

Sonning Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan

Summary of representations received by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) as part of Regulation 16 publication and submitted to the independent Examiner pursuant to paragraph 9 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990)

Parish/Town name: Sonning Parish

Consultation period: 2 February to 5pm 16 March 2026

Please note: All the original representation documents will be included in the examination pack. The table below is a summary of the representations received so will not be verbatim. As stated in the consultation material, any anonymous comments received during the consultation have not been considered. The comments are listed by type of responder and then alphabetically within each subheading.

A total of **17** responses were received. Of these, **8** were from statutory consultees; **2** were from a developers/landowners/agents; and **7** were from individuals (residents or individual councillors).

Ref	Respondent	Topic	Summary of Comments
Statutory Consultee comments			
1.	Berkshire Gardens Trust	Section 7.2, Conserving and enhancing the historic environment	General support for the Plan's recognition of the historic value of the plan area. However, notes the lack of reference in the plan and supporting text to Registered Parks and Gardens – including the Deanery a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden – or local non-designated parks and gardens. Recommends identifying and assessing any locally important, non-designated historic parks and gardens, then protecting them through suitable policy wording.
2.	Canal and River Trust	General	No comments. The Trust notes that it owns and manages no land or water within or near the neighbourhood area.
3.	Historic England	General	Welcomes the Plan and its coverage of the historic environment. General comments provided on the opportunities for neighbourhood planning to address historic matters – including identifying local heritage assets, use of the Historic Environment Record, etc – with links to Historic England guidance provided.

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4.	Natural England	General	No specific comments provided. Information, issues and opportunities standard advice provided, and recommendation that advice is sought from local ecological, landscape and soil advisors.
5.	Oxfordshire County Council	Traffic and travel	Restates its position that any new Thames crossing should be limited to public transport, walking and cycling, and that the bridge and its mitigation should be treated as one project.
6.	Surrey County Council	General	No comments.
7.	Twyford Parish Council	General	Support expressed for the plan.
8.	Wokingham Borough Council	Introduction	Recommends updates to reflect the most recent progress with the Local Plan Update since the draft plan was published for consultation.
		Chapter 2 – Planning	Recommended modification to reflect the latest calculated Local Housing Need and to explain that the figure will change as new data inputs are published, in order to futureproof the text. Recommended factual update to the Regulation 14 consultation date.
		Policy SNP/HOU1	Supports affordable and almshouse provision in principle. Modifications recommended so that: the reference to the site name is consistent with the existing and emerging local plans; almshouses are treated as part of a wider affordable housing mix rather than a replacement for social rented housing; and the policy is clearer for decision-making.
		Policy SNP/HOU2	Support the policy with modifications. Recommends clearer wording on rented and ownership tenures and use of up-to-date evidence produced or endorsed by the council to avoid potential unintended consequences.
		Policy SNP/DES1 Charvil 2	Supports high-quality design and use of the Design Guidance and Codes, while noting that the policy and decision making should retain enough flexibility for innovative design solutions and any future national requirement for higher densities.

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		Policy SNP/ENV1	Support the policy with modifications. Supports the principle of preventing Sonning and Charvil from merging, but recommends reducing the northern part of the Sonning–Charvil gap to Broadmoor Lane, adding physical coalescence to the policy wording, and making related supporting text and figure references clearer.
		Policy SNP/ENV2	Supports the proposed Local Green Spaces. Recommends aligning the extent of Ali’s Pond and adjacent land with the larger area assessed through the Local Plan Update, and supports designation of The Wharf which had not previously been assessed by the Council having not been promoted into the LPU process.
		Policy SNP/TRA1	Support the policy with modifications. Notes that reported traffic data in the plan is lower than many other B roads in the borough and a reduction in past levels. Sets out the LPU approach to safeguarding land for a new Thames crossing, but acknowledges there is currently no deliverable scheme. Supports traffic calming measures where it improves road safety and sense of place, but notes there is no specific detail on what is envisaged and that any new measures would need input from the highway authority, where accordance with best practice guidance would be sought.
		Policy SNP/TRA2	Support the policy with modifications. Support for improved walking and cycling routes, but recommends referring to the Council’s Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to ensure that additional routes and improvements envisaged in that strategic document are appropriately reflected in the policy. Comments that some paths may need safety and maintenance improvements before they function as year-round active travel routes, and that this would need to be weighed against other considerations such as countryside character.
Developer / landowner / agent comments			
9.	Reading Blue Coat School	Policy SNP/ENV2: Local Green Space	Objects to including Sonning Field within LGS.03. Comments that part of this field has an implemented permission for school sports use and that flexibility to complete this permission is needed to enable the School to adapt to future needs. The proposed LGS designation would restrict that use. Further comments that LGS.03 would represent an extensive tract of land, contrary to national policy concerning Local Green Space, and that the plan incorrectly identifies Sonning Field as a nature reserve.

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10.	University of Reading (c/o Stantec)	Policy SNP/HOU1	Supports affordable housing and almshouses in principle, but comments that requiring or giving significant weight to a 100% affordable scheme at “Bull Close” is not supported by strategic policy or evidence and is not justified in the context of the emerging Local Plan Update proposed allocation. Seeks flexibility for viability and up to date housing need and proposes modifications to policy wording. Comments that part C of the policy should be split into a separate policy or else be included in Policy SNP/HOU2, so that the focus of HOU1 is the Bull Close site. Amendments to supporting text proposed for greater accuracy as well as to provide a definition of almshouses.
		Policy SNP/HOU2	Comments that a prescribed 50:50 starting point for affordable rented and affordable home ownership tenures is too inflexible and diverges from the strategic policy approach. Recommends modifications to ensure greater flexibility, including reference to the provision of affordable housing being based on latest evidence and discussion with relevant stakeholders.
		Policy SNP/ENV1	Objects to the Sonning–Charvil Local Gap, commenting that it would constrain development in sustainable, edge of settlement locations, which would inhibit housing needs being met in the parish and wider borough (particularly in light of increased housing need under latest national policy). In particular, this would impact on University owned land east of Garde Road, where the LPU site assessment process has concluded development would not lead to coalescence of settlements, and its activities at Sonning Farm. Considers existing countryside, landscape, heritage and development limit policies (and constraints) already protect settlement identity, so the proposed designation is unnecessary. Regarding the evidence base underpinning the policy, The University has commissioned a Landscape Appraisal Note (by Nicholas Pearson Associates) submitted in support of their representation. This appraisal considers the central open fields make the strongest contribution to separation, while land nearer settlement edges is more enclosed. Therefore, the evidence does not justify treating the whole area in the same way and nor does it explain how candidate areas and boundaries were selected. Requests deletion of Policy SNP/ENV1. If retained, it asks for a substantially smaller gap excluding land immediately east of Sonning and west of Charvil, including land east of Garde Road.

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Individual's comments			
11.	Barton, David	General	A general consultation response, not specific to the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan, that calls for stronger support for the historic environment – including traditional and locally distinctive architecture, design codes, historic buildings, conservation areas, retention of historic buildings and locally important heritage assets – in planning policy documents.
12.	Driver, Alastair	Policy SNP/ENV1	Strongly supports the Plan and the principle of settlement boundaries and Local Gaps. However, considers the wording of policy SNP/ENV1 to be too weak and suggests the policy should instead only allow for development within a gap in exceptional circumstances of overriding public interest.
		General	Highlights an error in the reference to Garde Road forming part of the parish boundary and in the mapping and size provided for LGS.03.
13.	Etherington, Paul	General	Support expressed for the whole plan and its consultation process.
		Local Environment	Support expressed for the plan's recognition of the importance of maintaining separation of Sonning and Charvil.
		Traffic and travel	Highlights congestion at Sonning Bridge, flooding on the road to Playhatch, and the lack of services (including a local GP surgery, dentist and convenience shop). Notes improved bus services on the A4.
14.	Goodey, Glenn	Traffic and travel	Concern raised about speeding on Charvil Lane, particularly near Augustfield, Acrefield and Sonning Farm. Request that the traffic-calming scheme be extended along Charvil Lane to the A4 junction, with lower speed limits and additional measures such as road humps.
15.	Hlousek, Milan	Traffic and travel	Comments that a new bridge over the Thames is required, with a suggestion that this be at the end of the A329 (outside the parish), in order to alleviate congestion.
16.	McElhone, Iain	Traffic and travel	Comments that the plan will have little effect on dangerous driving, traffic volumes or noise within the parish. Measures suggested to address these concerns – including extending 20mph speed limit,

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			installation of additional speed cameras and introducing a toll for crossing Sonning Bridge at peak times – lie outside of the remit of a development plan document.
17.	Pascall, Tim	General	Comments that greater control over the planning process is needed in Sonning village.