



133 Dukes Ride
Crowthorne
RG45 6DP
22 January 2022

Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan Update

Dear Sir

The following response to the consultation on the updated local plan is from the Crowthorne Village Action Group, a non-political association of residents who seek to protect the established character of Crowthorne Village and ensure that future developments are in keeping with their surroundings.

P13, Para 4.3

Housing Numbers

The prime reason for a local plan is to plan for the anticipated growth in housing numbers over the plan period. The derivation of those numbers is absolutely crucial to whether or not the plan is sound.

It is noted that this new Local Plan Update has made a fundamental change in the basis of predicting demand for new homes and it is surprising that this change does not appear to be part of the consultation.

In the 2020 Local Plan the anticipated housing numbers were based on the Berks Strategic Housing Market Assessment, (SHMA) Published Feb 2016, which itself was based on data from 2012.

This update, November 2021, switches to using the central government standard method, which is based on data from 2014.

The government itself recognises that there has been a substantial change in the distribution of housing need since 2014:

- We will continue to use the 2014-based household projections. The government has carefully considered whether to use the 2018-based household projections and has concluded that, due to the substantial change in the distribution of housing need that would arise as a result, in the interests of stability for local planning and for local communities, it will continue to expect only the use of the 2014-based projections.

Therefore, neither of these are sound basis for a plan which goes until 2036.

Without a better and more up to date understanding of the drivers for housing growth, this local plan will lack a sound base.

The government understands that local needs are sometimes different from a broad brush national target, and puts the onus on local authorities to plan for local needs, as they said in the consultation on proposed changes in the planning system.

Within the current planning system the standard method does not present a 'target' in plan-making, but instead provides a starting point for determining the level of need for the area,

It is for local authorities to determine precisely how many homes to plan for and where those homes most appropriately located.

A significant driver of housing growth in Wokingham Borough is catering for families leaving London for a more rural environment. A recent report in The Times on 26 December 2021 identifies Wokingham as the second most popular destination for families leaving London.

Tens of thousands leave the Old Smoke in biggest exodus for a generation

Where are they going?

Top five destinations for people leaving London

1. Dartford
2. Wokingham, Berkshire
3. Epping Forest, Essex
4. Tandridge, Surrey
5. Runnymede, Surrey

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/tens-of-thousands-leave-the-old-smoke-in-biggest-exodus-for-a-generation-3g7r8pcn2>

The popularity of Wokingham will be partly due to the imminent arrival of Crossrail, providing fast access into the heart of London for those who would like more rural living but need access to a London office. Locating new homes with easy access to Crossrail better meets their needs.

To ignore the drivers for growth and fail to plan to meet the actual local needs would be reprehensible. It is requested that there should be a comprehensive re-evaluation of what is driving growth, how many homes are required, of what type and in what location.

P23, Para 5.37,

835 Homes south of Waterloo Road, and west of Old Wokingham Road

The plan proposes an additional 835 homes on land west of Old Wokingham Road. This land is currently farmland and its loss would be regrettable and irreversible. These would be in addition to the 1,800 already planned for south of Wokingham.

It would contribute additional traffic to Old Wokingham Road, a road which is already congested at peak times and will only get busier as the 1,000 homes at Bucklers Park in Crowthorne are occupied.

The map isn't clear but appears to show that the 835 homes have an exit both to the SDL distributor Road and to Old Wokingham Road. If so, then motorists from the entire SDL may choose to pass through this new area to access the A329M at Jennetts Park if the London Road exit becomes congested. This should be strongly resisted as the Jennetts Park junction was never designed for such an onslaught.

By building right up to the boundary between Bracknell and Wokingham, the council are eroding the strategic gap and relying on the goodwill of Bracknell Forest to maintain a buffer between the two towns.

The alternative, a proposed development by Berkeley Group of 2,500 homes at Twyford Garden, gives access to Crossrail at Twyford station and would better meet the needs of new residents moving out from London than an additional 835 homes in land west of Old Wokingham Road.

According to Berkeley Homes, communities in the south of Wokingham Borough have accommodated 97% of the Borough's new homes between 2010/11 and 2019/20. Our roads in the South are getting more and more congested. Here's an opportunity for levelling up.

<https://twyfordgardens.co.uk/rebalancing-growth/>

It is understood that Twyford is metropolitan green belt but the 835 homes proposed for the South Wokingham SDL also involves loss of green fields so the only difference is one of semantics and whether green space has been designated green belt or not. Local Authorities can, and should, review Green Belt boundaries when they review their Local Plans so now is the time for action.

ADDITIONAL HOUSING / MIXED USE ALLOCATIONS, Pinewood

Pinewood is a much valued community recreational facility and its inclusion in the section dealing with sites for additional housing, raises serious concerns. The current council has given reassurances about its continued future, which is welcome. However, the inclusion of a paragraph with the words "Pinewood" "on site" and "development" in a Local Plan document identifying sites for additional housing could be interpreted differently by future councils who may claim that the plan does allocate Pinewood as a site for future housing.

We strongly urge that Para 6.19 should be removed in its entirety.

In its place, we ask that Pinewood be included in section 7.0 and included in Table 5, list of sites designated as a local green space. It clearly meets the criteria of being demonstrably special to the local community and holding a particular significance for its recreational value.

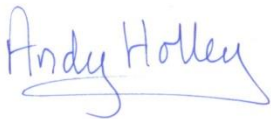
Section 7.0 Green Space

In addition to Pinewood we request that the following are added to Table 5, list of sites designated as a local Green Space:

Bigshotte Park
HeathLake SSSI
The SANG at Oakham Park

We would be happy to discuss any of these points with representatives of the council if you should wish.

Yours faithfully



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