

Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036



Consultation Statement March 2019

A plan for the community by the community

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Glossary

ACRR	Arborfield Cross Relief Road
BVRA	Barkham Village Residents Association
Core Strategy	WBC local plan adopted in 2010
FBC	Finchampstead Baptist Centre
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
LAF	Local Access Forum
LPU	Local Plan Update
MDD	Managing Development Delivery (adopted in 2014 supplements Core Strategy, adopted in 2014)
NMRE	Nine Mile Ride Extension
NMU	Non-motorised users
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPSG	Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
PROW	Public Right of Way
REME	Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
SANG	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace
SDL	Strategic Development Location
VDS	Village Design Statement
WBC	Wokingham Borough Council

1. A plan for the community by the community

- 1.1 Arborfield and Barkham Parish Councils 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 Councils. A proposal to develop the plan was approved by the two Parish Councils in May 2012 and a steering group of parish councillors was formed. WBC encouraged the two parishes to join with a third parish, but this was not considered practical. The plan area was eventually designated by WBC at an Executive meeting on 31 July 2014. However initial progress remained slow as there were still many uncertainties while the plans for the SDL were in a state of flux. Eventually the plan was relaunched in the summer of 2016, with a Steering Group comprising a broader cross-section of residents.
- 1.2 It has been the intention throughout to encourage participation by residents of the two parishes, hence the strap line 'A plan for the community by the community' has been widely used in publicity material. Participation has been achieved by a publicity programme which included:
- a) Website
 - b) Email updates
 - c) Social media.
 - d) Parish Newsletters
 - e) Leaflets
 - f) Presentations and displays at local venues
- Details are shown in sections 2 and 3.
- 1.3 By developing these channels, it became possible to evolve an active programme of local consultation with three main strands:
- a) **Focus Groups:** a number of Focus Groups have been run. The main groups covered Sustainability, Greenways and Transport. Other groups have been more informal addressing the natural environment and heritage.
 - b) **Surveys:** two surveys were carried out in 2013 and 2016.
 - c) **Public Events and Consultations:** The NPSG has organised its own "drop in" public events and participated in other local activities (see Figure 1 in para 6.1). These events were used as an opportunity to explain the issues to residents and to obtain feedback on the topics raised.

2. Website

- 2.1 After the relaunch of the Neighbourhood Plan programme in 2016, it rapidly became evident that a website would be needed to provide a central point of reference to which residents and other stakeholders could refer. This was agreed by the Steering Group. The website can be viewed at <https://www.arbarplan.com/html/documents.html>
- 2.2 The layout of the website is for the most part conventional and kept as simple as possible to make it easier to view and to maintain. Pages include
- a) **Home Page** This includes a welcome section and the latest news item.
 - b) **What is a Neighbourhood Plan** Includes a brief explanation of neighbourhood planning and a road map of the various stages. This shows 12 stages and is based on a guide produced by Locality.
 - c) **Progress** This is basically a compilation of previous news items.
 - d) **Documents** Contains links to various documents including the Neighbourhood Plan itself, maps, annexes and other support papers.
 - e) **Links** Includes Parish Council websites, WBC Local Plan Update, Neighbourhood Plan Regulations (DCLG), and Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
 - f) **Contacts** Steering group email address abnpsg@gmail.com and a contact form.
 - g) **Views Map** An interactive map shows the Important Landscape Views mentioned in the Neighbourhood Plan, along with pictures and locations.
- 2.3 In a typical week, about 50 pages are viewed in 25 visits. Many of these visits appear to be from developers. However in the aftermath of direct publicity such as an email update or publication of a magazine article, the rate of visits surge, with over 450 pages viewed in 250 visits in one week in July 2018.

3. Publicity Channels

- 3.1 **Email updates:** A mailing list has been put together to enable the circulation of updates on progress and forthcoming events. Care has been taken to observe data protection rules including the GDPR introduced in May 2018. Content of these updates have generally followed the same content as the news items displayed on the website, along with reminders when deadlines have approached for surveys and feedback forms. The BVRA has also kindly assisted by circulating information from time to time using their own email circulation and Arborfield and Newland Parish Council have kept members of their parish e-mail list similarly apprised.
- 3.2 **Social media:** Similar bulletins have been posted on Facebook local interest pages including the following: Arborfield; Arborfield Community; Arborfield Green Village Community; and the Finchampstead & Barkham Community Page.
- 3.3 **Parish Newsletters:** Articles including progress reports and explanation of planning issues have been included in local publications. These include
- a) 'Arborfield News' which is produced by Arborfield and Newland Parish Council six times a year,
 - b) 'BVRA Newsletter' which is produced by the Barkham Village Residents Association and is distributed four times a year.
 - c) 'Village Info', a new publication introduced in 2018 by Barkham Parish Council. So far there have been two issues (with a third in preparation) and it is intended to continue on a quarterly basis.
- 3.4 **Leaflets:** It has been the intention to advise all households of public events and surveys. Consequently house to house deliveries of leaflets have been required when it has not been possible to include information at the right lead-time in the parish newsletters. On occasion commercial delivery services have been contracted to do this work.
- 3.5 **Presentations and displays at local venues.** These have included
- Presentations at SDL Forum events organised by WBC including 10 Oct 2016, which was used to relaunch the Neighbourhood Plan and to promote the drop-in events later in the month and the new residents survey.
- Pop up displays during October 2016 at the Henry Street, the local garden centre, using material from the "Shaping Our Future" event. A number of Steering Group members were also allowed to have a small display stand on Saturdays through this period.
- All these events are listed in the table in para 6.1.

4. Focus Groups

- 4.1 Residents were actively encouraged to participate in Focus Groups covering some of the main topics. At various stages there have been Focus Groups looking at Greenways, Transport, Sustainability and the Arborfield Cross village centre. More informal discussions encompassed Flooding, Community Facilities, Heritage and Natural Environment, which involved inputs from relevant experts, some of whom are residents. Many points raised at the public events were incorporated.
- 4.2 An open invitation to join the focus groups was sent to all residents via newsletters and flyers and communicated orally at the public events.
- 4.3 The focus groups worked initially to list the issues that were raised at both public events and through their own focus group discussions. This ultimately led to the creation of a 20 Questions Survey, produced in the autumn of 2016. The survey asked residents for their views on the key issues from each focus group. More than 500 responses were received, highlighting the strength of community concern over these issues. An analysis of the responses is published on the Neighbourhood Plan website as Annex III Residents' Survey (2016) Summary of Results. The plan aims to tackle many of the issues raised.
- 4.4 Topic papers have been written by several of these groups and are included as supporting documents. Findings are also summarised in Sections 4 to 8 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Sustainability Group

- 4.5 A Focus Group of 24 residents came together to consider what sustainability could mean for Arborfield and Barkham. These residents represented a wide range of backgrounds and skills, from across the two villages. The full report prepared by the group is shown as Annex IV Sustainability on the Neighbourhood Plan website. In parallel, flooding issues were studied by a resident who is specifically an expert on flooding. Her report is shown in Annex XII Flood Risk Management of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.6 Findings of the Sustainability Group included:
 - a) Residents enjoy the community spirit of the various settlements and their historical identities. It is a worry that large scale development will smother these existing communities.
 - b) Rapid development is threatening to erode the natural attractions of the locality.
 - c) There is a danger that infilling gaps between the existing settlements will create a kind of urban sprawl, hence the importance of retaining separation between settlements.
 - d) Increasing urbanisation is likely to reach a tipping point where natural green corridors are eroded, threatening wildlife and biodiversity.
 - e) Planning for growth has become problematic with approved sites not yet built.
 - f) Unlawful development is a challenge.
 - g) It is a sad truth that larger four and even five bedroom houses predominate in new housing proposals, bringing in new residents, but failing to satisfy the needs of local people, young and old.
 - h) There is significant employment in the two parishes which is seen positively.
 - f) There have been proposals submitted for large scale renewable energy schemes, for example wind farms (in one of the lowest wind areas in the country) and solar parks. These proposals are unpopular with local residents and have been deemed to be 'inappropriate' by WBC. However it is disappointing that less intrusive solutions have not been forthcoming, such as maximising discreet solar panels on large roof buildings.
 - g) Transport and the associated congestion is without doubt the biggest challenge of all. Congestion means an inefficient use of energy resources (and will still do so in the age of the electric car) and time wasted in unproductive activity. The road system depends on lanes built for the horse and cart era. Many of these became residential roads during the 1950s and 1960s and with increasing

development in the wider area they are now used as main through routes. Meanwhile the alternatives to journeys by car are very restricted: the bus service is limited in scope while sustainable transport opportunities (as opposed to leisure routes) are virtually non-existent.

Greenways Group

- 4.7 Another focus group started in 2013 to study greenways in considerable detail, including surveys of rights of way and a Greenways Questionnaire at the Arborfield Village Fete in June 2015. Besides preparing a far-reaching report, the group has been in dialogue with WBC Countryside Services about improving PROWs and has participated in the Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum (LAF). The Greenways group also initiated some practical projects, in particular two signposted walks: the Barkham Way and The Coombes Circular Walk, both these projects being completed in 2017. The report of the group's findings is shown in Annex XIII Arborfield and Barkham Greenways Report of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.8 Findings of the Greenways Group included the following identified needs:
- a) Greenway suitable for cycling from Arborfield Cross to the SDL (safe route to school).
 - b) Greenway suitable for cycling from Barkham to the SDL (safe route to school) and extension to Wokingham centre (commuting).
 - c) Improved crossings at various locations including Barkham Road adjacent to Barkham Bull, Edney's Hill and Pegasus crossing in Mole Road.
 - d) Ensure proposed greenways in SDL are fit for purpose, in particular adequate crossings provided for main roads, specifically Biggs Lane, Shearlands Road and the Nine Mile Ride Extension.
 - e) Signs for existing footpaths, e.g. The Coombes Circular Walk, Barkham to Rooks Nest.
 - f) Plans for longer leisure routes, e.g. Bearwood Circle linking The Coombes, Woosehill, Sindlesham and Carters Hill.
 - g) Loddon Path
 - h) Develop circular routes for horse riding especially in The Coombes and Carters Hill area.
 - i) Bridge over Arborfield bypass
 - j) Reclaiming quiet lanes, specifically Church Lane (Arborfield) and Edney's Hill (Barkham)
 - k) Promotion of greenways (maps, websites, QR codes etc.)
 - l) Maintenance arrangements for stiles, kissing gates and ensuring adequate drainage to facilitate all weather usage.

Transport Group

- 4.9 In 2013, a Transport Focus Group began to examine all aspects of transport provision. Its efforts were early on redirected to a review of the Arborfield Green transport proposals when they were published. This was quickly followed by a period of engagement with Wokingham Borough Council's work on the Arborfield Cross Relief Road. Through its analysis, the group expanded its appreciation of the issues and underlying causes, and some residential traffic surveys were prompted. These are shown in the Barkham Traffic Count and Residential Trip Rate Survey of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Identity and Rural Setting

4.10 This theme was researched more informally under four topic headings:

- **Heritage:** Giles Stephens, WBC Conservation Officer, provided guidance on the approach and suggested a number of sources. The issues emerging have been discussed with residents at a number of public events and the full report is shown in Annex VII Heritage.
- **Natural environment:** This review follows an approach suggested by Duncan Fisher, WBC Ecology Officer, who directed the team to The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC). TVERC produced a report covering the biodiversity of Arborfield and Barkham. Follow-up was facilitated at a number of public events and further details are shown in Annex VI Natural Environment.
- **Important Landscape Views:** residents were invited to submit landscape views which they considered to be important. These were used to illustrate a landscape study which drew on the Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment. This followed the pattern of a similar study carried out by Sherfield on Loddon as part of their Neighbourhood Plan which was adopted in February 2018. The paper can be viewed as Neighbourhood Plan Annex V Landscape and Important Views while an interactive map is also included on the website at https://www.arbarplan.com/html/views_map.html
- **Arborfield Cross Village Centre:** The completion of the Arborfield relief road will reduce the majority of the through traffic passing along the A327, including access to the SDL. This creates the opportunity to improve the environment in the village centre in a way that benefits both residents and businesses. A Focus Group has been formed to examine these opportunities in more detail and establish basic ground rules.

Housing

4.11 The NP Steering Group initiated work on housing in two stages:

- a) Stage 1 was to commission planning consultants Bell Cornwell to prepare a review paper.
- b) Stage 2 Based on the work done by Bell Cornwell, the Steering Group produced its own Housing Needs Analysis.

These studies are shown as Neighbourhood Plan as Annex X Briefing Note Neighbourhood Areas Housing Need April 2017 and Annex XI Housing Needs analysis.

4.12 The housing needs analysis produced by the Neighbourhood Planning team, based on census data indicates a requirement for 899 homes by 2036. Using the formula suggested by the DCLG indicates a very slightly higher figure of 917 homes. Both of these calculations suggest that the number of committed new homes in the Plan area is already twice the identified need.

5. Surveys

- 5.1 An initial residents' survey was carried out in 2012. The survey was conducted on a household basis, in both online and paper format. In total there were 367 completed returns.
- 5.2 Following the relaunch of the Neighbourhood Plan during 2016, a second survey was carried out at the end of 2016. This survey invited individuals of 18 years and over to respond and was also in both online and paper format. In total there were 525 completed returns. The results are summarised in Supporting Document 13. Although using a different methodology than the 2012 survey, the findings were strikingly similar.
- 5.3 A Greenways survey was carried out at the Arborfield Fete on 6 June 2015. There were 111 responses. Though recognised as not being fully representative of the two parishes, it did help to inform residents' attitudes on the topic.
- 5.4 A business survey was attempted but owing to the poor response rate the results were somewhat inconclusive. The one issue that was apparent was the need for faster broadband in all areas.

Results of Household Survey 2012

- 5.5 The survey was carried out in the period September to November 2013. A survey sheet with explanation was delivered to all households. Additional publicity was carried through articles in the 'Arborfield News' and 'BVRA Newsletter'. The responses were requested on a household basis.
- 5.6 In total 367 households responded: this is a substantial number and confirms that there is a lot of interest in how the parishes evolve. Highlights of the results are as follows:
 - a) **The Rural Location:** The following propositions had overwhelming support
 - Do you agree that preserving the identities of Arborfield and Barkham as distinct village communities is an important goal? (97%)
 - Do you agree that green gaps should be preserved between the villages and neighbouring communities? (99%)
 - If the development of the Arborfield Garrison site relies on local residential roads, (Barkham Road, Bearwood Road, School Road, Langley Common Road etc) will this be detrimental to the environment of the villages through increased noise, pollution and safety concerns? (93%)
 - b) **Challenges facing Arborfield and Barkham:** Most important challenges facing Arborfield and Barkham were considered to be traffic congestion (84.0%), development (44.6%), traffic speed (41.4%), protection of open spaces and green gaps (39.9%) and traffic noise (36.7%).
 - c) **Journeys to work:** The vast majority of journeys to work were by car (78%). The dependence on car transport is clearly explained by the complexity of commuting journeys with the vast majority of destinations not being readily accessible by public transport. The distribution between destination areas is spread remarkably evenly, including London (9%), Wokingham Town (8%) and then Arborfield, Reading (Central) and Reading (Other) each 7%. The largest group was "Elsewhere" (17%) which would have included Hampshire and Surrey. Note that at the time of the survey, Arborfield Garrison was still an active military location with many personnel both living and working on the garrison.
 - d) **Bus travel:** Commuting by bus covered a very low proportion of households (3%) but a much greater proportion use buses at least occasionally (43%). Arborfield households would be more inclined to use buses if fares were lower (63%), while Barkham would like better frequency (67%). Just 9% admitted they would not use the bus under any circumstances.
 - e) **Community Facilities:** Facilities most sought at Arborfield Green were a doctors' surgery (48%), a primary school (46%) and a secondary school (41%). Note: A primary school is now being built and the secondary school opened in 2016.

- f) **Housing:** There was only lukewarm support for affordable housing (38%).
- g) **Transport:** The survey included questions about the proposed Arborfield Cross Relief Road and Barkham Bridge widening. The Relief Road received strong support (56% if one mile from village, 16% if close to the village). Barkham Bridge widening was favoured more by Arborfield households (56%) than by Barkham (41%).
- h) **Listed Buildings:** The top two preferences for re-using the Listed Buildings forming Arborfield Garrison stable block are a café/restaurant (38%) or museum (31%). A combination of the two would seem a good compromise!

Results of Residents' Survey 2016

- 5.7 The survey was carried out in the period September to December 2016. A survey sheet with explanation was delivered to all households. Additional publicity was carried through articles in the 'Arborfield News' and 'BVRA Newsletter'. There was also an additional mailing for businesses. Unlike the 2013 survey, responses were requested from individual residents 18 years and older. The survey could also be completed online.
- 5.8 In total 525 residents responded: this is a substantial number and confirms that there is a lot of interest in how the parishes evolve. Highlights of the results are as follows:
- a) **The Rural Location:** A major theme to emerge is that residents have a strong attachment to the rural and village character of the area. There was strong support for the proposition that the rural setting makes Arborfield and Barkham good places to live, with 98% of respondents agreeing. Meanwhile 91% strongly agreed and a further 8% agreed that the unique identity of the area is best preserved by retaining open spaces around the villages.
 - b) **Challenges facing Arborfield and Barkham:** Concern about development related issues is widespread. The most important challenges faced by Arborfield and Barkham are traffic congestion (49%) and protecting open spaces (29%).
 - c) **Journeys to work:** The vast majority of journeys to work were by car (86%) and so it is hardly surprising that there is congestion on the limited road network available to serve the community. The dependence on car transport is clearly explained by the complexity of commuting journeys with the vast majority of destinations not being readily accessible by public transport. Excluding the "not applicable" group (basically retirees) the distribution between the 12 destination areas is spread remarkably evenly. The two largest destination groups at 12% each were Wokingham (Other) and Hampshire/Surrey.
 - d) **Bus travel:** Commuting by bus covers a very low proportion of residents (3%) but nearly a quarter of residents (23%) use buses at least monthly. The proportion is higher for Arborfield residents which reflects the more frequent bus service to Reading. For Barkham residents the priority to promote greater use is frequency (41%) while more direct routes (29%) and fares (24%) are more of a factor in Arborfield.
 - e) **Community Facilities:** There is a strong sense that nursery provision (72%) and also play facilities for children up to 12 years (60%) are adequate across the parishes. However a majority felt that there was a shortage of recreation facilities for teenagers (77%).

Satisfaction with local medical facilities is low (38%) but the result splits by parish. Arborfield residents have the benefit of a small doctor's surgery facility which explains higher satisfaction at 45% compared with just 31% in Barkham. Parks and recreational spaces are considered adequate (68%) and also community centres within the current residential areas (62%).
 - f) **Housing:** The proposition that there should be a policy to provide housing for first time buyers received strong support at 77% of responses. There was also even stronger support (91%) for life

time homes (i.e. homes where people can continue to live independently when they become old or disabled). These two concepts clearly need to be addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 5.9 Generally, the results of the 2016 and 2012 surveys were similar, even though different questions were asked in the two surveys. Also note that the earlier questionnaire surveyed households and the later one surveyed individuals. An analysis of the responses to the 2016 survey is published as Neighbourhood Plan Annex III Residents' Survey (2016) Summary of Results.

Greenways Survey

- 5.10 A public survey was carried out at The Arborfield Fete on 6 June 2015. The results clearly were weighted towards Arborfield residents (59%) rather than Barkham (17%), but nevertheless it was considered that they gave a useful insight into local behaviour.
- 5.11 There were a total of 111 responses, including 95 walkers, 35 cyclists and 16 riders (some respondents fell into multiple categories). Highlights of the results are as follows:
- a) Purpose of outing: dog walking and rambling groups featured strongly. Specifically the Health Walks from Henry Street were mentioned several times.
 - b) Circular routes generally preferred
 - c) Great interest in Loddon Riverside Walk
 - d) Survey sample weighted towards older age groups

Full results are shown in the Annex XIII Arborfield and Barkham Greenways Report.

- 5.12 In general the results reinforced previous thinking on these topics. The biggest gap was an understanding of how many people use the different walking routes. There is also a feeling that the needs of different types of cyclists (commuting, school, off road, sporting etc.) were not fully identified. Younger people should be targeted in any future survey.

6. Public Events and Consultations

6.1 The full list of public events in which the Steering Group has participated is shown below. This list includes the 'drop in' events organised by the Steering Group and other events where there has been an additional opportunity to present material and to discuss the Neighbourhood Plan with residents.

Figure 1 Summary of Public Events

Date	Event	Location	Activity	Attendance
26 Feb 2013	NPSG public event	Barkham Village Hall	Presentation and review of survey results	40 residents
10 Oct 2016	Community Forum	Henry Street Garden Centre	Presentation to relaunch NP	60 residents
15 Oct 2016	NPSG public event	Barkham Village Hall	Display to explain NP	30 residents
20 Oct 2016	NPSG public event	Arborfield Village Hall	Display to explain NP	40 residents
20 Mar 2017	Community Forum	Henry Street Garden Centre	Stall with display	120 residents
30 Sep 2017	Shaping Our Future	Arborfield Green Community Centre	Display developing NP themes	60 residents
14 Oct 2017	Crest event	Arborfield Green Community Centre	Display developing NP themes	40 residents
14-31 Oct 2017	Pop-up events and display	Henry Street Garden Centre	Display developing NP themes	Not recorded
31 Oct 2017	Community Forum	Henry Street Garden Centre	Display developing NP themes	40 residents
23 June 2018	NPSG public event	Arborfield Green Community Centre	Display explaining pre-submission draft plan	37 residents

Public Event 26 Feb 2013

6.2 The event took the form of a wide ranging presentation with a question and answer session. The agenda included

- a) Why it is important to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan
- b) Progress to date
Neighbourhood Plan survey successfully completed
Attendance at various training sessions arranged by WBC, NALC and CPRE
Discussions with WBC and Arborfield Garrison Landowners
Identification of main themes for the Neighbourhood Plan
- c) Update from Shinfield of their experience so far
- d) Summary of results from the Neighbourhood Plan Survey
- e) Update on Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location (SDL) plans
- f) Emerging themes for the Neighbourhood Plan
Infrastructure including housing mix (affordable/low cost), Aspiration for FBC type facility

Transport: improvements to road network, alternative modes of transport, public transport and green routes

Interaction with existing communities: preserve green gaps, design principles, open spaces

Employment: Local (where possible), Recognise changing work patterns, Live-work spaces

- g) Next steps including participation of residents Set up working groups with residents to progress some of the emerging themes – we would like to progress this tonight!

- 6.3 The opportunity was taken to recruit a number of residents to Focus groups. Some of these residents have stayed with the programme and also joined the Steering Group.

Public Events October 2016

- 6.4 Two drop-in events were held, the first one in Barkham Village Hall on 15 October and a second in Arborfield Village Hall on 20 October. Additional publicity was achieved by a presentation at the SDL Forum event organised by WBC on 10 Oct 2016. A total of 70 residents attended the two drop in events.
- 6.5 These events had a number of aims:
- a) To relaunch the Neighbourhood Plan, following a period in which progress had slowed due largely to uncertainties relating to the early planning of the SDL.
 - b) To outline the constraints involved in producing a Neighbourhood Plan and to discuss the main issues which were likely to be addressed in the Plan, answering questions from residents
 - c) To launch a new survey. (It was felt that the 2013 survey could now be somewhat out of date.)
 - d) To recruit volunteers for the Focus Groups.
- 6.6 There was considerable discussions with attendees. The main feedback was through the Questionnaire results (see para 5.8 above). The exhibition boards can be seen in Consultation Statement Appendix 1 - Public events to launch survey October 2016.

'Shaping Our Future' public event

- 6.7 A major public event entitled 'Shaping Our Future' was organised by the NPSG. This was held on 30 Sep 2017 and included an exhibition outlining the main NP issues. Members of the NPSG were on hand to answer questions and to receive comments. The 'Shaping Our Future' exhibition was aired several times during October including at a Crest event and a number of pop-up events at Henry Street, the local garden centre. The exhibition boards can be seen in Consultation Statement Appendix 2 - Public event 30 September 2017 "Shaping Our Future.
- 6.8 Written comments are summarised below while proportion by topic was as follows:

Figure 2 Feedback from Shaping Our Future (written responses)

Topic	Comments	%
Development	17	26%
Preserving countryside	15	23%
Infrastructure	9	9%
Greenways/Bridleways	7	7%
Public Transport	6	6%
Medical facilities	5	5%
Utilities & Schools	4	4%
Security	4	1%
Allotments	4	1%
Total	65	100%

Development and preserving the countryside were the topics mentioned most frequently. These were also major concerns in the Residents' Survey.

- 6.9 Residents' concerns included a variety of topics relating to development, preserving the countryside and the inadequacy of local transport.
- a) Development was a hot topic, particularly following the recent announcement that Barkham Square is being assessed by the planners when the building of Arborfield Green is only in the early stages. "Why is Barkham being targeted again?" asked one resident while another said he had "moved here to be in the country and soon it will be part of Reading".
 - b) There was concern that all this development was progressing without WBC listening to the residents. One resident, citing a recent appeal in Barkham Road, questioned if the effort was worthwhile as "wasn't Barkham Square already a done deal?"
 - c) Meanwhile there were worries about the loss of countryside and building on flood plains.
 - d) Traffic congestion, inevitably, was another hot topic, especially following the number of road works around the area. "Will it ever end? The building has only just begun." was a typical comment.
 - e) There was criticism that developers seem to focus on building the more expensive types of houses and that there is still a lack of housing for first time buyers. Older people complained that they were unlikely to downsize as there were no suitable properties being built – "no bungalows" said one.
 - f) There was a lot of irritation that there is still no firm plan for a medical centre at Arborfield Green. Residents feel short-changed about this: "We were told that redeveloping the garrison would provide facilities for the local community. It is not happening" was one comment.
 - g) There was more a more upbeat response to the new Bohunt School but this was tempered by many complaints about access routes. There are still no safe routes for pupils living in Arborfield Green, let alone for more distant parts of the parishes. Timings of the buses and poor punctuality were also criticised.
 - h) The new greenway from Finchampstead and the expansion of the network across Arborfield Green was welcomed as a means of creating safe cycling and walking routes. Some specific problems emerged about crossings on main roads and gates that were difficult to negotiate.
 - i) Some other issues raised included the slow roll out of fast broadband and concerns about maintenance of sports pitches. There was impatience to learn more about what is proposed for the new District Centre at Arborfield Green.

Public Event to Launch Consultation on Pre-Submission Plan

- 6.10 The Pre-Submission Plan was the subject of a public consultation. This was launched at a public event on 23 June 2018, with the consultation running until 3 August 2018.
- 6.11 The event was publicised through a number of channels:
- the Arborfield News and the Village Info. Both of these publications were distributed to all residents in the two parishes and included details of the public event and a centre page proforma for comments.
 - BVRA Newsletter This contained some commentary and editorial to support the consultation.
 - Website. The same proforma was also included on the website, along with some commentary.
 - An email update was sent to the Neighbourhood Plan address list email.
 - Social media. Postings were made on the local pages.
- 6.12 The exhibition included brief commentary on the main issues and summaries of the policies. In addition a policy booklet was provided. The exhibition boards can be seen in Consultation Statement Appendix 3 - Public event 23 June 2018 Launch of Consultation. A comment sheet was made available in both hard copy and online versions. This is shown in Consultation Statement Appendix 4 - Feedback from Regulation 14 Consultation.
- 6.13 Responses were received from 124 residents. Of these, 117 agreed with the majority of the proposed policies and 23 disagreed with at least one policy. A summary of responses for each policy is shown below.

Figure 3 Consultation of Pre-Submission Plan – analysis of responses

Policy	Agree?			Total responses	% Agree
	Yes	No	Blank		
IRS1	120	2	2	124	96.8%
IRS2	118	4	2	124	95.2%
IRS3	119	3	2	124	96.0%
IRS4	118	3	3	124	95.2%
TC1	116	3	5	124	93.5%
TC2	116	2	6	124	93.5%
TC3	112	4	8	124	90.3%
AH1	107	7	10	124	86.3%
AH2	107	6	11	124	86.3%
AH3	114	1	9	124	91.9%
AH4	110	3	11	124	88.7%
AH5	110	3	11	124	88.7%
GA1	116	1	7	124	93.5%
GA2	115	3	6	124	92.7%
GA3	106	8	10	124	85.5%
GA4	112	3	9	124	90.3%
Total	1816	56	112	124	90.3%

- 6.14 Roughly a half of respondents (62) provided comments. Of these respondents, only 8 disagreed with one or more policy. General comments included some which were supportive of the plan, without referring to specific policies and ones which could be considered as constructive criticism.
- 6.15 The consultation provided the opportunity for residents to put their feelings into words. Many residents took the trouble to do so and their comments provided some useful food for thought. The main themes were no great surprise: over-development, the pressure on roads, protection of the countryside and the failure to provide infrastructure. Below is a small selection of the comments from

residents who agreed with the relevant policies. (Resident numbers refer to Consultation Statement Appendix 5)

- a) "With all the building at Arborfield Garrison, the existing communities should benefit from some facilities. There is not even a shop yet." (Resident 2)
- b) "I bought an existing house in this area so that I could enjoy the countryside which provides habitat for animals, a peaceful setting and great walks." (Resident 30)
- c) "Where's the infrastructure, where are the new GP practices, where are the schools (doubling the size of a town and then throwing in one extra school does not cut the mustard), where are the cycle lanes?" (Resident 11)
- d) "I would not support any further development as we are already at saturation point. Affordable housing and key worker homes should have already been included surely?" (Resident 5)
- e) "The local roads have not changed since we came here (40 years ago)" (Resident 41)
- f) "Protect the Coombes. We are so lucky to have such a special natural area which is also a habitat for wildlife. Please add a clause to the Neighbourhood Plan to preserve it and totally restrict any development there." (Resident 8)
- g) "A good plan for the community would be the mandatory preservation of green and woodland areas around Barkham and Arborfield." (Resident 36)
- h) "Where are our young people going to live?" (Resident 52)

6.16 Next is a small selection of the comments from residents who have disagreed with the relevant policies. Generally these comments expected the Neighbourhood Plan to be more restrictive than would be permitted by the NPPF and Local Plan.

- a) "Whilst the draft plan makes an attempt to cover the special rural character of the area, it should be more definitive and prescriptive in certain areas." (Resident 1)
- b) "A good plan for the community would be the mandatory preservation of green and woodland areas around Barkham and Arborfield." (Resident 36)
- c) "Widening roads and bridges will only encourage more traffic and as for more bus routes...why! I never see more than half a dozen people at any one time on the buses and if you start widening the roads and junctions... the next development will be more housing!!!" (Resident 34)
- d) "We have lots and lots of new houses in the Arborfield area at the moment with the redevelopment of the garrison. There are also more houses proposed along School Road. Surely as a small area we have now fulfilled our quota of new housing without plots now being available within the Coombes wood. Although areas of greenery have been included in the development plans of all the new housing the massive increase in population means we all need ample space to walk dogs, get away from the traffic and have safe places to enjoy with our children. At some point we need to stop building and save the areas of beauty that we have. Please leave the woodland as woods." (Resident 39)

Statutory and Other Consultees

6.17 The following 22 Statutory and Other Consultees were approached for their comments:

BT	Crest Nicholson	Earley Town Council	Environment Agency
Finchampstead PC	Highways England	Historic England	Ministry of Defence
National Grid	Natural England	NHS	Reading BC
Thames Water	Shinfield PC	South East Water	Sport England
SSE	Swallowfield PC	Thames Valley Police	Winnersh PC
Wokingham Town Council		Wokingham Without PC	

6.18 Various responses were received from statutory consultees including Historic England, Thames Water, Natural England, Highways England, Environment Agency and National Grid. In general these were neutral, but an interesting response was received from Historic England which outlined how specific local assets, such as The Coombes, could at least be recognised in the planning process as non designated sites. Some sample comments are shown below:

- a) IRS1 Neighbourhood Plan does not need to repeat what is already adopted policy in the Local Development Plan or national policy, rather the draft policies must be compatible with existing policies.
- b) IRS1 There are varying Landscape Character Areas within the Parishes and as such, the Neighbourhood Plan should make not only a clear distinction between the varying characters but also reflect varying importance and significance.
- c) IRS1 The key characteristics of these areas are not all identified to be 'open'.
- d) IRS2 We consider that reference to 'Separation Areas' should be removed from the Pre-Submission Draft A&BNP.
- e) AH4 With regard to Criteria c), we consider that this draft policy should be deleted as Lifetime Homes Standards is no longer supported by national policy
- f) AH5 It is acknowledged the principles of the flood risk management, including SuDS, should be addressed at an early stage, but it is unreasonable to request all elements to be fully addressed when the scheme, and the details influencing the flooding and drainage, will not be fully detailed.

The full response and commentary are shown in Consultation Statement Appendix 5.

6.19 Three responses from Barton Wilmore, a planning consultant were also received. These represented three different landowners and developers, Reading University, Reading Football Club and Linden Homes. Unsurprisingly they were opposed to restrictive planning rules and sought more freedom for development.

6.20 All comments from residents and other consultees are shown in Consultation Statement Appendix 5 including a summary of observations and actions taken to amend the Plan.

7. How were issues and concerns raised considered and addressed?

- 7.1 The issues and concerns raised by residents, statutory and other consultees were reviewed by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Also reviewed were the Health Check produced by Andrew Mathison on behalf of NPIERS and advice sought from WBC. This led to a revised Submission Plan which was completed on 29 September 2018.
- 7.2 The layout of the plan has been altered to combine the policies with the supporting text, thus eliminating the separate section for policies. The amount of introductory comment has been reduced as much of this material is now covered in the Basic Conditions Statement and the Consultation Statement and is also covered in the various annexes.
- 7.3 The following policies have been redrafted as a result of the consultation:
- Policies IRS3, IRS4, TC3, AH3, AH5, GA1, GA2 and GA3.
 - Policy GA3 was deleted (thus the policy previously numbered GA4 is renumbered GA3).
 - Other policies have been amended in detail.
- 7.4 The aim of the amendments was to clarify the meaning and to strengthen the policies and to better reflect national (NPPF) and local (WBC) policies, demonstrating how these should be interpreted in the light of conditions in the Plan Area.
- 7.5 Additional factual information given by consultees was incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan where appropriate.
- 7.6 Amendments made to the Neighbourhood Plan in response to the issues and concerns raised by consultees are identified in Appendix 4 of the Consultation Statement.
- 7.7 Where comments related to matters that are outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, no action was taken or, where appropriate, have been added to the Project List for the attention of the two parish councils.