ploughed in recent memory.

- 15.5 There are several ponds that are also rich in wildlife, including the largest one at “The Common”, and a series of ponds in Grazeley and where ditches widen out beside the single track lanes of Hyde End Lane, Croft Road and Ryeish Lane, particularly in the wetter months. Ponds on the heavy clay soils around Ryeish Green may dry up in summer droughts. These habitats add to biodiversity in the parish.
- 15.6 Corridors of natural features are vital for the survival of the flora and fauna of the native environment. They link separate patches of, for example, meadow and hedgerow or water so that plants and wildlife have essential variety of opportunities for feeding, shelter and breeding. Without these corridors there can be little biodiversity and the range and number of wildlife species decreases sharply. The corridors enable species to move across open green spaces and playing fields. Grass verges in housing developments can provide links within a corridor.
- 15.7 The topography and geology of the Parish is such that drainage and flooding from surface water is a serious issue and has been fully recorded. Existing open water courses such as field and roadside ditches form an extensive network for essential water drainage. A report by a hydrologist (*see Appendix H*) examines and highlights this issue.
- 15.8 Over the last few years small infill developments have begun to erode the open space countryside and the new large scale developments threaten to merge the three main villages of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross into a single town. The concerns voiced by residents about non-land-use Planning Issues are set out in *Appendix J*.
- 15.9 The following information (*see appendix P*) was received from the Countryside Officer (Biodiversity) of WBC:

Hedgerows – Best practice (as established elsewhere in Wokingham) in planning terms suggests ordinarily that hedgerow buffer zones are 15 metres from the centre line of the hedge on each side, in order to allow for minimum 2-4 metre wide hedgerow plus 5 metre wide rough grassland habitat strip and 5 metre strip suitable to allow vehicular access for maintenance;

Veteran/near veteran trees – 15 times the stem diameter is the buffer zone/root protection zone recommended by the Ancient tree Forum in their Ancient Tree Guides No.3: ‘Trees and development’.

Ancient Woodland – Natural England and the Woodland Trust both recommend that ancient woodland have a minimum buffer zone of 15 metres and policy 6 is aimed at securing a buffer zone that is in excess of the absolute minimum.

The management of residential gardens cannot be controlled in the future so they are not suitable for inclusion in these buffer zones.

15.10 Gathering of the issues that people considered important (*see appendix Z*) and public consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan revealed key concerns in relation to the natural environment:

- More than 87% of the '19 Questions Survey' (*see appendix A*) respondents felt that retaining the individual character and clear boundaries of the villages and settlements within the parish was important;
- Over 93% believed that walking distance access to open countryside is important;
- 98% felt that open countryside, trees and hedgerows form significant and valued characteristics of the parish;
- 99% believed in the importance of providing adequate space in new developments for trees and hedgerows to grow and mature;
- 97% believed in the need to have appropriate, secure spaces for birds and animals to move, feed and breed within the parish;
- 99% felt it important that local ditches, ponds and streams are kept in a good condition.

Policy 6: Trees, hedgerows and Woodland

New build development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

- 1) Hedgerows which are appropriate for retention, as determined by the assessment of a survey of affected hedgerows to be carried out by the developer, due to their age or ecological value or in order to screen other development or land use, will have a buffer zone of sufficient width to ensure that the value provided by that hedgerow (as determined by the survey) is adequately preserved. Any buffer zone will be measured from the central stem of the hedge and will be comprised, usually on both sides, of soft landscaping that excludes any residential curtilage;
- 2) Habitats of Principal Importance in England (Section 41 Habitats under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)), which are appropriate for retention and which are shown to have significant ecological importance as determined by the assessment of a survey of affected habitats to be carried out by the developer, will have a buffer zone of sufficient width to preserve that ecological value (as determined by the survey). This will be comprised of soft landscaping that excludes any residential curtilage. Where habitats meet the description of a section 41 Habitat type and are being retained but do not currently support significant ecological value, the developer should, where possible, put forward proposed management or other enhancement measures to improve the future ecological value of that habitat;
- 3) Ancient Woodlands, Local Wildlife Sites and ponds which are appropriate for retention, as determined by the assessment of a survey of affected woodlands, wildlife sites or ponds to be carried out by the developer, will have a buffer zone of sufficient width to preserve the ecological value of that feature. For Ancient Woodlands, buffers should normally be of a minimum 15m width in accordance with Natural England's Standing Guidance for Ancient Woodlands, except where surveys identify the need for additional width to address a particular sensitivity, or where an alternative width can be justified under paragraph 118 of the NPPF. The optimal composition of buffers will vary depending on the feature being protected, but for Ancient Woodland will normally include an element of native woodland and scrub planting that grades into other habitats such as tall flower-rich grasslands, which excludes any residential curtilage;
- 4) All buffer zones should consist of appropriate native species and where appropriate should be designed in such a way as to encourage public access and enjoyment of the zone and with appropriate provision for its maintenance.

Policy 7: Biodiversity

New build development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

- 1) The scheme, where practical, provides biodiversity enhancement through the creation of new areas of Habitats of Principal Importance in England (Section 41 Habitats under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)) such as woodlands, ponds, hedgerows and wildflower grasslands.
- 2) The scheme provides biodiversity enhancement through the provision of additional bat roosting and bird nesting opportunities, hibernacular and 'Bug hotels'.
- 3) The scheme provides biodiversity enhancement through the provision of suitable wildlife corridors¹ to ensure that the development site retains or enhances its ecological permeability.
- 4) The scheme provides biodiversity enhancement for garden dwelling species such as hedgehogs through the provision of suitable residential boundary treatments.

Policy 8: Flooding

- 1) Where appropriate, new developments must incorporate the existing open watercourses, points and ditches within the development site, to lessen the risk of flooding to property, fields and roads.
- 2) Existing open watercourses, ponds and ditches shall be preserved in new developments and substituted only where absolutely necessary or otherwise appropriate.
- 3) The creation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in new developments should be promoted wherever practicable and should be incorporated into the site layout and landscape design, matching with the requirements of existing adjacent land and with regard to provision for fauna, flora and habitats. Provisions for the maintenance and management of the features must be made by the developer.
- 4) No development will be permitted which reduces the ability of the site to alleviate flooding, or which results in increases in surface water run-off rates that would have a detrimental effect off-site, unless suitable mitigation is put in place.

¹Wildlife corridor includes terrestrial, aquatic and aerial corridors.

16. Community and Recreation

- 16.1 For many years there has been a strong sense of community in each of the areas that form Shinfield Parish and residents identify themselves as part of these individual areas.
- 16.2 This has come about as a result of the rural feel of the whole parish, fostered through local nurseries and schools, strong congregations in local churches, local shops and medical facilities and wide ranging clubs and societies that offer activities to all age groups.
- 16.3 The parish council recognises that the existing sports, leisure and social facilities are of great value to the community and are generally well utilised. We have five community halls, but they lack space and modern equipment to cater for all needs and the halls are mostly fully occupied, especially in the evenings. The parish council will work to protect and enhance these existing facilities (*see appendix K and appendix L*), and will seek to identify other assets of community value (defined as buildings and pieces of land that are essential to the social foundation of the area) and will seek, where appropriate, to register identified assets with Wokingham Borough Council and retain a working list of sites identified as valuable to the community (*see appendix M*).
- 16.4 The parish has many outstanding sports clubs but a lack of capacity holds back further development. A sports survey (*see appendix C*) was commissioned by the parish in conjunction with WBC in the spring of 2013 to establish both the current and future requirements based on benchmark data for communities of a similar demographic profile to Shinfield. The main proposals of this survey have been adopted by WBC
- 16.5 There are five religious organisations serving the community, with four churches and a Friends Meeting place. These groups form a substantial part of the local community.
- 16.6 The community cafe in St Michael's Church in Spencers Wood has provided a welcome meeting point for many people and shows that further developments of this kind would enhance the parish.
- 16.7 We have recreation and green areas around the parish, some controlled by the parish council, others by the borough council, and some which are privately owned. The development of new homes within the parish will also provide a number of additional green areas that will be available to everyone. These need to be carefully planned, managed and deliver the right sort of facilities that are demanded by the current population today and the large number of extra residents that will come into the parish with the new dwellings (*see appendix K*).
- 16.8 We encourage developers to engage with the parish council at an early stage of development planning to identify suitable sport, leisure and recreation projects.
- 16.9 The comprehensive sports audit summary (*see appendix C*) details the basis for current and future open space, recreation and sports needs for the parish, across an array of sports and facilities, and this forms much of the evidence base for the policies below.

16.10 In addition, the following views of residents were taken from the '19 Questions Survey' (See appendix A):

- 62% of respondents wanted more indoor sport and recreation facilities;
- 72% of respondents wanted more space for outdoor leisure activities;
- 69% of respondents wanted more recreation and social facilities for teenagers;
- 86% of respondents wanted a flexible community centre which could meet the needs of the local community.

Policy 9: Community Assets

- 1) Development which results in the loss of any current community sports, social or leisure assets, through redevelopment will only be supported if it provides an alternative equivalent asset or an appropriate contribution towards the improvement of an existing asset.

Policy 10: Community and Sports Facilities

- 1) All qualifying developments shall contribute towards formal and informal sport and leisure activities and recreation and social facilities within the parish, either through the provision of on-site or off-site facilities or through financial contributions towards sports, leisure and recreation projects, where they are required to mitigate the impact of the development.
- 2) Where appropriate, housing developments should also seek to provide community facilities such as allotments and communal gardens.

17. Business and Commercial Development.

17.1 Shinfield Parish has a mixture of mainly small business and commercial organisations, based across a number of local retail sites and small industrial estates.

17.2 As at May 2015, many businesses exist to supply the local market, including:

- Four hairdressing salons
- Four convenience stores – three with Post Offices attached
- Three petrol stations
- Five public houses serving food and two restaurants
- Two pharmacies
- Two doctors' surgeries and two dental practices
- Two veterinary surgeries
- Two florists
- Two estate agents
- One bakery
- One dry cleaner and laundry
- A number of independent suppliers such as a cycle shop, printers and a carpet cleaning company.

17.3 Shinfield Parish has some large employers such as Amec Foster Wheeler and The European Weather Centre, who draw on staff from a wide area due to their specialist nature. There are also a number smaller of office based employers in the area, but a recent trend has been for these type of premises to fall vacant and for them in time to be converted to apartments under current planning laws.

17.4 Whilst the proposed University of Reading Thames Valley Science Park will naturally provide some employment to the existing local population, it is expected that many of the people who will eventually work there may well be amongst the new residents of the parish living in one of the 3,000+ new homes to be built. There is however a growing number of self-employed people who operate a variety of businesses from their own homes, many of whom are dependent upon the internet. Whilst the Thames Valley generally has high levels of employment it is important to retain local employment where it currently exists.

17.5 Data from the 2011 census shows that 7.3% of residents in employment work mainly from home (*see appendix AD*). It is essential that super-fast broadband be available across the parish as soon as possible.

- 17.6 Improvements have been made and this is to be welcomed. However, it would be important to ensure that the network is continuously upgraded and all dwellings on new developments should be connected by fibre-optic cables.

Policy 11: Commercial Development

- 1) Proposals for (or that incorporate) employment uses may be supported where they do not conflict with other policies and it can be demonstrated that:
 - A) The scheme will not result in any net loss of dwellings
 - B) The scale of the development would complement the local area
 - C) The proposals will not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity for neighbouring land uses
 - D) The proposal will not cause an adverse impact on highway safety
 - E) The scheme will contribute to the development of local employment and innovation (e.g. through the creation of live-work units)
 - F) The scheme will retain and enhance green routes and green route enhancement areas (existing and proposed) where relevant
- 2) In cases where new development would result in the loss of commercial premises that fall under Classes A and B of the Use Classes Order (2005), and where planning permission is required for the change of use, proposals may be supported where they demonstrate that the commercial use of the premises is no longer viable (e.g. through continued vacancy and evidence of competitive marketing for an appropriate time period, at an appropriate price, and in an appropriate location).

Policy 12: Broadband provision

- 1) The continuous improvement of broadband and internet connections to all premises in Shinfield Parish will be encouraged.