



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan Information Statement

This statement has been prepared to meet Regulation 4(3)(a) and 4(3)(b) of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendum) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

1. About this Statement

A referendum on The Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan will be held on Thursday 7 December 2023. This Statement provides information on the referendum that is going to take place and how you can take part in it.

2. Referendum on The Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan

A referendum asks you to vote 'yes' or 'no' on a specific question. For this referendum you will receive a Ballot Paper which asks the following question:

"Do you want Wokingham Borough Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Ruscombe Parish to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?"

3. What are Neighbourhood Plans?

Neighbourhood Planning was introduced under the Localism Act 2011. It aims to help local communities play a direct role in shaping how the land in the area in which they live and work is used and developed.

Neighbourhood plans are prepared by Town or Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Forums.

4. The Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan

The Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Ruscombe Parish Council. It has been produced in accordance with the statutory requirements and, following independent examination which recommended some modifications, has been recommended to proceed to referendum.

The neighbourhood area is shown on the map at the end of this Statement. The boundary of the neighbourhood area was approved by Wokingham Borough Council on 25 January 2018. The referendum area is identical to the area which has been designated as the Ruscombe neighbourhood area.

5. What Does the Referendum Result Mean?

If more than 50% of individuals vote 'yes' in the referendum, then Wokingham Borough Council will 'make' (adopt) The Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan. If the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' it will help determine planning applications in the neighbourhood area. It will also form part of the statutory development plan for Wokingham Borough. If more people vote 'no' than 'yes' then the Neighbourhood Plan will not be made part of the statutory development plan for the local area.

6. Can I Vote in the Referendum?

A person is entitled to vote in The Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan referendum if on Thursday 7 December 2023:

- he or she is entitled to vote in a local government election in the referendum area; and
- his or her qualifying address for the election is in the referendum area. A person's qualifying address is, in relation to a person registered in the register of electors, the address in respect of which he or she is entitled to be registered.

The referendum will be conducted based in accordance with procedures similar to those used at local government elections.

In order to vote in the referendum you must be registered to vote by midnight 21/11/2023. Electors who are currently on the register at a qualifying address do not need to make a new registration application in order to vote at this poll.

7. How Can I Vote

There are three ways of voting, you may vote in person, by post or by proxy.

In Person:

At your local Polling Station on Thursday 7 December 2023. This will be displayed on the Poll Card that will be sent to you.

Polling Stations will be open between 7:00 AM and 10:00 PM.

By Post:

If you already have a Postal Vote you will receive a Postal Poll card confirming this and Postal Vote Pack with your Ballot Paper.

If you do not have a Postal Vote but would like to vote by post in the referendum, you can find out how to apply on our website:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/council-and-meetings/elections-and-voting/vote-post-or-proxy>

Please note: The deadline for Postal Vote applications is 5pm on 22/11/2023.

By Proxy:

If you already have a permanent Proxy Vote you will receive a Poll Card confirming this in the weeks leading up to the referendum.

If you are unable to vote at your Polling Station and do not wish to vote by post you may be eligible to vote by Proxy. This means appointing somebody to vote on your behalf at your Polling Station.

Details on applying to vote by Proxy can be found here <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/council-and-meetings/elections-and-voting/vote-by-post-or-proxy/>

Please note: The deadline for us to receive your Proxy Vote application is 5pm on 29/11/2023.

After this date you can still apply for an Emergency Proxy Vote if your circumstances meet certain criteria. Information is available from <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a-voter/voting-person-post-or-proxy/voting-proxy> or by calling 0118 974 6523.

8. How to Mark Your Ballot Paper?

You show your choice by putting a cross (X) in the box next to your choice on the Ballot Paper.

Put a cross in only ONE box and do not mark your Ballot Paper in any other way. If the Counting Officer is not able to clearly understand what your intention was your vote will not be counted.

9. Referendum Expenses

Individuals or Groups may campaign to promote a particular outcome of the referendum.

Spending on the campaigns is restricted by an expenses limit, which campaigners and campaign groups must not exceed. The limit is calculated in accordance with the following formula:

- £2,362 + (0.059xN)
- Where N is the number of entries in the relevant register

The referendum expenses limit that will apply in relation to the referendum and the numbers of persons entitled to vote has been calculated as the following:

- Expenses Limit: £2,413.33
- Persons Entitled to Vote: 870 persons (as of 1st October 2023*)

*The current electorate figure was taken from the latest alteration to the Register of Local Government Electors, published after the conclusion of the annual canvass on 1st December 2022.

10. How Can I View the Referendum Documents?

There are a number of documents that are available to view as part of the referendum:

- The Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan: Referendum version (incorporating modifications);
- The Independent Examiner's Report;
- A Summary of the representations submitted to the Independent Examiner;
- Post Examination Decision Statement, including confirmation that Wokingham Borough Council is satisfied that The Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions and provisions as they apply; and,
- A statement setting out general information in relation to town & country planning (and neighbourhood planning) and the referendum.

These documents can be viewed on the Wokingham Borough Council website at:

www.wokingham.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning

And in hard copy at:

Wokingham Borough Council, 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 the following times:

- Monday 9.30am - 5pm
- Tuesday 9.30am - 5pm
- Wednesday 9.30am - 4pm
- Thursday 9.30am - 7pm
- Friday 9.30am - 5pm
- Saturday 9.30am - 4pm

11. How to Find Out More

Further general information on neighbourhood planning can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

Detailed Information on the proposal can be found on: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning>

Map of Referendum Area

