Sonning Neighbourhood Plan Decision Statement

This statement has been prepared to meet Section 38A(9) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and Regulation 19(a) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

Wokingham Borough Council

The Sonning Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2040

DECISION STATEMENT BRINGING THE SONNING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN INTO LEGAL FORCE

This document is the Decision Statement required to be prepared under Section 38A(9) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ("the 2004 Act") and Regulation 19(a) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ("the Regulations")[1]. It sets out Wokingham Borough Council's ("the Council") considerations and formal decision to make the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan ("the Plan") following a successful local referendum held on 12 November 2026.

1 Summary

1.1 In accordance with the above regulations, and following a successful local referendum held on 12 November 2026, the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan attained the same legal status as a local plan (and other documents that form part of the statutory development plan for Wokingham Borough).

1.2 On 19 November 2026, the Council decided to formally 'make' (adopt) the Plan under Section 38A(4) of the 2004 Act. The Sonning Neighbourhood Plan therefore forms part of the statutory development plan.

2 Decision

2.1 Wokingham Borough Council decided at the meeting of Full Council on 19 November 2026 to:

1. Make (adopt) the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan so that it forms part of the statutory Development Plan, pursuant to Section 38A(4) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;
2) Publish the Decision Statement pursuant to Regulation 19 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ("the Regulations") in order to give effect to the above recommendation; and
3) Delegates to the Director of Place and Growth, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing, Partnerships and the Local Plan, and in agreement with the Qualifying Body, to make any spelling, grammatical, typographical or factual corrections to the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents.

3 Background

3.1 On 24 October 2019, the Council designated the Sonning Neighbourhood Area for the purpose of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The plan area covers the parish of Sonning and lies solely

[1] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/regulation/19/made

within Wokingham Borough. Sonning Parish Council (the qualifying body) submitted the draft Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents to the Council in November 2025.

3.2 Following submission of the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan, it and the supporting documents were publicised and representations invited from the public and stakeholders. The consultation ran for six weeks from 2 February to 16 March 2026. The Council, with the consent of the qualifying body, appointed an independent examiner, Mr Andrew Ashcroft MRTPI, to review whether the Plan met the basic conditions required by legislation and other legal requirements, and whether it should proceed to referendum.

3.3 The Examination Report was received on 19 June 2026 and concluded that, subject to the modifications proposed, the Plan meets the basic conditions. The examiner also recommended that the referendum area was based on the neighbourhood area that was designated by the Council on 24 October 2019.

3.4 The Council determined on 24 September 2026 that the Plan, subject to the modifications recommend by the Examiner (with the very minor deviation for MN5, MN9, MN15, and MN16 to correct typographical errors and provide factual updates) should proceed to referendum.

3.5 A referendum on the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan was held on Thursday 12 November 2026, where 90.86% of those who voted were in favour of the Plan being used to help to decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area. The Plan attained the same legal status as a local plan (and other documents that form part of the statutory development plan for Wokingham Borough) at that point. The turnout for the referendum was 33% of the registered electors.

3.6 On 19 November 2026, the Council resolved that the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan (incorporating modifications), be formally 'made' (adopted) so that it forms part of the statutory Development Plan for Wokingham Borough. It will sit alongside the other adopted local plans that together form the development plan.

4 Reasons for the Decision

4.1 Section 38A(4)(a) of the 2004 Act requires a local authority to 'make' (adopt) a neighbourhood plan if more than half of those voting in the referendum voted in favour of the Plan being used to help to decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.

4.2 Section 38A(6) of the 2004 Act states that the local planning authority is not subject to the duty if it considers that the making of the Plan would breach, or would otherwise be incompatible with, any retained EU obligation or any of the Convention rights (within the meaning of the Humans Rights Act 1998 (as amended).

4.3 The Council's Executive determined on 24 September 2026 that the Plan, as modified by the Examiner's recommendations, meets the basic conditions set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule

4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, is compatible with retained EU obligations and the Convention rights and complies with relevant provisions made by or under Section 38A and B of the 2004 Act.

4.4 The Council is satisfied that the preparation of the Plan had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European ECHR and that it complies with the Human Rights Act. The Council is satisfied that there has been full and adequate opportunity for all interested parties to take part in the preparation of the Plan and to make their comments known. The Examiner also concluded in his report that the Plan is compatible with the Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998 (as amended) and retained EU obligations.

4.5 The Council issued a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Determination Statement in January 2025, which confirmed that an SEA and an Appropriate Assessment were not required on the Plan. The Determination Statement was informed by consultation with the relevant environmental bodies, who confirmed the decision[2]. The Council's Decision Statement issued in September 2026 under Regulation 18(2) confirmed that the modifications accepted by the Council, both separately and combined, produce no likely significant environmental effects and are unlikely to have any significant effects on European Designated Sites.

4.6 The Council is therefore satisfied that the making of the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan, incorporating the modifications recommended by the examiner and accepted by the Council, would not breach, or would otherwise be incompatible with, any retained EU obligations or any of the Convention rights.

4.7 As the plan was successful at the referendum and the Council is satisfied that it would not breach and be otherwise incompatible with retained EU obligations or Human Rights legislation, the Council is required to make the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan so that it forms part of the development plan.

4.8 As such, the Council decided at the meeting on 19 November 2026 to accept the recommendations set out in paragraph 2.1 above.

5 Other Information

5.1 In accordance with Regulation 20 of the Regulations, this decision statement will be made available to view and access on the Council website at: www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/adopted-development-plan/neighbourhood-development-plans

5.2 In accordance with Regulation 20 of the Regulations, hard copies of the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents are available for inspection at:

[2] With the exception of the Environment Agency who provided no comments

- Wokingham Borough Council Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM (Monday to Friday).
- Wokingham Library, Carnival Hub, Wellington Road, Wokingham, RG40 2AF (at normal opening hours).
- the Council's website: www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/adopted-development-plan/neighbourhood-development-plans

3.2 Further information can be obtained from the Planning Policy and Infrastructure Team by email to: PolicyandPlans@wokingham.gov.uk

Andy Vaughan – Interim Director of Place & Growth

19 November 2026