

Wokingham Borough Council

Duty to Cooperate: Interim Statement of Compliance

Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update:
Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19)

September 2024



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Contents

1. Introduction	4
Background to the LPU Proposed Submission Plan.....	4
2. Introduction to the Duty to Cooperate	4
Duty to cooperate bodies	6
3. Strategic Context.....	9
4. Wider Engagement.....	10
5. Engagement on Strategic Matters.....	12
Housing, employment and economic development	13
Housing need and supply.....	13
Gypsy and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople	16
Supply of employment land.....	18
Town centre retail.....	19
Development allocations (all types)	21
Infrastructure provision	24
Education	24
Health facilities.....	25
Utilities and infrastructure	26
Flood risk	26
Strategic transport links.....	28
Natural and historic environment, biodiversity and climate change	29
Biodiversity including Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and Sites of Special Scientific Interest	30
Landscape including Green Belt.....	31
Atomic Weapons Establishment consultation zones.....	31
Historic environment.....	32
Open space	33
Climate change.....	33
6. Conclusion	34
Appendix A – Overview of collaboration on the evidence base	36
Appendix B – Existing cooperative groups.....	41
Appendix C – Record of key engagement	45
Appendix D – Western Berkshire Statement of Common Ground.....	77

Appendix E – Environment Agency Memorandum of Understanding	107
Appendix F – South East Water Memorandum of Understanding.....	111
Appendix G – Thames Water Memorandum of Understanding	114

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Duty to Cooperate Interim Statement of Compliance (hereinafter referred to as this statement) has been prepared to support the Local Plan Update (LPU): Proposed Submission Plan (September 2024) which sets out the proposed long term development strategy for Wokingham Borough. This statement seeks to evidence how the council has complied with the 'Duty to Cooperate' in preparing the LPU.

Background to the LPU Proposed Submission Plan

- 1.2 Wokingham Borough Council has been preparing a new local plan – the Local Plan Update. The new local plan, once completed, will set the framework to guide the growth of the borough addressing needs and opportunities for housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure, as well as the basis for conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment, mitigating and adapting to climate change, and achieving well designed places.
- 1.3 The preparation of the new local plan has been informed by four principal consultations, including the Draft Plan Consultation (2020) and the Revised Growth Strategy Consultation (2021).
- 1.4 The LPU: Proposed Submission Plan represents the evolution of the new local plan to the version the council intends to submit to the government for examination by a government appointed planning inspector. The examination will consider whether the plan meets legal requirements and is sound. If the plan passes examination, the council may adopt and use it to make decisions on planning applications.
- 1.5 In preparing the LPU Proposed Submission Plan, the council has considered all representations made in response to previous consultation and reflected on technical evidence and studies to develop policies and proposals in the plan.

2. Introduction to the Duty to Cooperate

- 2.1 Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011 inserted a new section 33A into the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 placing a duty on local planning authorities and other specified bodies to cooperate with each other (the 'duty to cooperate') to address strategic cross boundary issues relevant to their area during the preparation of a development plan. Section 33A(4) defines these 'strategic matters' for single tier authorities like Wokingham Borough Council as:

a) sustainable development or use of land that has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas, including (in particular) sustainable development or use of land for or in connection with infrastructure that is

strategic and has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas.”

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) sets out the requirements for plan making and for “maintaining effective cooperation”. Paragraph 16c) states that plans should:

“16. c) be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan- makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees”.

- 2.3 Paragraphs 24 to 27 state:

“24. Local planning authorities and county councils (in two-tier areas) are under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries.

25. Strategic policy-making authorities should collaborate to identify the relevant strategic matters which they need to address in their plans. They should also engage with their local communities and relevant bodies including Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, the Marine Management Organisation, county councils, infrastructure providers, elected Mayors and combined authorities (in cases where Mayors or combined authorities do not have plan-making powers).

26. Effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities and relevant bodies is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy. In particular, joint working should help to determine where additional infrastructure is necessary, and whether development needs that cannot be met wholly within a particular plan area could be met elsewhere.

27. In order to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, strategic policy- making authorities should prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these. These should be produced using the approach set out in national planning guidance, and be made publicly available throughout the plan-making process to provide transparency.”

- 2.4 Further to the NPPF, the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) explains that there is a “*legal duty on local planning authorities and county councils in England, and prescribed public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to*

maximise the effectiveness of local plan... preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters.”¹

- 2.5 It continues to advise that strategic policy making authorities *“should explore all available options for addressing strategic matters within their own planning area, unless they can demonstrate to do so would contradict policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. If there [sic] they are unable to do so they should make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation on strategic cross boundary matters before they submit their plans for examination . Authorities are not obliged to accept needs from other areas where it can be demonstrated it would have an adverse impact when assessed against policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.”²*
- 2.6 The PPG explains that the local plan examination will assess whether the local planning authority has complied with the duty, amongst other legal requirements, using all available evidence. It states: *“As the duty to cooperate relates to the preparation of the plan it cannot be rectified post-submission, so if the Inspector finds that the duty has not been complied with they will recommend that the local plan is not adopted and the examination will not proceed any further.”³*
- 2.7 The Planning Inspectorate’s examination procedure guidance prescribes that a statement of compliance shall be submitted as part of the submitted evidence. This document will be refined as necessary following the outcome of the Proposed submission consultation and associated further engagement and shall constitute the Statement of Compliance referred to in the examination procedure guidance.
- 2.8 Case law has confirmed that the duty to cooperate is not a duty to agree and that whether or not there is agreement is not determinative of compliance with the duty to cooperate. What must be shown is that there was an active and ongoing process of cooperation between relevant bodies on strategic matters.
- 2.9 In summary, the duty to cooperate is not a duty to agree, but local planning authorities should make every reasonable effort to actively and on an ongoing basis cooperate with each other on strategic cross boundary matters before submitting their local plans for examination. At examination, local planning authorities must demonstrate how they have complied with the duty and this document will form the basis of a subsequent statement of compliance which will be submitted as part of the independent examination.

[Duty to cooperate bodies](#)

¹ Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 61-029-20190315

² Paragraph: 022 Reference ID: 61-022-20190315

³ Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 61-031-20190315

2.10 Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 sets out the bodies that are prescribed for the purposes of Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. All neighbouring districts, county councils, unitary authorities and prescribed bodies have been included in the list as well as other relevant bodies relating to Wokingham Borough, listed in Table 1.

Table 1: List of Duty to Cooperate Partners for Wokingham Borough Council

Category	Organisation
Neighbouring Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council • Bracknell Forest Council • Buckinghamshire Council • Hart District Council • Hampshire County Council • Oxfordshire County Council • Reading Borough Council • Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead • South Oxfordshire District Council & Vale of White Horse District Council (joint plan making service together known as 'South and Vale') • West Berkshire Council
Other Prescribed Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Agency • Historic England • Natural England • The Mayor of London • Civil Aviation Authority • Homes England • Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board • Frimley Integrated Care Board • Office of Rail and Road • Transport for London • Integrated Transport Authority (not relevant for Wokingham Borough) • Highways authorities⁴ • Marine Management Organisation (not relevant for Wokingham Borough) • National Highways

⁴ Comprising: Bracknell Forest Council, Buckinghamshire Council, Hampshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Reading Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, West Berkshire District Council

2.11 A range of other bodies have been engaged throughout the LPU process. These are listed in Table 2. The council has reached Memoranda of Understanding with some of these bodies to assist in demonstrating effective engagement.

Table 2: List of additional bodies engaged by Wokingham Borough Council

- Berkshire Archaeology
- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
- Berkshire Local Nature Partnership
- Centrica / British Gas
- Ealing Council
- Elmbridge Borough Council
- Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership
- Great Western Railway
- Guildford Borough Council
- Hillingdon Council
- London Economic Action Partnership
- Ministry of Defence
- Mole Valley District Council
- National Grid
- National Rail
- Network Rail
- NHS England
- Office for Nuclear Regulation
- Oxford City Council
- Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Runnymede Borough Council
- Rushmoor Borough Council
- Scotia Gas Networks (SGN)
- Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN)
- Slough Borough Council
- South East Water
- South Western Railway
- Spelthorne Borough Council
- Sport England
- Surrey Heath Borough Council
- Surrey County Council
- Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Thames Water
- Transport for the South East
- Waverley Borough Council
- Woking Borough Council

3. Strategic Context

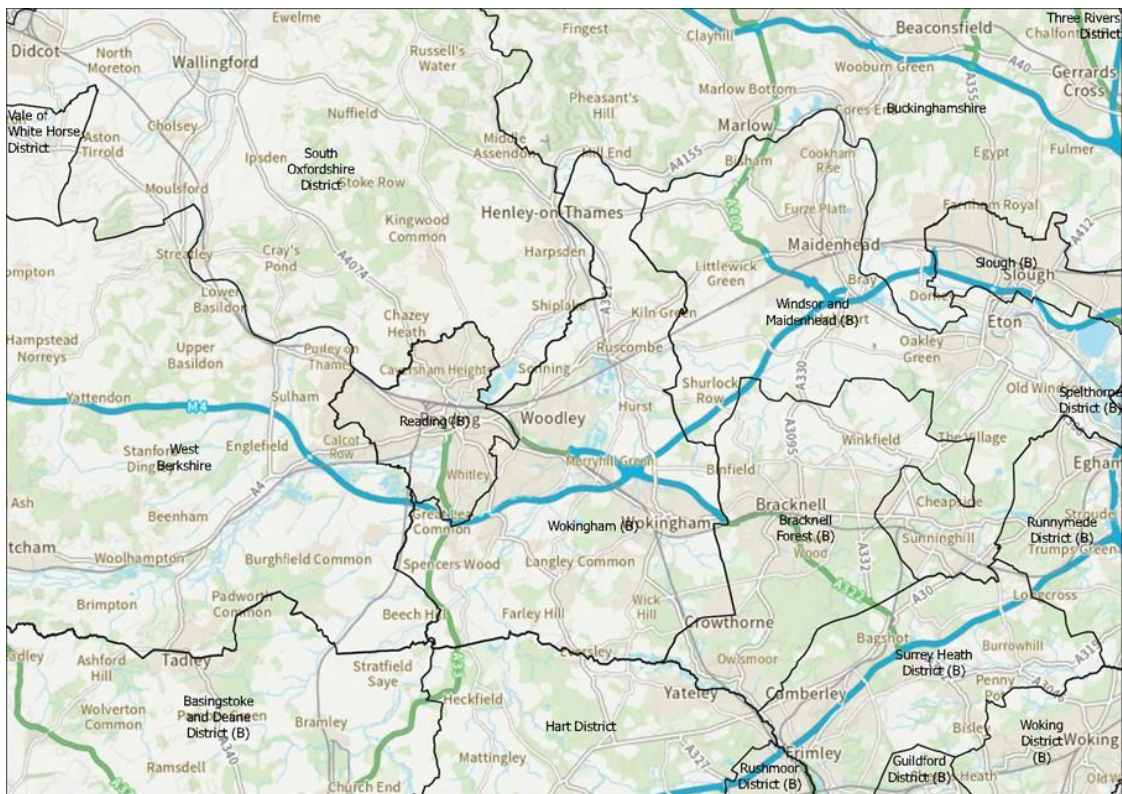
- 3.1 Wokingham Borough lies approximately 50km west of London, in the heart of the Thames Valley and within the Royal County of Berkshire. It covers an area of 17,892 hectares and is divided into 17 parishes. The borough is characterised by a variety of settlements, with the largest being Earley, Winnersh and Woodley, which are in proximity to Reading, and Wokingham.
- 3.2 The borough benefits from good transport connections. The M4 running east-west through the centre. The A329M/A3290 connects Wokingham with both Bracknell and Reading. The M3 lies to the south of the borough and can be reached via the A33, which itself connects Wokingham Borough to Basingstoke. The borough also has direct rail connections to London Paddington/Reading/Henley-on-Thames (from Twyford Station). London Waterloo/Reading from Wokingham, Earley, Winnersh Triangle and Winnersh stations), and to Redhill/Gatwick (from Wokingham Station).
- 3.3 Wokingham Borough adjoins a number of other local authorities with Buckinghamshire Council to the north; the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest Council to the east; Hart District Council to the south; Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council to the south west; and West Berkshire District Council, Reading Borough Council and South Oxfordshire District Council to the west.
- 3.4 Wokingham Borough has a rich and varied natural environment. The borough supports various green and blue landscape elements, including the Rivers Thames, Loddon and Blackwater. The borough has four Sites of Special Scientific Interest, many area of ancient woodland, over one hundred Local Wildlife sites, eleven Local Nature Reserves and five Local Geological Sites.
- 3.5 The range of landscapes are described in the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and range from elevated chalk plateaus and open and settled clay farmlands to coniferous plantations and heathland. In addition to the landscapes described in the LCA are the three National Character Areas (NCAs): Thames Basin Heaths, Thames Valley and Chilterns.
- 3.6 The Metropolitan Green Belt covers the northern parishes of Wargrave, Remenham and Ruscombe, along with small sections of the parish of Hurst. In total approximately 16% of the borough's geographical area is designated Green Belt.
- 3.7 The borough is home to approximately 340 different protected or notable species including European- need designated 'Notable and Protected' species such as Stag Beetles, European Otters, Noctule Bats and the Kingfisher. Situated beyond the

borough is the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area which supports populations of ground nesting birds.

3.8 Wokingham Borough is an attractive location for a range of businesses sectors and services. The Thames Valley Berkshire sub region is recognised as the most dynamic and competitive sub-regional economy in the UK. Employment is largely based around the service sector including the IT, communications and pharmaceutical sub-sectors and include international companies, such as Microsoft, Oracle, Pepsico and Johnson & Johnson. Film studios have opened in recent years at Shinfield and Winnersh, providing diversity economy The various town, district, and local centres within the borough also play an important role providing both employment and acting as focal points for their local communities.

3.9 The population in the borough recorded through the 2021 census was 177,500 people. Between 2011 and 2021 the population of the borough grew by 15.0%, the third highest in the South East (average 7.5%) and one of the highest in England (average 6.3%).

Figure 1: Wokingham Borough and neighbouring local authorities



4. Wider Engagement

4.1 A scoping exercise to inform engagement for the LPU took place between April and May 2016. This involved the circulation of a table outlining potential strategic matters

to bodies and requesting views on whether they considered issues to be a relevant matter for cooperation. Bodies were also asked to identify any issues that were not included within the template. Comments and suggestions were noted and incorporated into a strategic matters matrix which has formed the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.

- 4.2 All neighbouring authorities, prescribed bodies as well as other relevant bodies have been contacted throughout the LPU process. This has included contact through formal consultation as well as engagement as necessary relating to technical evidence. Early formal Regulation 18 consultation included the Issues and Options consultation which ran from 4 August till 30 September 2016. They were further contacted during the Homes for the Future consultation (12 November 2018 to 22 February 2019). Comments received through these consultations, as well as ongoing discussions in the intervening and following periods, were taken into consideration when preparing the Draft Local Plan.
- 4.3 The Draft Plan included the proposal for a new garden town at Grazeley, crossing the boundary of West Berkshire District Council and Wokingham Borough Council, and in proximity to Reading Borough Council. The opportunity for the garden town was identified through joint working between the local authorities, which included gaining garden city status and a joint bid to the Housing and Infrastructure Fund. Considerable ongoing engagement was undertaken to facilitate and development this proposal.
- 4.4 Each of the neighbouring authorities, prescribed bodies and other relevant bodies were contacted again as part of the Draft Local Plan consultation (3 February to 3 April 2020).
- 4.5 Subsequent to the publication of the Draft Plan, a redetermination of emergency planning arrangements around Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield unexpectedly and significantly extended the area where emergency plans must be in place in the event of an incident, to incorporate for the first time both the area of Grazeley as well as the villages of Three Mile Cross and Spencers Wood.
- 4.6 For the avoidance of doubt, the Grazeley garden town proposal was beyond the area in which emergency plans must be in place when identified and consulted on in the Draft Plan. AWE, Ministry of Defence, and the Office for Nuclear Regulation had all been engaged during the preparation of the Draft Local Plan and were aware of the garden town proposal.
- 4.7 In light of the unexpected change in circumstances, the council determined that the garden town proposal, and therefore the strategy proposed by the Draft Plan was no longer achievable and moved to test alternative strategies. The council undertook engagement with neighbouring local authorities on the suitability of sites which might

reasonably form part of a new planning strategy prior to forming a view on any replacement plan.

- 4.8 A new plan consultation - the Revised Growth Strategy consultation was undertaken 22 November 2021 to 24 January 2022. Once again, each neighbouring authority, prescribed body and other relevant bodies were engaged in relevant discussions in the build up to, and through, this formal consultation.
- 4.9 To ensure cooperation remained effective, a re-scoping exercise was carried out prior to the Revised Growth Strategy consultation between 14 October and 1 November 2021. Similar to the initial scoping exercise of 2016, this sought confirmation that all the correct strategic matters and relevant bodies had been identified. The responses received to the re-scoping engagement and the actions taken were recorded in an updated re-scoping document⁵.

5. Engagement on Strategic Matters

- 5.1 Paragraphs 20 to 23 of the NPPF, whilst not exhaustive, set out the strategic matters that policies should make provision for and on which cooperation is required for cross-boundary matters. These are:

- a) housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;*
- b) infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);*
- c) community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure);*
- and*
- d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.*

- 5.2 The following identified strategic matters were originally informed by the NPPF and the existing work with other local authorities and organisations. As set out in Section 4 above, comments were invited from the duty to cooperate bodies prior to these being finalised. Below is a summary of the key matters, cross-boundary and strategic issues that have arisen and their resolutions. They are organised under three key headings comprising:

- 1) Housing, employment and economic development;

⁵ Duty to Co-operate Re-scoping of strategic matters – November 2021 available: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-07/WBC%20DtC%20Re-Scoping%20Document%20November%202021.pdf>

- 2) Infrastructure provision; and
- 3) Natural and historic environment, biodiversity and climate change.

- 5.3 These headings are consistent with the strategic matters matrix contained in the re-scoping document (see footnote 5). The matrix groups strategic matters into key themes, which broadly reflects that those matters will generally require engagement with the same bodies.
- 5.4 The focus of this section is on engagement regarding the most relevant and up to date evidence, noting that some earlier evidence produced to support the LPU Proposed Submission Plan has been superseded. Further details of engagement on that evidence can be found in the earlier Duty to Cooperate Statement⁶. Where older evidence and engagement remains relevant, this is addressed below.
- 5.5 Where possible, engagement has been progressed through existing mechanisms. By way of illustration, within Berkshire there are a number of existing forums for collaboration, such as the Berkshire Heads of Planning and Development Plans Group which both meet on a roughly quarterly basis. Meetings include a standing agenda item for updating of plan progression, forthcoming evidence and scoping out opportunities for joint working. The Berkshire local authorities find these meetings provide an effective forum for ongoing collaboration and an opportunity for issues to be highlighted and discussed. In the interests of proportionality, individual meetings themselves have not been referenced in detail in the following paragraphs.

Housing, employment and economic development

Housing need and supply

- 5.6 The Berkshire local authorities and the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP jointly commissioned a study to identify the relevant Housing Market Area(s) (HMAs) in which the authorities were located, and subsequently to calculate the related housing needs of each. The study, the Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was published in 2016. It identified two HMAs relevant to the authorities, the first centred on Reading (the Western Berkshire HMA) and the second centred on Slough (the Eastern Berkshire HMA). Wokingham Borough formed part of the Western Berkshire HMA alongside Reading Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council, and West Berkshire District Council. The study continued to calculate the relevant housing need for each HMA and its constituent authorities. This was based on the 2012-based sub national household projections.
- 5.7 Subsequent to the completion of the SHMA, the 2014-based sub national household projections were published. The local authorities within the Western Berkshire HMA

⁶ Available here: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-07/Duty%20to%20Co-operate%20Statement%20January%202022.pdf>

commissioned a supplementary study to consider the implications of the new projections for housing need. The study – the OAN Sensitivity Testing – Western Berkshire HMA was published in 2018.

- 5.8 In 2018 the government introduced a national standard method for calculating Local Housing Need (LHN). The standard method superseded calculations made within the SHMA and the subsequent OAN Sensitivity Testing study. Whilst the standard method now calculates LHN, the Berkshire local authorities continue to consider the HMA geography identified by the SHMA as the most relevant to inform engagement and cooperation on the matter of housing.
- 5.9 The Berkshire local authorities have agreed to progress local plans with the principle of each local authority meeting the housing need for that local authority in full. Wokingham Borough Council has at each stage of plan-making consultation presented a strategy capable of meeting the housing needs of Wokingham Borough in full over the plan period. At the Draft Plan (2020) stage, the council sought views on exceptional circumstances surrounding a revised housing requirement providing a lower figure than LHN. The council subsequently chose not to pursue a case for exceptional circumstances and has since concluded LHN to be the appropriate figure. For completeness, the surrounding authorities of Basingstoke and Deane, Bracknell Forest, Buckinghamshire, and Reading Borough Council commented on the robustness of the alternative housing need advanced at the Draft Plan (2020) stage. There was recognition however that the land supply enabled by the Draft Plan exceeded the higher LHN, thereby satisfying the housing need being met in full, however defined.
- 5.10 The local authorities within the Western Berkshire HMA have been kept up-to-date on an ongoing basis with the progression of the LPU through forums such as the Heads of Planning and the Development Plans Group, supplemented by specific meetings as necessary. Other local authorities have been engaged in an ongoing manner, including being comprehensively briefed via email in October 2023 which, amongst other matters, confirmed the council's continuing intention to meet its LHN in full (at that time 795 dwellings per annum). Adjacent authorities, with the exception of Reading Borough Council (discussed below), either have up to date plans which meet their housing needs or have not indicated the potential for unmet needs arising which requires cooperation with Wokingham Borough Council.
- 5.11 The Proposed Submission Plan continues to enable a land supply which is sufficient to meet LHN in full over the plan period. The land supply includes a suitable degree of flexibility to allow for non-implementation.

Reading unmet need

- 5.12 The local authorities which make up the Western Berkshire HMA have agreed a Statement of Common Ground (dated August 2021 see Appendix D) for the purposes of plan-making. The statement recognises an unmet need of 230 in the period to 2036 arising from Reading Borough and the principle that the need should be met within the HMA. This agreement relates only to Reading's housing need as calculated by the Berkshire SHMA (on which Reading's plan requirement was based), not by any alternative calculations of need.
- 5.13 The council has remained engaged with Reading Borough Council on this issue which has included exchanging information on actual and projected housing delivery.
- 5.14 Whilst the adopted plan expected a small shortfall in housing delivery, actual delivery achieved within Reading Borough has been stronger than originally anticipated when the unmet need was defined and now no shortfall is projected against the adopted Reading local plan, with over delivery expected to be in the order of 1,900 dwellings.
- 5.15 Reading Borough Council has started the process of reviewing its adopted local plan, holding the consultation 'Scope and Content of the Local Plan Partial Update' between November 2023 and January 2024. The consultation included detail on the potential levels of need which could inform the updated plan. The preferred approach was to base future need on the outcome of a commissioned housing need assessment which assessed housing need as 735 dwellings per year. Reading Borough Council have indicated that the assessed housing need can be met in full and that it does not intend there to be any unmet needs that neighbouring local authorities need to consider. This has most recently been confirmed in a letter from Reading Borough Council dated 23 August 2024.
- 5.16 It should be noted that should Reading Borough Council be required to plan for LHN as calculated by the standard method, current assessments of land supply forecasts a modest shortfall of 954 dwellings over the period to 2041. This is based on the standard method calculation of 878 dwellings per annum, which comprises 650 dwellings plus an additional 228 dwellings as a result of the 35% urban uplift. The NPPF at paragraph 62 states that the urban uplift should be met within the urban centre except where there is voluntary cross boundary redistribution. The 'base' calculation of LHN excluding the urban uplift is lower than the scale of housing being proposed by Reading Borough Council. There is no obligation on other local authorities to accommodate the 'uplift' with the clear expectation this should be met within the city or urban centre to reflect the intention to encourage the reuse of previously developed land. Meeting housing needs of Wokingham Borough is highly reliant on greenfield land, contrary to this intention.
- 5.17 Turning to other local authorities within the Western Berkshire HMA, Bracknell Forest Council's adopted local plan meets their LHN, with the enabled land supply including

modest flexibility above. Similarly, the West Berkshire District Council's submitted local plan is also seeking to meet their LHN.

- 5.18 In summary, the Proposed Submission Plan provides for LHN meaning there are no unmet needs requiring engagement with other local authorities. Similarly, there are no unmet needs arising from neighbouring local authorities which Wokingham Borough must consider in preparing the Proposed Submission Plan. Wokingham Borough Council has continually engaged with all relevant local authorities throughout plan making process, including the commissioning of evidence.

Gypsy and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople

- 5.19 The Berkshire local authorities have a history of joint working when assessing the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities. Past cooperation has included the preparation of a joint methodology for undertaking assessments (see Appendix A). More recently accommodation assessments have been undertaken by a common consultant, arc4, whose methodology involves a stakeholder survey engaging all adjoining authorities (and relevant interest groups) in the preparation of the study.
- 5.20 Beyond Berkshire, South and Vale District Council have likewise most recently appointed arc4, whereas Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council, Hart District Council and Buckinghamshire Council have used different consultants. The council has engaged positively to approaches by other local authorities when requested. This has included sharing knowledge and assessments.
- 5.21 Wokingham Borough Council have undertaken regular Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA) to inform the plan-making process, with studies published in 2015, 2017 and 2023. The preparation of each assessment included engagement with key stakeholders, including neighbouring local authorities. No objection or concerns have been raised towards the methodology of assessing need or the output of any assessment from other local authorities.
- 5.22 The most recent GTAA for Wokingham Borough is the 'Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment 2023' (GTAA 2023). This identified the cultural and nomadic need, which are two overlapping representations of accommodation need. The nomadic need was based on the definition of Gypsies and Travellers found within the national planning document Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) published in August 2015. This was subsequently subject to an update in December 2023 which amended the definition of Gypsies and Travellers. Cultural need is the accommodation need identified for all households which identify as part of Gypsy and Traveller communities, regardless of whether they live a nomadic or settled lifestyle. The cultural need identified in the GTAA is now the relevant need

figure in light of the updated PPTS. The GTAA 2023 identified no accommodation need for Travelling Showpeople accommodation.

- 5.23 With regard to additional permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches, need is as set out below:
- 2022-2027 = 35 pitches.
 - 2028-2032 = 15 pitches.
 - 2033-2037 = 26 pitches.
 - 2038-2040 =- 10 pitches.
- 5.24 With regard to transit need, the GTAA 2023 included a recommendation for the council to develop a negotiated stopping policy to support Travellers passing through the borough. This need is recognised and is a matter that the council's housing team are taking forward. A suitable policy framework is set within the Proposed Submission Plan. While numerous conversations have taken place between the Berkshire local authorities regarding potential joint transit provision, each local authority has its own identified need which it has been seeking to address individually. This is in recognition of the legislative powers that exist regarding unauthorised encampments, which are solely directed to individual authorities making provision within their own boundaries. As a result, there is no expectation that the council, or any other Berkshire local authority, should accommodate transit need arising elsewhere.
- 5.25 The council intends to meet the identified accommodation need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches within Wokingham Borough through a combination of: specific site allocations; requiring strategic developments (both allocations and proposals) to provide a proportionate provision of pitches as part of delivering a mixed community; and through a criteria based policy to support planning applications (windfall).
- 5.26 Meetings were held with adjoining Berkshire local authorities between September and November 2023 outlining the expectation that meeting need would be reliant in part on windfall sites, with potential allocation being insufficient on their own. No objections were expressed by any local authority. In support of the principle, officers from Bracknell Forest indicated that the Inspector examining their local plan had accepted that longer term need can be met by windfall sites.
- 5.27 The council subsequently wrote to all neighbouring authorities in November 2023 formally outlining the above context. Assistance in meeting the anticipated shortfall (at that point in time expected to be around 21-26 pitches) was requested, as well as thoughts on whether exceptional circumstances existed to release land in the Green Belt for Gypsy and Traveller pitches, and inviting further discussion to explore these issues.

- 5.28 Responses were received from all nine surrounding authorities (including Slough Borough Council within Berkshire), each confirming they were not in a position to assist. Of these, Buckinghamshire Council, Hart District Council, Reading Borough Council, and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead indicated that they themselves have an unmet or likely unmet need. Bracknell Forest reiterated in their response that the Inspectors conducting their local plan examination had drawn the initial conclusion that short term need could be met but long term need could not. The Inspectors had appeared to accept that longer term need could be met through the development management process. Reading Borough Council are the only authority who have formally approached other local authorities, including Wokingham Borough Council, for assistance in meeting unmet need. This approach was made in February 2018 prior to adoption of Reading's local plan in 2019. The unmet need in Reading Borough Council's adopted local plan equates to 10-17 pitches. This will be a matter for Reading Borough Council to progress, however, evidence supporting the Proposed Submission Plan indicates that insufficient identifiable land exists within Wokingham Borough to assist.
- 5.29 Subsequent to the above engagement, further site assessment work and option refinement has taken place. The Proposed Submission Plan now identifies a supply of 78 pitches, leaving a reduced level of 8 pitches which are expected to be delivered through windfall development. This figure is considered modest, comfortably within the scale of historic windfall delivery, and consistent with the approach to meeting longer term need in the recently adopted Bracknell Local Plan. As such, the council is in a position where it is not reliant on surrounding local authorities for assistance.
- 5.30 In summary, there are no unresolved duty to cooperate issues with regard to meeting the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community arising from Wokingham Borough.

[Supply of employment land](#)

- 5.31 The six Berkshire authorities and the Thames Valley LEP have worked together to define the relevant Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs) to the Berkshire local authorities (2016). This work then formed the basis for carrying out an Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) (2016) for each of the FEMAs to identify the future quantity of land/floorspace required for economic development uses.
- 5.32 To provide up-to-date information, an Employment Land Needs Study (2020) was produced for Wokingham Borough (based on a joint commission with Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire Council). This was superseded by an Employment Land Needs Review (2023) to account for changes in relation to permitted development rights and the Covid pandemic.

- 5.33 The 2023 study identified no need for additional office floorspace within Wokingham Borough and a minimum need of 18ha for warehousing/industrial. Considering factors that extend beyond the borough a wider aspirational figure of 53ha of new land was identified. This wider need falls beyond the scope of a single study and an individual authority and would require cooperation across the Thames Valley.
- 5.34 The Draft Plan (2020) proposed a policy approach of protecting existing Core Employment Areas and supporting their evolution and intensification. This would be supplemented by small scale development in support of the rural economy. Few comments were received from duty to cooperate bodies on this approach. Representations from Bracknell Forest Council noted and supported the principle of the proposed approach, while Reading Borough Council noted and accepted the robustness of the employment evidence base.
- 5.35 Due to a lack of demonstrably available land, the council had projected at the time that there would be insufficient opportunity for the identified need of 18ha for warehousing/industrial floorspace to be met and therefore unmet need was regularly highlighted at the quarterly meetings of the Berkshire local authorities. The council formally wrote to all Berkshire local authorities in August 2023 seeking assistance in meeting identified needs, indicating our willingness to answer any queries and provide additional clarity if required. This included identifying the wider aspirational figure of 53ha of new land across the Thames Valley. No local authority was able to assist, and several noted that their own employment needs were not likely to be met.
- 5.36 In October 2023 the council extended its efforts by writing to adjoining local authorities outside of Berkshire with whom employment had been identified as a potential cross boundary strategic matter, and offering meetings to discuss matters further. This engagement was made notwithstanding those authorities are outside of the identified FEMA. Again, no offers for assistance were received.
- 5.37 Following the above engagement, commitments and completions data for the borough was available which set out the future supply of employment land, including warehousing/industrial floorspace. This showed that when the completions and committed supply were added to additional employment supply proposed in the Proposed Submission Plan, the council is able to meet the 18ha need for warehousing/industrial floorspace. However, the council is not able to meet the higher aspirational figure of 53ha.
- 5.38 In summary, the Proposed Submission Plan provides for full employment needs meaning there are no unmet needs requiring engagement with other local authorities.

[Town centre retail](#)

- 5.39 The council, along with Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, and West Berkshire Council co-operated on the production of a Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Assessment, which reported in April 2017. This examined quantitative and qualitative need for new floorspace and facilities within the four authorities and forms a basis for plan-making.
- 5.40 Wokingham Borough Council subsequently commissioned and published the Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Assessment (2023). The study assesses the future requirements of convenience, comparison goods, and commercial leisure floorspace in Wokingham Borough to 2040. It takes into account the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic and changes to permitted development rights and the Use Class Order. The study identified no need for comparison goods floorspace but a need for between 14,700 and 17,200sqm convenience goods floorspace. The study also forecast a growth in leisure spending, with the majority anticipated to be in the form of restaurants and cafes.
- 5.41 Despite recent challenges faced by the retail sector, Wokingham town continues to perform well and the remaining centres, whilst experiencing some leakage of spend continue to perform relatively well, serving the local community and providing a focus for commercial, business and service uses.
- 5.42 The Proposed Submission Plan seeks to protect and support town and other centres, consistent with the current development plan approach, but with greater flexibility for non-retail uses. For the avoidance of doubt, policies do not encourage or support the expansion of any town or other centres which would alter the retail hierarchy across the sub-region.
- 5.43 The planned rejuvenation of Wokingham town centre is largely complete, providing additional floorspace for retail, leisure and entertainment uses and diversifying the type of uses available. There are no firm plans to regenerate other existing centres, but improvements to the Woodley and Earley centres is supported in principle. New neighbourhood and local centres are proposed as part of the strategic allocations to support the new communities.
- 5.44 Given scale of needs, the location of main settlements and emerging proposed housing allocations, the council does not consider this having cross boundary implications and none have been raised through ongoing engagement with neighbouring local authorities. All adjoining authorities were written to in October 2023 outlining the above position regarding retail, with no substantive comments received in response. This is consistent with responses from neighbouring authorities to the Regulation 18 consultations, where the only views offered on the proposed approach to retail were from Bracknell Forest Council acknowledging the ongoing rejuvenation of Wokingham town centre which is likely to have altered the need position. Bracknell Forest further expressed the view that this should be verified by

new evidence, which the council has undertaken in the form of the 2023 study. Therefore, no issues have been raised by Duty to Cooperate bodies on the approach to town centre development.

Development allocations (all types)

- 5.45 Information on the promotion of land has been available online throughout the plan-making process. Duty to cooperate bodies have been made aware of its availability through engagements and formal consultations.
- 5.46 To assist in understanding the opportunity for development offered by larger or more complex promotions, the council commissioned holistic masterplanning support. This was applied to the promotions at Grazeley, Twyford/Ruscombe, and Barkham Square (Strategic Growth Scenarios Report 2018); Hall Farm and Ashridge (Strategic Growth Scenarios Report 2018) and Hall Farm/Loddon Valley and South Wokingham (Strategic Sites Report 2021). Key stakeholders, were invited to participate in the masterplanning process, with views offered considered in shaping the output (see Appendix C for further details).
- 5.47 The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) is a key step in understanding where land may be suitable, available and achievable for development. In doing this, it assists in identifying a pool of land that might reasonably form part of potential strategies to manage development.
- 5.48 The general process for undertaking HELAA is set out in the PPG. To supplement this, the Berkshire local authorities prepared a joint 'Berkshire Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Methodology (2016)'.
- 5.49 In August 2021, the council formally wrote to neighbouring Berkshire local authorities providing an update outlining the opportunities at Ashridge, Hall Farm and Twyford/Ruscombe, as well as highlighting potential smaller sites close to administrative boundaries. Information provided by the promotor was also shared where available. The views offered by neighbouring local authorities were considered by the council in shaping the strategy outlined in the Revised Growth Strategy.
- 5.50 The spatial strategy outlined in this consultation focussed the majority of development at strategic scale development locations. The land at Hall Farm / Loddon Valley was proposed as the most sustainable new strategic option with the capacity to deliver 4,500 dwellings (2,200 within the plan period). Additional development was also proposed as an extension of the planned South Wokingham Strategic Development Location. Additional supplementary smaller scale developments were also identified. The spatial strategy can broadly be summarised as:

- Optimisation of sustainably located previously developed land.
- Sustainable extension of major settlements.
- Evolution and sustainable extension of adopted SDLs.
- The allocation of a new sustainable strategic development.
- Proportionate development on the edge of minor settlements.

- 5.51 The proposed Hall Farm / Loddon Valley Strategic Development Location Village is located centrally within the borough. No neighbouring authority has raised any objections in principle to the strategic approach to growth, noting that there will be some impact on strategic infrastructure such as transport, education, health, water supply and wastewater, telecommunications and green infrastructure, which may cross administrative boundaries (discussed elsewhere). It has been agreed with the Environment Agency through the signed MoU (discussed below) that there are no flood risk barriers that would prevent the delivery of the proposal, including the delivery of road infrastructure through the flood plain linking the site internally and with Lower Earley Way to the north.
- 5.52 Reading Borough Council did express some concern over the deliverability of the necessary public transport improvements, principally linkages to Reading, requesting wishing for further information. The council has subsequently engaged Reading Borough Council on the production of its transport assessment work and has engaged with them on the land promoter's early draft public and active transport strategies. Engagement included a meeting in July 2024 attended by officers of both Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council and the land promoters. The outcome of this meeting was general support for the proposals evolution. Views on possible mitigations were offered which are being considered by the council and the land promoters as part of the evolution of the public transport and active transport strategies. Additional written comments on the draft strategies were also invited and subsequently provided by officers of Reading Borough Council.
- 5.53 The council is confident that the necessary on-site and off-site mitigations can be secured and therefore that no formal duty to cooperate objection will be raised. Following this early engagement, the council will continue to work closely with Reading Borough Council regarding highway matters and mitigations in order that they are effective across the two local authorities.
- 5.54 Turning to the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location, Bracknell Forest Council expressed the view that the proposed development would significantly urbanise the character of the presently rural stretch of Old Wokingham Road and as such significantly reduce the landscape and gap value of the area. Bracknell Forest Council also expressed the desire for further discussions regarding the implications for cross-boundary transport impacts upon the local road network.

- 5.55 The council met with officers from Bracknell Forest Council’s planning policy and transport teams in September 2023 to discuss this site, amongst other matters. Wokingham Borough Council expressed its view that the proposal would not result in the physical or visual coalescence of settlement areas and invited officers from Bracknell Forest to specify any particular sensitivities of this area that should be considered. Officers from Bracknell Forest Council confirmed that there were no speculative applications in the vicinity, nor were any sites proposed for allocation in their local plan. No other sensitivities or issues to be taken into account were raised.
- 5.56 Subsequent to the meeting, the council further engaged with landscape specialists and undertook a review of the HELAA assessment. The conclusion of the review was that the land remained potentially suitable. The allocation continues to be proposed within the Proposed Submission Plan with the council remaining of view that it does not present a coalescence issue. Notwithstanding, the council has strengthened the proposed policy position around the need to include measure to reduce the impact on the experience of moving between settlements. The latest masterplan recognises this by including native landscaping enhancements on the western side of Old Wokingham Road. The sensitivity of this issue has been communicated to the land promoters.
- 5.57 Bracknell Forest Council also raised concern regarding the proposed allocation on land north of London Road. The view was expressed that the land played an important role in the physical and visual separation between Wokingham to the south west (bounded by the A329) and Bracknell to the east (in particular, Amen Corner North).
- 5.58 Subsequent to the meeting, the council further engaged with landscape specialist and undertook a review of the HELAA assessment for the site. The conclusion of the review altered the assessment from potentially suitable to unsuitable on the basis of impact on settlement coalescence. As a result, the land was removed in the working draft of the Proposed Submission Plan.
- 5.59 Notwithstanding above, a planning application for 45 dwellings was received for development of the site. Bracknell Forest Council were consulted on the merits of the application. Whilst the application was contrary to the adopted development plan, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applied to the determination of planning applications requiring permission to be granted unless the adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefit. Applying the presumption, the council resolved to grant planning permission in August 2024.
- 5.60 It is intended to continue to liaise and share information with neighbouring local authorities and appropriate organisations such as National Highways, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Historic England, and any other organisations, as appropriate, as any issues or matters are brought to light and to take into account the plans and/ or strategies that they have produced.

- 5.61 Work on specific infrastructure requirements are covered under separate matter headings. Other than the issues requiring ongoing engagement outlined above, no other duty to cooperate bodies have raised concern with the scale and location of housing proposed in the Local Plan. In summary, there are not envisaged to be any duty to cooperate objections raised in relation to site allocations.

Infrastructure provision

Education

- 5.62 The council, as a unitary authority, is responsible for the sufficiency of school places. Regular ongoing liaison with the council's education team has occurred throughout the plan making process. The education team have their own mechanisms for engaging with neighbouring local authorities.
- 5.63 Due to the geography of Wokingham Borough and the operation of parental preference within the school system, some resident children will cross local authority boundaries to access education in other local authorities. Movement also occurs in the opposite direction. The coordination of school place sufficiency with neighbouring authorities is undertaken to ensure demand is met.
- 5.64 In response to the Draft Plan (2020), Oxfordshire County Council acknowledged that while there is a low level of cross-boundary school movement between Wokingham Borough and Oxfordshire, there was a need for ongoing liaison in relation to potential cross boundary implications of planned new secondary schools in Reading. The council's education service engages regularly with surrounding authorities, including annually sharing pupil numbers data. On the basis of this engagement, and the advice from education colleagues, there is no known cross boundary issue as regards secondary schools in Reading. Bracknell Forest also specifically requested ongoing engagement on the matter of education. Otherwise, no specific comments were received from neighbouring authorities in response to the Draft Plan (2020) or the Revised Growth Strategy (2021) in relation to educational impacts arising from proposed allocations.
- 5.65 The council as local planning authority wrote to adjoining authorities in October 2023 outlining the position regarding education provision and offering opportunity to discuss matters in detail. The Loddon Valley Garden Village proposal and the expansion of the South Wokingham SDL are being masterplanned to facilitate necessary primary and secondary school capacity to meet the needs of the new communities. Whilst there are short term pressures regarding secondary school places, this is being driven by inward migration of overseas nationals. The council is acting to address this. There are no borough pressures regarding the sufficiency of primary school places, although there are localised misalignment of children and

places. The timing of new development is not likely to drive the need to expand secondary or primary school provision in proximity to any surrounding authority. No issues were raised by neighbouring local authorities in relation to this matter.

- 5.66 With regard to higher education, the University of Reading's (UoR) main Whiteknights campus straddles the boundary of Wokingham Borough and Reading Borough. Additional UoR facilities are situated in other parts of each local authority. Collaboration with Reading Borough Council has been ongoing throughout the plan making process, including the sharing of draft policy wording outside of formal consultation. This has resulted in an aligned policy regarding development at Whiteknights Campus, which amongst other matters fully reflects Reading Borough Council's interests regarding student accommodation.
- 5.67 In summary, there are no known cross boundary issues relating to primary or secondary education. Engagement between with Reading Borough Council has achieved an aligned policy position.

Health facilities

- 5.68 There has been and continues to be ongoing discussion with health care providers to ensure the appropriate consideration of health and well-being throughout the LPU. This includes internal services within the council and Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (ICB).
- 5.69 Health organisations were invited to participate in masterplanning process (discussed in the Development Allocations section above).
- 5.70 At the Draft Plan (2020) stage Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (now superseded by the ICB) wrote in support of the proposed healthcare facility within the proposed Grazeley garden town development and highlighted the need for developer contributions to contribute to extensions and refurbishments of existing facilities elsewhere in the borough. Specific comments on Policy H9: Accommodation for Older People and Vulnerable communities were provided which have been duly considered.
- 5.71 All relevant internal services and the ICB have been provided with projected delivery information used in the preparation of the Proposed Submission Plan. Each were invited to comment on infrastructure requirements necessary to support the potential development locations as part of the preparation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). This included opportunity to comment on the proposed health facilities at Loddon Valley Garden Village.

- 5.72 IN addition to infrastructure requirements, engagement has also led to amendments to policy wording, as well as the formulation of a Health Impact Assessments that informed the Draft Plan, Revised Growth Strategy, and the Proposed Submission Plan.
- 5.73 It is intended to continue to share information and liaise with relevant bodies and neighbouring authorities as appropriate. No issues have been raised by duty to cooperate partners as regards health provision.

Utilities and infrastructure

- 5.74 The council has undertaken both Phase 1 and Phase 2 Water Cycle Studies. Throughout this work the council has engaged closely with Thames Water, South East Water and the Environment Agency which has included their presence at inception and progress meetings as part of the studies, as well as being shared draft reporting for comment (see Appendix C for details). This engagement suggests sufficient capacity will be available to support development, and that any upgrades that might be required to support development are either planned or capable of being programmed for when they are required. MoUs have been signed with Thames Water, South East Water and the Environment Agency (see Appendices E – G) which, in summary, agree that the Water Cycle Study evidence is robust and that adequate water infrastructure can be delivered to support growth.
- 5.75 Detailed comments were received to the Draft Plan (2020) and Revised Growth Strategy (2021) from Thames Water providing advice on likely waste and water implications from each of the proposed allocations. These comments informed the further engagement undertaken as part of the Water Cycle Study evidence outlined above. South East Water also noted and supported the policy requirements around water efficiency. No other substantive comments were received from utilities or infrastructure providers.
- 5.76 All other relevant utility and infrastructure providers have been specifically consulted for input on various iterations of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Engagement has sought to understand what infrastructure each organisation believes is necessary to support population growth as a result of development. This included questions directly relating to current capacity, existing commitments, and upgrades that would be necessitated by development. Further conversations and engagement will be required during and post the Proposed Submission Plan, but no duty to cooperate objections have been raised or are envisaged.

Flood risk

- 5.77 An updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 1 and Level 2 was produced in 2023, providing an assessment of flood risk from all sources, including cumulative impacts taking account of on committed developments in neighbouring authorities.

The council has worked closely with the Environment Agency (EA) on an ongoing basis for the SFRA 2023 from inception to completion of the SFRA. The council worked closely on predecessor assessments. The Environment Agency, Thames Water, and South East Water have influenced the assessment methodology, with the bodies also consulted on the initial draft outputs of the Level 1 and Level 2 SFRA (2023), with updates made to the reports and mapping outputs on the basis of their feedback.

- 5.78 With regard to formal plan consultations, the Environment Agency welcomed and supported the Draft Plan (2020) in their formal representations. Detailed comments on specific policies were provided and amendments have been advanced by the council in response. Subsequently, the Environment Agency provided comments on the Revised Growth Strategy (2021), specifically providing feedback on proposed allocations, which was taken into account when reviewing the assessment of promoted sites and development guidelines to support proposed allocations, where appropriate. Queries were also received on the modelling used for the Level 2 SFRA that supported the Revised Growth Strategy (see details at Appendix C) which the council addressed through dialogue. This work was subsequently superseded by the SFRA 2023 referred to above. Post the Revised Growth Strategy consultation, the council shared its updated flooding and drainage policies with the Environment Agency prior to the Proposed Submission Plan, with no further comments being raised.
- 5.79 To help demonstrate effective cooperation, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the council and the Environment Agency (see appendix E). This includes confirmation that the SFRA 2023 provides a suitable and robust evidence base from which policy and strategy decisions for the LPU can be made and also that draft policies relating to flooding and drainage are consistent with national policy and guidance. The signed MoU also confirmed that, given the nature of flood risk in the borough, other constraints, and the scale of development needs, it would not be possible to allocate land to meet needs in full on sites wholly within Flood Zone 1. Notwithstanding, all allocations can be demonstrated as safe for their lifetime through the application of the sequential and exception test.
- 5.80 The council has undertaken a sequential and exception test in line with national policy. Draft work was shared with the Environment Agency prior to Proposed Submission Plan and comments invited. No comments have been received, however the council intends to continue to liaise closely with the Environment Agency and refinement of this evidence base will occur if necessary prior to submission.
- 5.81 In summary, no issues have been raised by duty to cooperate partners on the approach to flood risk in the LPU. A MoU between the council and the Environment Agency helps demonstrate effective engagement.

Strategic transport links

- 5.82 The council's planning policy team works very closely with its transport colleagues that comprise the highway authority for the borough. All transport evidence has been commissioned with input and steer of the highway authority. This includes transport modelling undertaken and updated at Draft Plan, Revised Growth Strategy and the Proposed Submission Plan.
- 5.83 Transport modelling has specifically been shared with all surrounding local authorities and National Highways in advance of formal consultation. With regard to the period before the Proposed Submission Plan, modelling was shared in October 2023 and again following updates in August 2024. As a result of engagement, with National Highways, a micro-simulation model was developed with the scope being shared and extended following engagement with neighbouring local authorities.
- 5.84 National Highways has endorsed the transport modelling approach, including the microsimulation work. They are broadly content with the evidence underpinning the plan process including proposed allocations and for this to be kept under review as proposals come forward on a site basis.
- 5.85 National Highways (formerly Highways England) responded to the Draft Plan (2020) and Revised Growth Strategy consultations. Their response to the former expressed support for the connections policies plan which sought to promote sustainable travel choices and expressed support for a planning policy framework which ensured development cannot progress without the appropriate infrastructure being in place. It also reiterated National Highway's commitment to working with relevant site promoters to develop an appropriate mitigation package.
- 5.86 At the Revised Growth Strategy stage, National Highways confirmed it had reviewed the supporting Transport Assessment evidence and noted its conclusions around further detailed modelling, including micro-simulation, that would be required prior to Proposed Submission Plan. A detailed technical note was provided which was reviewed by highways colleagues and the consultants preparing the evidence base. Further iterations of the transport evidence base (as discussed above) have taken these detailed comments into account.
- 5.87 Through its response to the Revised Growth Strategy, Hampshire County Council expressed the view that it could not be satisfied that the transport evidence considered the impacts of proposed growth on strategic links with Hampshire and therefore requested further information in relation to modelling assumptions and proposed mitigations. Updated transport assessment work was shared with Hampshire in October 2023 and a meeting offered to discuss any remaining queries. After numerous chases and re-sharing of the evidence in early 2024, comments were received from Hampshire County Council in July 2024 confirming that some of its

previous queries had been addressed, but again reiterating some lack of certainty that there would be no significant adverse impacts on the network in Hampshire. As a result, the council meet Hampshire County Council in August 2024 to further elaborate on the evidence and discuss any outstanding concerns. At this meeting the council also outlined the most recent updates to the transport assessment evidence. Hampshire County Council officers present provided the view that from a technical evidence perspective, the traffic forecasts didn't pose a significant impact to Hampshire and supported the strategic development approach with its opportunities for trip internalisation. As an action from the meeting, the council shared detailed flow data for key junctions from the emerging transport assessment update. The full assessment was subsequently finalised later in the month and shared with all surrounding authorities for further feedback. A letter was then received from Hampshire County Council on 9 September (dated 4 September) confirming that, having reviewed the shared data, *"at this stage the County Council do not consider that any mitigation will be required within Hampshire"*. The council will continue to actively engage with Hampshire County Council and other local authorities on cross boundary strategic matters as necessary.

- 5.88 In addition, to specific meetings, transport colleagues, have regular contact through the Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum (BSTF) with key duty to cooperate partners. The Forum brings together the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (now revoked), the six local transport authorities, the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail, National Highways, Heathrow Airport Limited, and some train and bus operating companies to discuss and consult on matters of mutual interest relating to strategic transport issues in Thames Valley Berkshire.
- 5.89 The Proposed Submission Plan proposes to safeguard land for the delivery of a Third Thames Crossing into South Oxfordshire. This remains a strategic priority of Transport for the South East, the strategic transport body for the area. Discussions with South Oxfordshire District Council have led to them noting and understanding that LPU growth is not reliant on the delivery of the scheme and that the safeguarding is merely to add protection in the event a business case is made in the future. Whilst they do not agree that safeguarding is necessary, they do not see this as a failure of cooperation.
- 5.90 In summary, engagement with various bodies has shaped the transport evidence produced by the council. This evidence has been shared throughout the plan making process, supplemented by meetings as necessary. Where requests for further information have been received, answers have been provided. No duty to cooperate issues are envisaged as regards strategic transport matters.

[Natural and historic environment, biodiversity and climate change](#)

Biodiversity including Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- 5.91 Engagement and cooperation regarding habitat sites largely takes place through officer and member forums (e.g. Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board; Blackwater Valley Network / Countryside Partnership; Loddon Catchment Steering Group). These forums provide an effective mechanism to discuss key issues of cross boundary implications. Regarding the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, there is an agreed strategy for mitigating the impacts of development which has been successfully implemented for many years. This strategy was agreed by the SPA Joint Strategic Partnership local authorities and Natural England.
- 5.92 The agreed strategy has been applied at all stages of plan making. The Proposed Submission Plan is supported by a deliverable mitigation strategy consistent with the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership approach. The council is not reliant on mitigations to be provided by other local authorities.
- 5.93 Turning to potential air quality effects on habitat sites, the council commissioned modelling to assess the potential impacts arising from potential site allocations. An initial report was prepared and shared with Natural England. Where queries were raised on the approach to modelling, answers were provided. Refined modelling has subsequently been undertaken to reflect the latest transport modelling. This work which informs the Habitats Regulations Assessment, concludes that the Proposed Submission Plan will not have an adverse effect on the habitat sites alone or in combination with other projects.
- 5.94 In their representation to Revised Growth Strategy, Natural England emphasised the need for the Hall Farm / Loddon Valley proposals to follow a joined up comprehensive approach to protecting and buffering the adjacent SSSI and supporting habitat. The council is satisfied that this approach has been taken through the policy approach and masterplanning work explored by the promoter. Natural England has continued to be engaged through the masterplanning work for this site and in the preparation of updated evidence.
- 5.95 The council has sought to engage with stakeholders who are not prescribed duty to cooperate bodies. The council met with the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT); Berkshire Local Nature Partnership; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; and Woodland Trust in November 2023. This included discussion around emerging natural environment policies, such as biodiversity net gain, valued landscapes, and trees, woodlands and hedgerows as well as an overview of the likely emerging spatial strategy.
- 5.96 Cooperation on biodiversity matters is clearly demonstrated through adherence to the agreed mitigation strategy regarding the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. No other

cross boundary issues have been identified, with air quality modelling indicating no impact on the integrity of habitat sites. The council will continue to share information and liaise with relevant bodies, particularly Natural England and adjacent authorities as appropriate.

Landscape including Green Belt

- 5.97 There are a wide variety of landscapes across the borough that extend into neighbouring local authorities. Approximately 16% of Wokingham Borough's area comprises the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 5.98 The council appointed consultants LUC to provide an updated Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) to inform decisions on planning applications and the plan making process. This LCA was published in 2019. Specific comments received from neighbouring local authorities regarding proposed allocations and their cross boundary landscape impacts have been addressed in the development allocations section above.
- 5.99 Wokingham Borough Council and Bracknell Forest Councils jointly commissioned a Green Belt Review that was published in 2016. The review assesses how Green Belt land functions in relation to the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt, as defined in NPPF. There has been no change in circumstances that would warrant the assessment being updated at this time. It is noted that the study supported the Bracknell Forest Council local plan, which has recently been adopted.
- 5.100 At no stage in the plan process has the release of Green Belt to meet development needs been proposed as part of a preferred strategy. No substantive comments have been received from duty to cooperate bodies regarding the council's position that exceptional circumstances do not exist to warrant the release land from the Green Belt.
- 5.101 There are two small areas of land within Green Belt that have been promoted as being available for Gypsy and Traveller use. The council does not considered that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of this areas given the identified supply and likely windfall outside of Green Belt. In addition, the sites would only yield a very modest number of pitches.
- 5.102 There are not considered to be any outstanding cross boundary issues relating to this strategic matter.

Atomic Weapons Establishment consultation zones

- 5.103 AWE Burghfield is a nuclear licenced site, located within West Berkshire District but in proximity to Wokingham Borough. Various consultation and emergency zones around

AWE Burghfield extend into the borough. These include the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) – the zone for which emergency plans must be in place in case of a radiological incident.

- 5.104 The council works on an ongoing basis with a range of organisations relevant to the function of AWE Burghfield and an emergency response in the event of a radiological incident. This includes the Office for Nuclear Regulation, West Berkshire District Council as the authority responsible for the Off Site Emergency Plan and a range of emergency services. Activity includes monitoring the potential cumulative change in population surrounding AWE Burghfield and understanding the consequences for emergency planning.
- 5.105 The extent of the DEPZ has influence the spatial strategy promoted by the Proposed Submission Plan with the proposal to create a garden settlement at Grazeley deemed unachievable following the extent of the DEPZ being extended. For further information see Section 4.
- 5.106 With regard to managing development within the DEPZ, the Draft Plan included a specific policy on development in the vicinity of AWE Burghfield (then policy HC10). No Substantive comments were received from duty to cooperate bodies, with the exception of Reading Borough Council who expressed support. Further evolution of this policy has been shared with West Berkshire District Council. Reading Borough Council, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and the Office for Nuclear Regulation. No objections have been received.
- 5.107 The Proposed Submission Plan does not propose any new housing allocations within the DEPZ. This is consistent with the approach of neighbouring local authorities, advise from emergency planners and views offered by the Office for Nuclear Regulation. There is no outstanding duty to cooperate matter that are required to be resolved in relation to AWE Burghfield.

Historic environment

- 5.108 The key statutory consultee, Historic England, have been engaged from early in the plan making process, with their views sought on the proposed HELAA methodology discussed above. Conservation officers and Berkshire Archaeology have been consulted during preparation and their comments and suggestions have been incorporated in the drafting of the policies. Historic England suggested at the Draft Plan (2020) stage that development requirements for non-strategic site allocations would improve certainty in relation to affected assets. In response, the Revised Growth Strategy included development guidelines for each site, covering off heritage where relevant. Additionally, Historic England requested additional heritage evidence be produced. A Heritage Topic Paper has been prepared accordingly which supports the Proposed Submission Plan. This summarises the borough's historic assets and

provides an assessment of the proposed site allocations in relation to heritage impact. An early draft of this document was shared with Historic England and Berkshire Archaeology and feedback has been used to shape the final topic paper.

- 5.109 All surrounding local authorities with whom heritage has been identified as a potential cross boundary issue have been written to, outlining the council's position that no adverse cross-boundary implications are envisaged from the spatial strategy set out in the Proposed Submission Plan and policy approach. No objections or disagreement with this position have been raised.
- 5.110 In summary, no issues have been raised by duty to cooperate partners on the approach to the historic environment.

Open space

- 5.111 The planning for, and protection of, more formal areas of open space is generally a matter for each local authority to consider through their own Local Plan process. There may be instances where new development is proposed close to local authority boundaries, where associated open space may need to be located (or part located) in another authority. Where this is the case, it is a matter for cooperation between authorities on a case-by-case basis. None of the proposed allocations in the Proposed Submission Plan give rise to the need for open space within an adjoining local authority.
- 5.112 The council's Playing Pitch Strategy was prepared with a steering group that included Sport England and sports governing bodies. The assessment has resulted in a common understanding of current provision and future needs that can be used by all organisations in steering their decision making. Sport England have been consulted at each stage in the plan making process, and no specific comments in relation to the proposed approach have been raised.
- 5.113 It is not considered that any unresolved duty to cooperate issues exist in relation to open space.

Climate change

- 5.114 The council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and adopted a Climate Emergency Action Plan to deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions directly resulting from and influenced by organisational activities. As the country transitions to a low carbon future, the council has therefore commissioned work to look at how a local plan can put forward land use policies to contribute towards achieving this.
- 5.115 The Proposed Submission Plan includes policies aimed at reducing environmental impacts of development, including reducing energy consumption and support for

renewable energy generation. The effects of the policies are not considered strategic; however, renewable energy generation projects may straddle local authorities boundaries. No allocations are however proposed.

- 5.116 Information regarding the proposed policy approach has been shared with neighbouring local authorities and other relevant organisations. No objections or negative comments have been received. Several local authorities are supportive of the policy ambition.
- 5.117 There are no duty to cooperate issues concerning climate change.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Throughout the process of preparing the Local Plan Update, the council has proactively engaged with relevant stakeholders to discharge the duty to cooperate. Evidence and information has been shared on an ongoing basis.
- 6.2 With regard to the evidence base, the council has shared information at the earliest opportunity at each stage. Where bodies or organisations have raised detailed matters, these have been duly considered and clarification provided. In several instances, the council has extended the scope of evidence to allow issues to be better investigated and issues resolved.
- 6.3 With regards to policy direction, the council has generally sought to meet development needs arising from Wokingham Borough, such as the full local housing needs. Engage with bodies and organisations has been undertaken before key recommendations have been made with regards to policy direction and site allocations, ensuring the views of other organisations can be taken into account. Where bodies and organisations have raised observations or concerns, these have been duly considered and clarifications provided where necessary. In several instances, emerging policies have been amended to appropriately address issues. Where the council disagrees, the body or organisation has been provided with an explanation. Where possible, draft policy wording has been shared.
- 6.4 The majority of the duty to cooperate bodies and organisations have stated that they are satisfied that strategic, cross boundary matters have been appropriately considered through effective and ongoing engagement.
- 6.5 The council is not aware of any unresolved issue that may be considered a failure of the duty to cooperate. The council has entered into Memoranda of Understanding to assist in demonstrate discharging the duty. It is considered that these may evolve into Statements of Common Ground once bodies and organisations have had the opportunity to consider the Proposed Submission Plan.

6.6 Should matters be raised through representations on the Proposed Submission Plan, the council will positively engage prior to plan's submission.

Appendix A – Overview of collaboration on the evidence base

Evidence	Jointly prepared with	Engagement with relevant bodies (where applicable)
Sustainability Appraisal		
SA Scoping Report (2016)	N/A	Engagement on scope included all surrounding authorities, duty to cooperate bodies (including Historic England, Natural England, Environment Agency) full details see Appendix 4 of the SA Scoping Report.
SA Incorporating SEA (2016)	N/A	Widely available for comment alongside LPU Issues and Options Consultation.
SA Incorporating SEA (2018)	N/A	Widely available for comment alongside LPU Homes for the Future Consultation
SA Interim Report (2020)	N/A	Widely available for comment alongside LPU Draft Plan Consultation
SA Interim Report (2021)	N/A	Widely available for comment alongside LPU Revised Growth Strategy Consultation
Housing development		
Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2016)	Joint commission of the six Berkshire local authorities and Thames Valley Berkshire LEP.	Stakeholder event held on 19 May 2015 comprising two sessions, one with duty to cooperate partners and one with wider stakeholders (including local agents, housebuilders/agents, registered providers, other interest groups. For further information see paragraphs 2.231-2.235 and Appendix D of the study.
OAN Sensitivity testing (2018)	Joint commission of the Western Berkshire HMA local authorities (Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, Wokingham Borough Council).	Technical update not subject to specific consultation.
Wokingham Strategic Growth Locations: Growth Scenarios Report – Grazeley, Twyford/Ruscombe and Barkham Square (2018)	N/A	Series of community stakeholder and technical stakeholder workshops held during production of the report, attended by neighbouring local authorities and duty to cooperate bodies.
Wokingham Strategic Growth Locations: Growth Scenarios Report – Hall Farm and Ashridge (2018)	N/A	Series of community stakeholder and technical stakeholder workshops held during production of the report, attended by neighbouring local authorities and duty to cooperate bodies.

Local Housing Needs Assessment 2019	N/A	Joint commissioning investigated but ultimately not taken forward.
Local Housing Needs Assessment 2022	N/A	Technical update not subject to specific consultation.
Wokingham Strategic Sites Report (2021)	N/A	Series of community stakeholder and technical stakeholder workshops held during production of the report, attended by neighbouring local authorities and duty to cooperate bodies.
Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2015) (superseded)	N/A	Key stakeholders including all adjoining local authorities engaged through online surveys / interviews.
Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment (2017) (superseded)	Though work undertaken to produce a joint Berkshire methodology, each authority subsequently commissioned its own study, with most choosing arc4 (the consultants for this 2017 and following 2023 study) utilising that consultant's common methodology.	Key stakeholders including all adjoining local authorities engaged through online surveys.
Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment (2023)	N/A	Key stakeholders including all adjoining authorities engaged through online surveys.
Boat Dwellings Accommodation Assessment 2019	N/A	Key stakeholders including all adjoining authorities engaged through online surveys.
Site Assessment		
Berkshire Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Methodology (2016)	Joint methodology agreed between Reading Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough Borough Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council.	Engagement on methodology undertaken with key stakeholders, and responses used to update the methodology as appropriate. Responses included the Environment Agency, Highways England (now National Highways), Historic England, Natural England, Transport for London.
HELAA 2020	N/A	Engagement with neighbouring local authorities on the initial assessments.
HELAA 2021	N/A	Engagement with neighbouring local authorities on the initial assessments.
HELAA 2024	N/A	Engagement with neighbouring local authorities on the initial assessments.
Employment development		

Functional Economic Market Areas (2016)	Joint commission of the six Berkshire local authorities and Thames Valley Berkshire LEP.	Earley engagement on proposed methodology and further engagement on emerging findings took place in October 2015 and December 2015 respectively. Included neighbouring local authorities and other organisations with an interest in economic development across the wider sub-region. See paragraphs 1.18- 1.20 and Appendixes 1-4 of the Study for further information.
Economic Development Needs Assessment (2016)	Joint commission of the six Berkshire local authorities and Thames Valley Berkshire LEP.	As part of the study, a focused consultation was undertaken on the emerging draft report in July 2016 to allow this to be shaped. Engagement included commercial property agents active in the area, neighbouring local authorities and other organisations with an interest in economic development across the wider sub-region. See paragraphs 1.13-1.16 and Appendixes 5&6.
Employment Land Needs Study (2020)	Jointly commissioned with Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council – each authority received its own report as output.	In producing the study, a technical briefing was held for duty to co-operate bodies which was attended by a number of district councils from the surrounding area and a presentation was made available to those who couldn't attend (which also included the Thames Valley Enterprise Partnership).
Employment Land Needs Review (2023)	Wokingham specific update to the study previously jointly commissioned with Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council.	Virtual workshop held with key stakeholders including local agents and developers.
Town centre and retail		
Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Assessment (2017) (superseded)	Joint commission with Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, and West Berkshire Council.	Focused engagement with retailers and property agents on need figures.
Retail and Commercial Leisure Needs Assessment (2023)	N/A – Wokingham specific update to previous 2017 study.	Householder surveys with residents in Wokingham and adjoining authorities.
Infrastructure		
Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2020)	N/A	A variety of specific organisations were engaged throughout the preparation of the IDP. This included various service and utility providers (both internal within the council and external organisations). In relation to specific duty to co-operate bodies, this included Highways England (now National Highways, health providers, and the Environment Agency.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2021)	N/A	As per 2020 version.
Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2024)	N/A	As per 2020 and 2021 version.
Water Cycle Study Phase 1 (2019)	N/A	Involvement in inception meeting to enable shaping of scope and data input, followed by continued engagement on draft output with the Environment Agency, Thames Water, South East Water.
Water Cycle Study Phase 2 (2024)	N/A	Involvement in inception meeting to enable shaping of scope and data input, followed by continued engagement on draft output with the Environment Agency, Thames Water, South East Water.
Flood risk		
SFRA (2020) (superseded)	N/A	Engagement on draft report with all neighbouring local authorities and duty to cooperate bodies including Environment Agency, Natural England, Thames Water, South East Water. Specific informal engagement with Environment Agency on approach to climate change, prior to first drafting.
SFRA Level 1 (2023)	N/A	Inception meeting attended by the Environment Agency. Various progress meetings with the Environment Agency to discuss and agree the approach to matters such as modelling. Engagement on draft report with Environment Agency, Thames Water, South East Water.
SFRA Level 2 (2023)	N/A	As per Level 1 SFRA (2023).
Transport		
A33 Corridor Study	Joint commissioning of study with Reading Borough Council, West Berkshire District Council, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and Hampshire County Council.	Periodic engagement meetings to discuss the work which had the purpose of understanding strategic opportunities to improve the Berkshire to Hampshire network. The relevance of the study was reduced following the decision that the Grazeley garden settlement was no longer achievable.
Wokingham Modelling Transport Assessment Report (2020)	N/A	Engagement with all neighbouring local authorities through the preparation of the report to ascertain commitments data. Engagement with National Highways on draft outputs and study made widely available for comment alongside Draft Plan consultation.

Wokingham Transport Assessment Report (2021)	N/A	Engagement with all neighbouring local authorities through the preparation of the report to ascertain up to date commitments data. Engagement with National Highways on draft outputs and study made widely available for comment alongside Revised Growth strategy consultation.
Wokingham Transport Assessment Report (2023) (not published and superseded prior to Reg 19).	N/A	Initial engagement regarding the scope of the project with neighbouring local authorities. Draft outputs shared with all neighbouring local authorities. Regular meetings with National Highways throughout production and draft shared for comments.
Wokingham Transport Assessment Report (2024)	N/A	As per 2023 report.
Natural environment		
Green Belt Review (2016)	Joint commission between Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council.	Focused engagement was undertaken on the methodology in February 2016. This included all adjoining authorities, Town and Parish Councils within Wokingham and Bracknell Forest. For further information, and how consultation responses were addressed, see section 2.6 of the study.
Habitats Regulations Assessment Scoping Report (2016)	N/A	Widely available for comment alongside LPU Issues and Options Consultation.
Landscape Character Assessment (2019)	N/A	Technical engagement with key stakeholders on emerging draft report, including Environment Agency, Friends of Keephatch Local Nature Reserve, and Secretary of WDVTA, Berkshire Archaeology, Berkshire Garden Trust, TVERC, all adjoining LPAs, all ward members, all town / parish councils. The outcome was views were considered and reflected in the finalised document.
Habitats Regulations Assessment (2020)	N/A	Widely available for comment alongside LPU Draft Plan Consultation.
Habitats Regulations Assessment (2021)	N/A	Widely available for comment alongside LPU Revised Growth Strategy Consultation.
Air Quality Assessment	N/A	Air quality assessment shared with Natural England, with ongoing engagement subsequently to address comments.

Appendix B – Existing cooperative groups

Existing co-operative groups	Group organisation/information	Aims/outcomes
<i>Berkshire Leaders</i>	Lead members from: Bracknell Forest Council Reading Council Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Slough Borough Council West Berkshire Council Wokingham Borough Council	The group provides a high level elected member forum to discuss various matters related to local government, including plan making as an when appropriate.
<i>Berkshire Chief Executives</i>	Chief Executive Officers from: Bracknell Forest Council Reading Council Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Slough Borough Council West Berkshire Council Wokingham Borough Council	The group provides a high level forum of each authority's most senior officer to discuss various matters related to local government, including plan making as an when appropriate.
<i>Berkshire Heads of Planning</i>	Quarterly meeting of service area lead officers from the following councils: Bracknell Forest Council Reading Council Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Slough Borough Council West Berkshire Council Wokingham Borough Council	The group provides a high level forum for discussion of operational matters, strategic planning policy overview for the Berkshire unitary authorities, and a forum for discussion on matters of mutual interest/concern.
<i>Berkshire Members Strategic Planning Group</i>	Executive member / portfolio holder for planning with senior officer support from: Bracknell Forest Council Reading Council Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Slough Borough Council West Berkshire Council Wokingham Borough Council	The group provides a high level member and officer strategic planning policy overview for the Berkshire unitary authorities, and a forum for discussion on matters of mutual interest/concern.
<i>Development Plans Group (DPG)</i>	Roughly quarterly meetings of lead officers responsible for planning policy from: Bracknell Forest Council Reading Council	This group provides a forum for planning policy discussion across Berkshire, enabling the sharing of information, discussion of emerging issues and updating on plan making programmes. D PG along with Berkshire Heads

Existing co-operative groups	Group organisation/information	Aims/outcomes
	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Slough Borough Council West Berkshire Council Wokingham Borough Council	of Planning, consider opportunities for joint working to inform local plans which has included housing and economic studies.
<i>West of Berkshire Strategic Planning Group</i>	Portfolio holders for strategic planning and senior officers (including Chief Executives and planning leads) from: Bracknell Forest Council Reading Council West Berkshire Council Wokingham Borough Council	The group provides a high level member and officer forum for the West of Berkshire Housing Market Area. The forum took the lead on preparing and updating SOCGs relating to strategic planning.
<i>Berkshire Economic Development Officers Group</i>	This group meets every two months and comprises representatives of each of the 6 Berkshire authorities and also the Local Enterprise Partnership.	The group reviews economic development in the Thames Valley Berkshire area, including supporting development of the Strategic Economic Plan, in order to support the economy of the geographic area.
<i>Berkshire Housing Enablers Group</i>	This group is a long-standing group of officers from the 6 Berkshire local authorities and Homes England that currently meet on an ad hoc basis.	The group calls meetings as and when there are issues that warrant sharing of best practice and approaches.
<i>Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum</i>	Wokingham Borough Council is a fully engaged member of the Forum and is represented at both member and officer level.	The forum brought together the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership, the six local transport authorities, the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail, National Highways, Heathrow Airport Limited, and some train and bus operating companies to discuss and consult on matters of mutual interest relating to strategic transport issues in Thames Valley Berkshire. The Forum aims to agree schemes and work which may be taken forward jointly for bidding and implementation.
<i>Blackwater Valley Network / Countryside Partnership</i>	The Council has been part of this partnership since 1971, with local authorities from Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey, which coordinates works in the Valley.	The role of the BVCP is to deliver an expert, experienced and centralised resource to coordinate projects and actions of all involved parties and stakeholders in the Blackwater Valley for mutual benefit. It also increases sustainable usage of the Blackwater Valley especially for informal outdoor recreation and ensures wildlife and landscape protection.

Existing co-operative groups	Group organisation/information	Aims/outcomes
<i>Elevate Me Berkshire</i>	Supporting of economic development officers from: Bracknell Forest Council Reading Council Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Slough Borough Council West Berkshire Council Wokingham Borough Council	This is an online tool for 16-24 year olds in Berkshire to access help, advice and support on employment, work experience, volunteering and mentoring. Elevate Me Berkshire's work includes driving down the skills gap that exists, which in some cases can mean young people are not accessing any employment opportunities that may be available, and investing in the necessary infrastructure, including homes and transport, necessary to support young people.
<i>South East England Aggregates Working Party (SEEAWP)</i>	SEEAWP brings together representatives from the aggregates, secondary aggregates and recycling industry and the mineral planning authorities.	The group assesses the potential for supply of secondary and recycled materials, and reserves (land bank) of primary aggregate. The group helps the central and eastern Berkshire authorities work towards a robust joint plan which will provide policies against which development proposals will be assessed.
<i>South East Waste Planning Advisory Group (SEWPAG)</i>	Bracknell Forest Council Brighton & Hove City Council Buckinghamshire Council East Sussex County Council Hampshire County Council (incorporating Southampton City, Portsmouth City and New Forest National Park Waste Planning Authorities) Isle of Wight Council Kent County Council Medway Council Milton Keynes Council Oxfordshire County Council Reading Borough Council Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Slough Borough Council South Downs National Park Authority Surrey County Council West Berkshire Council West Sussex County Council Wokingham Borough Council	SEWPAG ensures waste planning authorities collaborate in a meaningful way with the waste industry and the EA on strategic issues. The group helps the central and eastern Berkshire authorities work towards a robust joint plan which will provide policies against which development proposals will be assessed.
<i>Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board</i>	Bracknell Forest Borough Council Elmbridge Borough Council Guildford Borough Council Hart District Council Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead	This group provides a forum for joint working and liaison between the local authorities and other organisations affected by the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, to address matters relating to the management and protection of the

Existing co-operative groups	Group organisation/information	Aims/outcomes
	Runnymede Borough Council Rushmoor Borough Council Surrey Heath Borough Council Waverley Borough Council Woking Borough Council Wokingham Borough Council Hampshire County Council	Thames Basin Heaths SPA and associated land management and planning issues that are of interest to the member organisations.

Appendix C – Record of key engagement

The following table provides a summary of key engagement with duty to cooperate bodies. The list is not exhaustive, but provides a proportionate reflection of the ongoing and effective engagement that has taken place.

As per paragraph 5.5 of the main report, a complete list of Heads of Planning and Development Plans Group meetings is not included in the table below. As with the main body of the report, the focus is on engagement between the Revised Growth Strategy Consultation and Proposed Submission Plan stage, though engagement on evidence produced prior to that period is referred to as relevant.

Body / organisation	Date	Method / Activity and outcomes where relevant
<i>All Berkshire authorities</i>	2016 to present	Roughly quarterly meetings of Berkshire Heads of Planning to discuss ongoing cross boundary matters at senior officer level.
	2016 to present	Roughly quarterly meetings of Development Plans Group to share information, facilitate the collaboration on evidence bases, and to flag and discuss ongoing cross boundary matters as they arise.
	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	19 January 2017	Duty to cooperate workshop to consider what baseline information existed across Berkshire relating to infrastructure. Outcome was the agreement to share information on infrastructure provision (NB all Berkshire authorities except Slough in attendance).
	July 2018	Memorandum of Understanding signed by all Berkshire authorities to agree that the best fit housing markets identified Berkshire (including South Bucks) SHMA (2016) represent the appropriate geography over which to consider housing provision in the Berkshire and South Bucks area. To agree that the local authorities will work together to ensure need is met in full within the best fit market areas, so far as is consistent with the NPPF.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.

	23 August 2023	Formal written request to all Berkshire authorities seeking assistance with meeting likely unmet employment need. Responses received from all neighbouring local authorities confirming inability to assist. (N.B. needs now proposed to be met through the Proposed Submission Plan).
	October 2023	Written engagement with neighbouring local authorities setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Engagement also set out the potential recommendations regarding the direction of the Proposed Submission Plan. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail.
<i>Western Berkshire HMA authorities (Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, West Berkshire)</i>	October 2017	Memorandum of Understanding on Reading's Unmet Need with relation to the SHMA signed by four Western Berkshire HMA authorities.
	August 2021	Memorandum of Understanding signed by four Western Berkshire HMA authorities to agree that the local authorities will work together to accommodate Reading's unmet housing need within the HMA area.
	August 2021	Statement of Common Ground signed by four Western Berkshire HMA authorities agreeing the position on cross boundary strategic matters affecting the signatory local authorities and how these have been and continue to be addressed (joint evidence studies, governance arrangements, etc).
<i>All adjoining authorities</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted engagement to rescope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation was relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	June – July 2016	Stakeholder consultation on emerging findings for the Central Berkshire Economic Development Needs Assessment. Consultation responses received from key stakeholders on the draft outputs of the study and tweaks made to the study by the consultants, NLP.
	1 July 2018	Engagement, via consultants JBA, with surrounding local authorities on the emerging Water Cycle Study. This involved seeking to understand whether they had completed a WCS themselves, and to obtain data to take account of anticipated growth.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to rescope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation was relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	December 2023	Formal request made to all adjoining authorities seeking assistance with WBC's potential unmet Gypsy and Traveller needs. Responses received from all adjoining neighbours confirming inability to assist. (N.B. needs now proposed to be met through the Proposed Submission Plan).

<i>Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council</i>	20 August 2018	Duty to cooperate meeting to share progress with Employment Land Review evidence to date and explain the approach to re-evaluating the EDNA. Led by the consultants and client councils (comprising West Berkshire District Council, Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council).
	12 November 2020	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss progress with respective local plans and any potential cross boundary issues. Action included B&D sharing with WBC the West Berks Emergency Planning response to the B&D I&Os consultation given similar implications for the two authorities.
	November 2021	Information shared regarding Gypsy and Travel provision as part of engagement on B&D's emerging GTAA.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Engagement set out the potential recommendations regarding the direction of the Proposed Submission Plan. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. No response received following multiple chases into early 2024. Taken to mean no cross boundary issues exist.
	14 December 2023	Duty to Cooperate meeting to discuss each authorities emerging local plans. . Discussed the points raised in the October correspondence and it was verbally confirmed no cross boundary concerns exist and a response on unmet employment and GRT need would follow in writing.
	2 January 2024	Email correspondence confirming inability to assist with potential unmet GRT and employment need.
<i>Bracknell Forest Council</i>	29 July 2016	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss progress on Local Plan programmes and other issues that may be beneficial to cooperate on.
	March 2017	Collaborative sharing of information in response to stakeholder questions as part of Bracknell Forest's GTAA.
	16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on community wellbeing. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the social infrastructure and community facilities required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.

September – October 2018	Collaboration and agreement of a shared Appropriate Assessment template to be used in the development management process. Endorsed by Natural England.
13 November 2019	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss ongoing work regarding air quality assessments. Resulted in agreement to work towards aligning methodologies relating to air quality modelling and assessment.
18 August 2020	Meeting to discuss BFC's IDP infrastructure provision through the local plan. Clarification of any outstanding issues regarding cross boundary education and highways matters. Agreed to continue working together moving forwards on matter of school places.
26 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on transport infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation to the nature of transport infrastructure and other measures required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.
August 2021	Engagement letter sent providing update on LPU process and outlining the emerging strategic options that are under consideration, and inviting early comments on each in order to assist in formulating recommendations as to the content of the next formal consultation. Additionally, information provided about potentially suitable sites in the emerging HELAA close to the shared boundary, and comments invited on those. Feedback received was taken into account in finalising the assessment of sites and spatial strategy published in the Revised Growth Strategy Consultation.
31 January 2022	Engagement meeting to provide update on LPU transport modelling evidence. This facilitated discussion of key assumptions and sharing of relevant information / data to be captured in the modelling.
8 April 2022	Further engagement meeting to provide update on LPU transport modelling evidence, with a focus on the Hall Farm proposals. This included an update on LPU progress, and an update from consultants Stantec on the transport assessment work and sustainability measures.
21 September 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting providing full update of progress on the LPU; update on published and ongoing evidence base; likely emerging spatial strategy and intention to meet housing needs in full; discussion on expected unmet GRT and employment needs; update on approach to transport policy and emerging LTP; and update on SANG strategy. Discussion on emerging preferred option focussed on development closest to shared boundary. Comments were requested on any landscape sensitivities that the council should be particularly aware of and none were identified. The actions from the meeting included the sharing of information relating to applications close to the boundary (from both sides), and sharing of the GTAA. A further follow up meeting was arranged to focus on the latest transport assessment evidence with relevant highways colleagues present.

	26 September 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss transport assessment work. Relevant junctions and potential mitigations were discussed with the outcome that it was agreed continuing engagement required in relation to highways impacts of development.
	31 October 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting to share information on emerging LTPs and active and sustainable travel strategies being produced. This included the latest active and public transport strategies for the South Wokingham SDL. Agreement for further engagement as strategies evolve.
	28 August 2024	Duty to Cooperate meeting to provide a further update on local plan progress, principally updated transport evidence, and future timetable. An update was provided confirming that the council had reassessed the site to the North of London Road taking into account BFC comments and altered the HELAA assessment from potentially suitable to unsuitable. Notwithstanding, the site has now obtained permission under the tilted balance against the existing development plan. There was agreement between officers that whilst transport modelling work shows some traffic issues at key junctions on / near the shared boundary, this is within the scope of existing work programmes/engagement and can be capable of resolution. Additionally, it was agreed that each authority's emerging Local Transport Plans, seeking a shift to more sustainable travel, are likely to have a positive impact on traffic. Actions included a further detailed discussion between the two highways authorities to map out potential improvements and for WBC to share a note with relevant technical officers at BFC confirming the evidence base that no significant air quality impacts have been identified from planned growth.
<i>Buckinghamshire Council</i>	20 August 2018	Duty to cooperate meeting (with Chiltern and South Bucks District Council prior to amalgamation to form Buckinghamshire Council) to share progress with Employment Land Review evidence to date and explain the approach to re-evaluating the EDNA. Led by the consultants and client councils (comprising West Berkshire District Council, Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council).
	August 2023	Collaborative sharing of information via multiple email exchanges in response to stakeholder engagement as part of Buckinghamshire's GTAA.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response received 6 November raising no DtC concerns.
<i>Hart District Council</i>	29 July 2016	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss progress on Local Plan and other issues that may be beneficial to cooperate on.

	14 August 2021	Collaborative sharing of information in response to stakeholder questions as part of Hart's GTAA.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Engagement set out the potential recommendations regarding the direction of the Proposed Submission Plan. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. No response received following multiple chases into early 2024. Taken to mean no cross boundary issues exist. Response received 4 March 2024 following further chasing, raising no DtC concerns.
	27 March 2024	Sharing of SFRA cumulative impact assessment as part of collaborative approach to sharing relevant evidence.
<i>Hampshire County Council</i>	14 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on utilities. The purpose of this workshop was to explore the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the utilities infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on community wellbeing. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the social infrastructure and community facilities required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	31 January 2022	Engagement meeting to provide update on LPU transport modelling evidence. This facilitated discussion of key assumptions and sharing of relevant information / data to be captured in the modelling.
	8 April 2022	Further engagement meeting to provide update on LPU transport modelling evidence, with a focus on the Hall Farm proposals. This included an update on LPU progress, and an update from consultants Stantec on the transport assessment work and sustainability measures.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Engagement set out the potential recommendations regarding the direction of the Proposed Submission Plan. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of

		relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response received following multiple chases on 9 July 2024. This outlined desire for additional information, and meeting set up to address this.
	13 August 2024	Duty to Cooperate meeting to discuss Hampshire's written response (dated 9 July 2024) to latest transport assessment evidence. Officers present provided the view that the evidence does not give rise to significant concerns as regards impact on the Hampshire road network. This included acknowledgement that the spatial strategy, focussing on larger scale developments, provides the best opportunities to internalise trips within new developments, which was supported.
	14 August 2024	Sharing as part of a collaborative approach of detailed junction traffic flow data for relevant junctions affecting Hampshire. Data provided in advance of the emerging transport assessment evidence being finalised.
	9 September 2024	Letter received (dated 4 September) confirming the view, offered verbally at the meeting of 13 August 2023, that the quantum of development and traffic numbers associated with the emerging LPU spatial strategy are not considered by the County Council at this stage to require any mitigation within Hampshire nor have a significant impact on the Hampshire road network. This includes on the A33 where Hampshire recognise development in Wokingham Borough will likely only lead to minor increases in traffic.
<i>Oxfordshire County Council</i>	24 September 2019	Duty to cooperate meeting between Oxford 2050 planning team, Oxford County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, West Berkshire District Council, Reading Borough Council, TV LEP, and Wokingham Borough Council to update each other on respective local plan progress and cross boundary transport matters. Conversation mainly around the proposal for a new Thames Crossing. The council confirmed it supported the proposal in principle, but acknowledged that further work was required across the affected local authorities consider deliverability and potential mitigations to address impacts on the wider highway network. It was noted that the principal beneficiary of the scheme was Reading Borough Council.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Engagement set out the potential recommendations regarding the direction of the Proposed Submission Plan. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response received 29 November raising no DtC concerns.
	January 2024	Collaborative sharing of information in response to stakeholder questions as part of Oxfordshire's GTAA.

<i>Reading Borough Council</i>	January 2017	Collaborative sharing of information in response to stakeholder questions as part of Reading's GTAA.
	12 September 2017	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss infrastructure needs moving forwards, including transport and health. Agreement to continue ongoing engagement.
	14 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on utilities. The purpose of this workshop was to explore the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the utilities infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on community wellbeing. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the social infrastructure and community facilities required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	2018-2021	Regular meetings between West Berkshire District Council, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council regarding the potential for a new garden town at Grazeley which is situated on the administrative boundary of the local authorities. The outcome includes securing resource funding from Homes England and a joint bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund to develop the proposal. Following the extension of the DEPZ surrounding AWE Burghfield, the local authorities were engaged with key stakeholders such as AWE and the Office for Nuclear Regulation to consider the consequences for the Grazeley garden town proposal.
	26 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on transport infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation to the nature of transport infrastructure and other measures required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.
	26 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on green and blue infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation to green space, nature, water and drainage measures required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.
	27 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on community and social infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation the nature of community and social infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.

	August 2021	Engagement letter sent providing update on LPU process and outlining the emerging strategic options that are under consideration, and inviting early comments on each in order to assist in formulating recommendations as to the content of the next formal consultation. Additionally, information provided about potentially suitable sites in the emerging HELAA close to the shared boundary, and comments invited on those. Feedback received was taken into account in finalising the assessment of sites and spatial strategy published in the Revised Growth Strategy Consultation.
	31 January 2022	Engagement meeting to provide update on LPU transport modelling evidence. This facilitated discussion of key assumptions and sharing of relevant information / data to be captured in the modelling.
	8 April 2022	Further engagement meeting to provide update on LPU transport modelling evidence, with a focus on the Hall Farm proposals. This included an update on LPU progress, and an update from consultants Stantec on the transport assessment work and sustainability measures.
	22 September 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting providing full update of progress on the LPU; update on published and ongoing evidence base; likely emerging spatial strategy and intention to meet housing needs in full; discussion on expected unmet GRT and employment needs; update on approach to transport policy and emerging LTP; and discussion around potential relocation of Royal Berks Hospital. Discussion on emerging preferred option focussed on development at Loddon Valley Garden Village (LVGV). Initial thoughts shared by RBC officers in relation to active and sustainable linkage challenges into Reading. The actions from the meeting included providing more information regarding the emerging active and public transport strategies in relation to LVGV.
	July 2024	As a follow up to the above meeting, the LVGV land promoter's early draft public and active transport strategies were shared and comment invited. To facilitate engagement a meeting was held on 24 July 2024 with Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council officers with the land promoters in attendance to present their initial ideas and invite questions and comments. The outcome was the identification of issues for further exploration to assist the further development of the public and active travel strategies. Additional written comments on the draft strategies were also invited and provided by Reading Borough Council to inform the Pre-submission consultation documentation.
	August 2024	Reading Borough Council provide written confirmation that they do not anticipate unmet housing need under current national policy.
<i>Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead</i>	20 August 2018	Duty to cooperate meeting to share progress with Employment Land Review evidence to date and explain the approach to re-evaluating the EDNA. Led by the consultants and client councils (comprising West Berkshire District Council, Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council).

	August 2021	Engagement letter sent providing update on LPU process and outlining the emerging strategic options that are under consideration, and inviting early comments on each in order to assist in formulating recommendations as to the content of the next formal consultation. Additionally, information provided about potentially suitable sites in the emerging HELAA close to the shared boundary, and comments invited on those. Feedback received was taken into account in finalising the assessment of sites and spatial strategy published in the Revised Growth Strategy Consultation.
	9 November 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting providing full update of progress on the LPU; update on published and ongoing evidence base; likely emerging spatial strategy and intention to meet housing needs in full; discussion on expected unmet GRT and employment needs; update on approach to transport policy and emerging LTP. Discussion on emerging preferred option confirmed no large sites close to shared boundary. It was agreed any cross boundary issues were likely to be limited should any be identified.
<i>South Oxfordshire District Council & Vale of White Horse District Council (joint plan making service together known as 'South and Vale')</i>	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response received 21 November raising no DtC concerns.
	25 April 2024	Duty to cooperate meeting providing full update of progress on the LPU; update on published and ongoing evidence base; likely emerging spatial strategy and intention to meet housing needs in full; discussion on expected unmet GRT and employment needs; update on approach to Third Thames Crossing. The outcome of this meeting was all emerging implications were noted and it was agreed that the LPU was not likely to give rise to cross boundary issues. Approach to safeguarding land for potential Third Thames Crossing was noted and understood.
<i>West Berkshire Council</i>	29 July 2016	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss progress on Local Plan and other issues that may be beneficial to cooperate on
	14 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on utilities. The purpose of this workshop was to explore the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the utilities infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on community wellbeing. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the social infrastructure and community facilities required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.

	2018-2021	Regular meetings between West Berkshire District Council, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council regarding the potential for a new garden town at Grazeley which is situated on the administrative boundary of the local authorities. The outcome includes securing resource funding from Homes England and a joint bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund to develop the proposal. Following the extension of the DEPZ surrounding AWE Burghfield, the local authorities were engaged with key stakeholders such as AWE and the Office for Nuclear Regulation to consider the consequences for the Grazeley garden town proposal.
	November 2019	Collaborative sharing of information in response to stakeholder questions as part of West Berks' GTAA.
	August 2021	Engagement letter sent providing update on LPU process and outlining the emerging strategic options that are under consideration, and inviting early comments on each in order to assist in formulating recommendations as to the content of the next formal consultation. Additionally, information provided about potentially suitable sites in the emerging HELAA close to the shared boundary, and comments invited on those. Feedback received was taken into account in finalising the assessment of sites and spatial strategy published in the Revised Growth Strategy Consultation.
	31 January 2022	Engagement meeting to provide update on LPU transport modelling evidence. This facilitated discussion of key assumptions and sharing of relevant information / data to be captured in the modelling.
	8 April 2022	Further engagement meeting to provide update on LPU transport modelling evidence, with a focus on the Hall Farm proposals. This included an update on LPU progress, and an update from consultants Stantec on the transport assessment work and sustainability measures.
	4 May 2022	Duty to Cooperate meeting to discuss economic needs position and other general updates.
	8 November 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting providing full update of progress on the LPU; update on published and ongoing evidence base; likely emerging spatial strategy and intention to meet housing needs in full; discussion on expected unmet GRT and employment needs; update on approach to transport policy and emerging LTP; discussion around approach to development in proximity to AWE Burghfield. Discussion on emerging preferred option confirmed no large sites close to shared boundary. The proposed approach to no development with the DEPZ was endorsed and aligned with that being proposed by West Berkshire District Council. The actions from the meeting included highways officers meeting to discuss emerging evidence further. It was agreed any cross boundary issues were likely to be limited should any be identified.

<i>Environment Agency</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on green and blue infrastructure. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of green and blue infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	August 2018 - ongoing	Entered into framework agreement with the EA leading to agreement for the EA to provide advice on non-statutory local plan work. This agreement was updated and renewed in July 2022 and continues.
	26 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on green and blue infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation to green space, nature, water and drainage measures required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	March – June 2022	Representations received from the EA to the Revised Growth Strategy posing questions on modelling assumptions used in the Level 2 SFRA work that supported the RSG (now superseded). Liaising with Stantec (the consultants that produced the work) the council provided a response to the queries raised via email and phone conversations over this period, to address potential concerns.
	24 March 2022	Inception meeting for the Phase 2 Water Cycle Study with consultants JBA, Environment Agency, South East Water, Thames Water and WBC Planning Policy officers. Agreement to work collaboratively and share data to inform the evidence.
	12 May 2022	Inception meeting for SFRA with consultants JBA and WBC LLFA and Planning Policy officers. The Environment Agency agreed to send through required data to JBA and confirmed commitment to working with council through preparation of SFRA and wider LPU preparation.
	June 2022	Modelling approach to the River Loddon for the SFRA discussed at meeting on 14 June and approach agreed by Environment Agency in writing via email on 30 June.

	October 2022 – January 2023	Series of correspondence relating to updated PPG guidance and implications for the emerging SFRA. This includes multiple phone calls and a meeting in January 2023 where the approach was confirmed and updates to the SFRA agreed.
	March – April 2023	First draft of Level 1 SFRA shared as part of the collaborative process. Comments and feedback received on 27 April, suggesting some minor amendments and points of clarification only. JBA incorporated proposed amendments into final Level 1 SFRA.
	June – August 2023	First draft of Level 2 SFRA shared as part of the collaborative process. Comments and feedback received on 1 August, suggesting some minor amendments and specific comments on detailed site assessment. JBA incorporated proposed amendments into final Level 2 SFRA and provided clarifications where necessary.
	30 November 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting. This involved providing an update to the Environment Agency on likely emerging spatial strategy and timescales. Actions from this meeting included sharing the latest draft emerging flooding and drainage policies; re-sharing the latest SFRA detailed site tables to confirm climate change allowances (see below); facilitating a meeting between the Environment Agency and site promoters of Loddon Valley Garden Village; agreement that the Environment Agency would provide best practice examples of Sequential and Exception Tests (note – despite multiple reminders on the latter over following weeks, no examples were forthcoming).
	January – April 2024	Request from the council to confirm the correct climate change allowances applied to proposed new garden settlement. Series of emails and chaser emails explaining the assumptions made in the SFRA and confirmation received on 18 April 2024 from the EA that the correct assumptions used.
	August 2024	Finalised Water Cycle Study Phase 2 Shared with EA for input prior to publication.
	August 2024	Draft Sequential and Exception Test shared as part of collaborative process. This provided advanced sight of the report and allowed the EA opportunity to ask for early clarifications if that would be helpful.
<i>Historic England</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	May - June 2016	Engagement on draft HELAA methodology.
	April 2019	Informal sharing of draft emerging heritage policies in advance of formal consultation. Informal feedback received and policies updated accordingly.

	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	January – February 2022	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement on early draft Historic Environment Topic Paper and Site Assessment Proforma. Comments received incorporated into updated draft.
<i>Natural England</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	May - June 2016	Engagement on draft HELAA methodology.
	16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on green and blue infrastructure. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of green and blue infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	September – October 2018	Collaboration and agreement of a shared Appropriate Assessment template to be used in the development management process. Endorsed by Natural England.
	17 December 2019	One of the regular series of meetings of the Joint Strategic Partnership Board, where specific local plan matters relating to air quality were discussed. The implications of approaches taken during plan making at other local authorities outside the JSPB area were considered and helped inform future areas of work and engagement.
	26 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on green and blue infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation to green space, nature, water and drainage measures required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.
	27 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on community and social infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation the nature of community and social infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.

	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	5 September 2023	WBC share via email the ‘Air Quality – Local Plan Growth Scenario Appraisal’ prepared by consultants Stantec and invited Natural England’s review and comment.
	27 September 2023	<p>A meeting to discuss the emerging Local Plan Update programme and the emerging strategy and sites, including WBC’s SANG strategy and the air quality modelling work shared on 5 September. WBC updated that sufficient SANG capacity would likely be available to support the emerging local plan, providing an extension to the existing Rooks Nest SANG is delivered. NE were supportive of providing additional council owned SANG capacity and offered a site visit to the proposed extension.</p> <p>Outcome was WBC shared information via email on 28th September 2023 on the proposed WBC extension of the Rooks Nest SANG, including a map of the area, and draft masterplanning of the Hall Farm/Loddon Valley area.</p> <p>There was also agreement to pursue a Statement of Common Ground.</p>
	October 2023 – March 2024	Email engagement between Natural England and WBC officers about the air quality modelling undertaken, including responding to technical queries from Natural England.
<i>The Mayor of London</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Civil Aviation Authority</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Homes England</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.

14 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on utilities. The purpose of this workshop was to explore the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the utilities infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on green and blue infrastructure. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of green and blue infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on community wellbeing. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the social infrastructure and community facilities required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
2018-2021	Regular meetings between West Berkshire District Council, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council regarding the potential for a new garden town at Grazeley which is situated on the administrative boundary of the local authorities. Meeting supported by Homes England as necessary. The outcome includes securing resource funding from Homes England and a joint bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund to develop the proposal. Following the extension of the DEPZ surrounding AWE Burghfield, the local authorities were engaged with key stakeholders such as AWE and the Office for Nuclear Regulation to consider the consequences for the Grazeley garden town proposal.
26 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on transport infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation to the nature of transport infrastructure and other measures required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.
26 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on green and blue infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation to green space, nature, water and drainage measures required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.
October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.

<i>Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	2021-2024	Regular liaison meetings to exchange information on the delivery of currently planned developments, and emerging options for the Local Plan Update. Trajectory of housing delivery shared.
	April 2024	Formal written invitation to request information on infrastructure considered necessary to support population growth as a result of development. A spreadsheet of potentially suitable development sites and associated GIS mapping shared to assist consideration. Response received May 2024 which has been taken into account in the preparation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
<i>Frimley Integrated Care Board</i>	June 2024	Formal written invitation to request information on infrastructure considered necessary to support population growth as a result of development. A spreadsheet of potentially suitable development sites and associated GIS mapping shared to assist consideration. No response received.
<i>Office of Rail and Road</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Transport for London</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Highways authorities</i>	<i>Covered elsewhere under the relevant authority.</i>	
<i>Marine Management</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.

<i>Organisation (not relevant for Wokingham Borough)</i>	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	<i>National Highways</i>	April – May 2016
	26 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on transport infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation to the nature of transport infrastructure and other measures required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.
	16 August 2021	DtC letter sent providing update on the evidence base in preparing a revised growth strategy. This highlighted the potential need for a stepped housing trajectory, a summary of the strategic sites considered and the emerging preferred option (including quantum and location), raising the potential for new links to the strategic highways network. Request for a meeting to discuss further offered and taken up (see following).
	29 September 2021	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss implications of updated transport modelling and strategic growth scenario work. Resulted in the sharing of evidence base outcomes and positive discussion about the implications on the strategic road network and what the future evidential threshold will need to be. Agreement to produce an MoU between WBC and National Highways covering principles discussed and agreed. Whilst a draft was produced by the council, the agreement was not formally signed.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	1 February 2022	Engagement meeting to provide update on LPU transport modelling evidence, with a focus on the Hall Farm proposals. This included an update on LPU progress, and an update from consultants Stantec on the transport assessment work and sustainability measures. Advice from National Highways was used to shape the emerging evidence and agreement for continued support reviewing model outputs and assumptions.
	8 September 2023	Sharing of final draft of transport modelling evidence and supporting technical notes for comment as part of a collaborative approach to allow key stakeholder to inform the evidence base.

<i>Berkshire Archaeology</i>	16 March 2016	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss existing development plan policies on archaeology and whether any updates are required. Informal feedback received on what works well with existing policy and how it can be improved by suggested tweaks.
	April 2019	Informal sharing of draft emerging heritage policies in advance of formal consultation. Informal feedback received and policies updated accordingly.
	January – February 2022	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement on early draft Historic Environment Topic Paper and Site Assessment Proforma. Comments incorporated into updated draft.
<i>Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)</i>	16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on green and blue infrastructure. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of green and blue infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	23 November 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting providing full update of progress on the LPU, likely emerging spatial strategy, and overview of all ecology related emerging policies. Actions included the council sharing latest masterplanning documents for emerging Loddon Valley Garden Village and sharing of latest Valued Landscape topic paper; and BBOWT sharing a letter outlining ongoing research into the benefits of higher percentages of net gain. No issues requiring further engagement were identified.
<i>Berkshire Local Nature Partnership</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	23 November 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting providing full update of progress on the LPU, likely emerging spatial strategy, and overview of all ecology related emerging policies. Actions included the council sharing latest masterplanning documents for emerging Loddon Valley Garden Village and sharing of latest Valued Landscape topic paper. No issues requiring further engagement were identified.

<i>Centrica / British Gas</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Ealing Council</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Elmbridge Borough Council</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. No response received following multiple chases into early 2024. Taken to mean no cross boundary issues exist.
<i>Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.

<i>Great Western Railway</i>	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Guildford Borough Council</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response received on 31 October raising no matters requiring engagement.
<i>Hillingdon Council</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>London Economic Action Partnership</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Ministry of Defence</i>	-	Consulted via AWE
<i>Mole Valley District Council</i>	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.

	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. No response received following multiple chases into early 2024. Taken to mean no cross boundary issues exist.
<i>National Grid</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	14 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on utilities. The purpose of this workshop was to explore the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the utilities infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>National Rail</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Network Rail</i>	September 2022	Engagement regarding the promoted strategic site at Twyford / Ruscombe where the promoters propose a new trains station to serve the development. The meeting and subsequent letter clarified the procedure for considering new stations and the challenges associated with achieving this in the Twyford/Ruscombe area which is considered highly constrained. The information provided has been taken into account when assessing the suitability of the promoted development opportunity.
<i>NHS England</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on community wellbeing. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders

		the nature of the social infrastructure and community facilities required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	27 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on community and social infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation the nature of community and social infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Office for Nuclear Regulation</i>	January 2018	Duty to cooperate meeting where clarification provided on the uses which may be suitable within the DEPZ) around AWE Burghfield. The outcome was a better understanding of the implications for masterplanning and site selection within proximity to AWE Burghfield.
	November 2018 – February 2019	Reg 18 engagement leading to comments received on all promoted sites within or near to the AWE Burghfield’s detailed emergency planning zone and zones of extendibility. These comments will feed into the site assessment process.
	January - July 2020	Several meetings to investigate the consequences of the review of the DEPZ, which saw this extended to encompass the area proposed for the Grazeley garden town.
	June 2021	Engagement seeking views on the appropriateness of commercial development promotions within the Outer Consultation Zone. Views expressed taken into account by the council when assessing the developability of sites.
	June 2021	Engagement seeking views on the appropriateness of Gypsy and Traveller development promotions within the DEPZ. . Views expressed taken into account by the council when assessing the developability of sites.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	April 2022	Engagement seeking views on the appropriateness of commercial development promotions within the DEPZ. . Views expressed taken into account by the council when assessing the developability of sites.

	April 2022	Engagement seeing views on the appropriateness of school development within the DEPZ. . Views expressed taken into account by the council when assessing the developability of sites.
	September–December 2023	Informal engagement on regarding draft policy relating to development in the vicinity of AWE Burghfield. Outcome was agreed text. Engagement also involved AWE and West Berkshire District Council.
<i>AWE</i>	17 January 2019	Duty to cooperate meeting with AWE to discuss their consultation responses to the Reg 18 consultation, and to West Berkshire’s Local Plan consultation. It was agreed to continue to engage as part of the site assessment work that will inform Local Plans.
	June 2021	Engagement seeking views on the appropriateness of commercial development promotions within the Outer Consultation Zone. Views expressed taken into account by the council when assessing the developability of sites.
	June 2021	Engagement seeking views on the appropriateness of Gypsy and Traveller development promotions within the DEPZ. . Views expressed taken into account by the council when assessing the developability of sites.
	April 2022	Engagement seeking views on the appropriateness of commercial development promotions within the DEPZ. . Views expressed taken into account by the council when assessing the developability of sites.
	April 2022	Engagement seeing views on the appropriateness of school development within the DEPZ. . Views expressed taken into account by the council when assessing the developability of sites.
	September–December 2023	Informal engagement on regarding draft policy relating to development in the vicinity of AWE Burghfield. Outcome was agreed text. Engagement also involved AWE and West Berkshire District Council.
<i>Oxford City Council</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to re-scope relevant bodies and strategic matters to ensure cooperation remained effective.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight

		other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. No response received following multiple chases into early 2024. Taken to mean no cross boundary issues exist.
<i>Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Royal Society for the Protection of Birds</i>	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	23 November 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting providing full update of progress on the LPU, likely emerging spatial strategy, and overview of all ecology related emerging policies. Actions included the council sharing latest masterplanning documents for emerging Loddon Valley Garden Village and sharing of latest Valued Landscape topic paper.
<i>Runnymede Borough Council</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response received on 26 October raising no issues requiring further engagement.
<i>Rushmoor Borough Council</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.

	20 August 2018	Duty to cooperate meeting to share progress with Employment Land Review evidence to date and explain the approach to re-evaluating the EDNA. Led by the consultants and client councils (comprising West Berkshire District Council, Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council).
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response received 6 November raising no issues requiring further engagement.
<i>Scotia Gas Networks (SGN)</i>	14 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on utilities. The purpose of this workshop was to explore the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the utilities infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Scottish & Southern Electricity Network (SSEN)</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	14 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on utilities. The purpose of this workshop was to explore the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the utilities infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	April - May 2024	Multiple meetings to discuss and sign up to SSEN's Local Energy Net Zero Accelerator (LENZA) tool, a GIS based hub for sharing information relating to energy network upgrades and demand, including demand arising from development and proposed renewable energy schemes.

<i>Slough Borough Council</i>	20 August 2018	Duty to cooperate meeting to share progress with Employment Land Review evidence to date and explain the approach to re-evaluating the EDNA. Led by the consultants and client councils (comprising West Berkshire District Council, Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council).
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response received 6 March 2024 following chases, raising no issues requiring further engagement.
<i>South East Water</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	14 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on utilities. The purpose of this workshop was to explore the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the utilities infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	24 March 2022	Inception meeting for the Phase 2 Water Cycle Study with consultants JBA, Environment Agency, South East Water, Thames Water and WBC Planning Policy officers. Agreement to work collaboratively and share data to inform the evidence.
	March – April 2023	First draft of Level 1 SFRA shared as part of the collaborative process. No comments received despite chases for feedback.
	June – August 2023	First draft of Level 2 SFRA shared as part of the collaborative process. No comments received despite chases for feedback.
	4 July 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss Water Cycle Study RAG ratings of sites and engaging through the LPU to the next consultation stage.

<i>South Western Railway</i>	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Spelthorne Borough Council</i>	October – November 2021	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to re-scope relevant bodies and strategic matters to ensure cooperation remained effective.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. No response received following multiple chases into early 2024. Taken to mean no cross boundary issues exist.
<i>Sport England</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on community wellbeing. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the social infrastructure and community facilities required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	April 2022 – August 2023	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement on the production of Playing Pitch Strategy evidence. Sport England were included in the steering group of key stakeholders. The steering group helped to shape the strategy by providing relevant supply and demand data and supporting the consultation process. They have also reviewed all the work of the project team throughout the development of this report, allowing their expertise to shape the final outputs and ensure it is consistent with Sport England guidance.
<i>Surrey Heath Borough Council</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.

	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response received on 7 November raising no DtC concerns.
<i>Surrey County Council</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response and follow up response received on 6 and 14 November raising no DtC concerns.
<i>Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	16 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on community wellbeing. The purpose of this workshop was to explore in broad terms the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the social infrastructure and community facilities required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	26 April 2021	Technical stakeholder workshop on transport infrastructure in relation to Hall Farm / Loddon Valley and South Wokingham SDL extension. Knowledge and ideas gathered about the sites in relation to the nature of transport infrastructure and other measures required to achieve sustainable development in and around the sites.

	28 September 2021	Comments provided by WBC officers on the Net Zero Berkshire report and recommendations prepared by the LEP. This led to the outcome of Dialogue being opened and agreed areas where the LEP and WBC (and other Berkshire authorities) can work together to share best practice, advance joint evidence, collaborate on other matters so that climate change is robustly and consistently addressed across Berkshire.
	October 2021	Further targeted duty to cooperate engagement regarding emerging opportunity at the Hall Farm / Loddon Valley potential strategic development. Resulted in a letter of support from the LEP for the delivery of a mixed use employment and residential development.
	October – November 2021	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to re-scope relevant bodies and strategic matters to ensure cooperation remained effective.
	4 November 2021	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss LPU progress, including emerging spatial strategy in the upcoming RGS consultation. Discussion of the ongoing DtC rescoping exercise and a call to respond to that, as well as collaborative sharing of emerging LPU and LEP workstreams.
<i>Thames Water</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement – to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	19 January 2018	Duty to cooperate meeting to update on LPU and connection changes for developers to TW network.
	14 February 2018	LPU masterplanning technical workshop with key stakeholders, focussing on utilities. The purpose of this workshop was to explore the potential opportunities arising from strategic scale development, and to understand from key stakeholders the nature of the utilities infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development at each possible strategic development location.
	25 February 2019	Duty to cooperate meeting to share information on local plan progress, future evidence requirements, and network capacity issues.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
	24 March 2022	Inception meeting for the Phase 2 Water Cycle Study with consultants JBA, Environment Agency, South East Water, Thames Water and WBC Planning Policy officers. Agreement to work collaboratively and share data to inform the evidence.
	5 October 2022	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss current water infrastructure position in the borough, potential upcoming issues, working together, and the Water Cycle Study.

	March – April 2023	First draft of Level 1 SFRA shared as part of the collaborative process. A ‘no comment’ response received on 5 April 2023.
	13 June 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting to discuss Water Cycle Study RAG ratings of sites and engaging through the LPU to the next consultation stage.
	June – August 2023	First draft of Level 2 SFRA shared as part of the collaborative process. Comments and feedback received on 21 July 2024, providing information about modelling carried out for Thames Water’s Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) the Catchment Strategic Plan (CSP). High level information about flooding in particular catchments provided. Appropriate references to the CSP added into final Level 2 SFRA.
<i>Transport for the South East</i>	12 February 2019	Workshop involving councils and LEAs from across the south east. Resulted in the agreement to provide data to inform Economic Connectivity Review and progress towards a transport strategy for the region.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.
<i>Waverley Borough Council</i>	October – November 2021	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to re-scope relevant bodies and strategic matters to ensure cooperation remained effective.
	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response received following further chasing on 21 February.
<i>Woking Borough Council</i>	April – May 2016	Targeted duty to cooperate engagement to scope out relevant bodies and strategic matters to form the basis of effective and ongoing engagement.
	October – November 2021	Targeted engagement to re-scope matters relevant to duty to cooperate bodies and other organisations to ensure cooperation remained relevant and effective. Outcome was agreement over the matters for engagement.

	October 2023	Written engagement correspondence setting out in detail the latest position regarding all relevant cross boundary matters, sharing latest transport assessment evidence and inviting input, and providing links to other recent evidence base documents. Formal request for assistance with meeting expected unmet employment need and a request for comment on the matters raised and invitation to highlight other matters of relevance. Offer made through this correspondence to meet and discuss further matters in detail. Response received on 31 October. No response received following multiple chases into early 2024. Taken to mean no cross boundary issues exist.
<i>Woodland Trust</i>	23 November 2023	Duty to cooperate meeting providing full update of progress on the LPU, likely emerging spatial strategy, and overview of all ecology related emerging policies. Actions included the council sharing latest masterplanning documents for emerging Loddon Valley Garden Village and sharing of latest Valued Landscape topic paper. The Woodland Trust highlighted best practice examples of BNG evidence and commended the intended approach to link this to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Appendix D – Western Berkshire Statement of Common Ground

WEST OF BERKSHIRE AREA STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

FOR LOCAL PLAN-MAKING

August 2021



Contents

Contents.....	2
1. PARTIES TO THIS STATEMENT	3
2. SIGNATORIES TO THIS STATEMENT.....	4
3. STRATEGIC GEOGRAPHY.....	5
4. STRATEGIC MATTERS.....	8
A. HOUSING NEED AND SUPPLY	8
B. EMPLOYMENT NEED AND SUPPLY	10
C. GYPSY, TRAVELLER AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE ACCOMMODATION NEED AND SUPPLY	12
D. RETAIL, LEISURE AND TOWN CENTRES	13
E. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE	15
F. EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE PROVISION	16
G. UTILITIES PROVISION.....	17
H. FLOOD RISK	18
I. BIODIVERSITY	19
J. LANDSCAPE (INCLUDING GREEN BELT AND AONB).....	21
K. OPEN SPACE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE.....	22
L. HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT	23
M. CLIMATE CHANGE	23
N. ATOMIC WEAPONS ESTABLISHMENT	23
O. MINERALS AND WASTE	24
5. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS	25
6. TIMETABLE FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER CO-OPERATION.....	26
7. FURTHER INFORMATION	28
Information on development plans in each authority.....	28
Cross-boundary evidence documents	28
Other evidence.....	29

1. PARTIES TO THIS STATEMENT

1.1 The following are parties to this Statement of Common Ground (SOCG):

- Bracknell Forest Council (BFC)
- Reading Borough Council (RBC)
- West Berkshire District Council (WBDC)
- Wokingham Borough Council (WBC)

2. SIGNATORIES TO THIS STATEMENT

2.1 The following are the signatories for each organisation:

BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL

Name: Councillor Chris Turrell

Position: Executive Member for Planning and Transport

Signature: 

Date: 24.06.21

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Name: Councillor Tony Page

Position: Deputy Leader and Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment,
Planning and Transport

Signature: 

Date: 22/06/2021

WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name: Councillor Richard Somner

Position: Executive Member for Planning, Transport and Countryside

Signature: 

Date: 23rd June 2021

WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Name: Steve Moore

Position: Director of Place and Growth

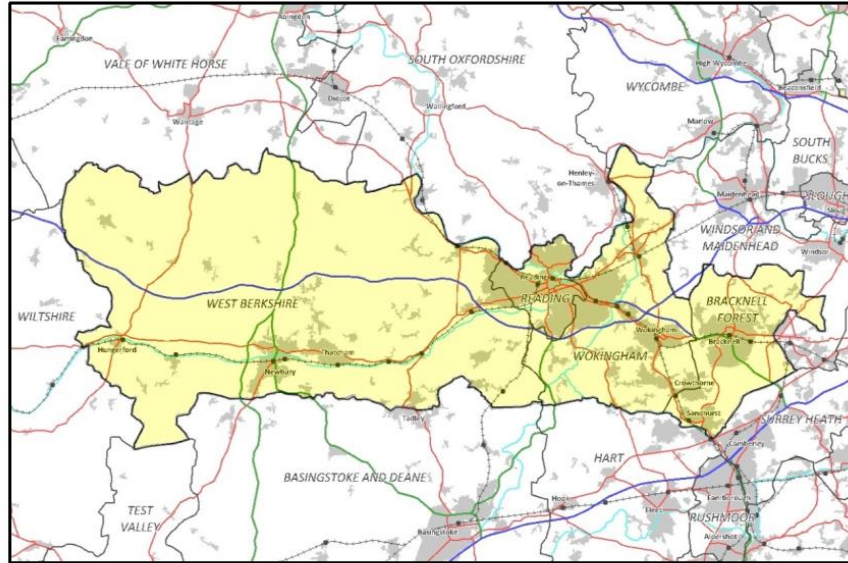
Signature: 

Date: 24/08/2021

3. STRATEGIC GEOGRAPHY

- 3.1 This SOCG (unless otherwise stated) covers the West of Berkshire area, which consists of the entire local authority areas of Bracknell Forest, Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham. Figure 1 below shows the geographic area covered.

Figure 1: Area covered by this Statement



- 3.2 The four authorities and the places within them have close relationships with one another, and are well-linked by road corridors such as the M4, A329(M) and A33, as well as railway lines including the Great Western Mainline, London-Penzance line and the Reading-Waterloo line, and navigable waterways in the River Thames and the Kennet and Avon canal.
- 3.3 A Western Berkshire HMA was defined by the Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment, published in February 2016. This was tasked with identifying the Housing Market Area or Areas (HMA) in which the six Berkshire authorities (which also included Windsor and Maidenhead and Slough) and South Bucks were located. It determined that there were two HMAs within the area – a Western Berkshire HMA and an Eastern Berkshire and South Bucks HMA. The Western Berkshire HMA consisted of the four local authorities shown in figure 1. The Eastern Berkshire HMA consisted of the three local authorities Slough, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) and South Bucks.
- 3.4 The following factors were of particular significance in defining the area:

- Difference in house prices and change in house prices, which highlighted that the Eastern Berkshire area had a much stronger relationship with London than the Western Berkshire area;
- Migration data, which showed 75-78% self-containment of migration flows (excluding long distance moves) within the Western Berkshire area;
- Commuting data also show reasonable levels of self-containment of 69-70% within the Western Berkshire area.

The area was defined on a best-fit basis to correspond to local authority boundaries, as recommended by guidance, and reflecting the fact that not all key data were available at below local authority level.

- 3.5 Other HMA groupings around Western Berkshire at the time were also well-defined, including; Oxfordshire; Wiltshire; Basingstoke and Deane; and Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath. This helped to confirm the boundaries of the identified HMA as appropriate.
- 3.6 The evidence around the defined HMA has been discussed at Local Plan examinations for RBWM (beginning in 2018 and ongoing) and Reading (in 2018-19). In the case of Reading, the Inspector was “satisfied that the conclusions of the SHMA is robust in relation to its definition of the HMA for Western Berkshire”¹. The RBWM Inspector is yet to report.
- 3.7 Evidence has shown that the appropriate functional grouping of authorities differs somewhat when economic matters are considered. The Berkshire Functional Economic Market Area Study (February 2016) defined Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs) covering the Berkshire authorities. It found that West Berkshire was a FEMA in its own right, whilst Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell Forest fell within a Central Berkshire FEMA that also included Windsor and Maidenhead. Windsor and Maidenhead falls within two FEMAs, as it is also part of an Eastern Berkshire FEMA with Slough and South Bucks.
- 3.8 It is considered that the West of Berkshire area (equating to the Western Berkshire HMA as defined in the SHMA) provides the most appropriate geography on which to base the SOCG, as it is a functional geography for housing and largely encompasses economic relationships. Other geographies can be brought into the SOCG as the situation demand, for example the consideration of impacts on international nature conservation designations. There is already a great deal of work that has been done on a West of Berkshire basis, including the West of Berkshire Spatial Planning Framework (December 2016) and assessment of retail and leisure needs. All six Berkshire

¹ Reading Borough Local Plan Inspector’s Report, paragraph 10

authorities have worked jointly through the Berkshire Members Strategic Planning Group (as well as at officer level through various groupings), and that group determined that the authorities should work within the Western and Eastern HMAs for the purposes of SOCGs. The West of Berkshire area has additional working relationships through the West of Berkshire Strategic Planning Group.

4. STRATEGIC MATTERS

4.1 The parties have identified the following as strategic matters covered by this SOCG:

- A. Housing need and supply
- B. Employment need and supply
- C. Gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople accommodation need and supply
- D. Retail, leisure and town centres
- E. Strategic transport infrastructure
- F. Education and healthcare provision
- G. Utilities provision
- H. Flood risk
- I. Biodiversity
- J. Landscape (including Green Belt and AONB)
- K. Open space and green infrastructure
- L. Historic environment
- M. Climate change
- N. Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston and Burghfield
- O. Minerals and waste

A. HOUSING NEED AND SUPPLY

4.2 The situation in terms of housing needs and plan targets within the West of Berkshire area is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of annual housing needs and plan targets

Authority	Housing need (per annum)	Source	Adopted or emerging plan target (post NPPF)	Unmet need per annum
Bracknell Forest	572	Standard methodology	614	0
Reading	699	Berkshire SHMA (2016)	689	10

Authority	Housing need (per annum)	Source	Adopted or emerging plan target (post NPPF)	Unmet need per annum
West Berkshire	509	Standard methodology	520-575	0
Wokingham	768	Standard methodology	772	0 ²

NB: Standard methodology calculations are for the period 2021-31 and based on the 2014-based household projections and affordability ratios published in April 2021

- 4.3 The housing need figures calculated under the standard methodology change at least once per year when new household projections or affordability ratios are published at a national level. Therefore, the figures in table 1 are liable to change and are not necessarily fixed for plan-making purposes, until such time as the respective plan is adopted (and only then for the five year period before a review is required). Reading's need as set out in the Local Plan derives from the 2016 SHMA, as Reading's Local Plan was submitted before the cut-off for using the standard methodology.
- 4.4 In terms of the spatial distribution of housing, the starting point is that each authority will seek to meet its own needs in the first instance. However, there may be scope for major development locations to be established that help to meet the housing needs of more than one authority or for the most sustainable pattern of development to result in the redistributed housing need. Cross-boundary working between the four authorities will continue to be necessary to explore these options.
- 4.5 The Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019), plans for at least 689 homes per annum, which falls below the need of 699 identified by the SHMA. This means a shortfall of 230 dwellings in total, or 10 per annum over the plan period, although the shortfall is expected to arise towards the end of the plan period. A Memorandum of Understanding was originally signed by the four West of Berkshire authorities in October 2017 that recognised the level of unmet need, and agreed that the West of Berkshire area should meet its housing needs in full. This has now been replaced by a revised Memorandum of Understanding signed in August 2021. This continues to recognise Reading's unmet need set out in the Local Plan and the principle that the need should be met within the West of Berkshire area. However, it is important to note that this agreement relates only to Reading's need as calculated by the SHMA, not by any alternative calculations of need, which will need to be subject to separate discussions.

² Housing provision figures in the Draft Local Plan are a minimum, and the Plan identifies sufficient sources of supply to meet the housing need. However, please see comments in paragraph 4.6.

- 4.6 Due to the extension of the emergency planning arrangements around AWE Burghfield in May 2020, the strategy set out within the Wokingham Draft Local Plan (February 2020) is no longer considered achievable. WBC has started the process of reviewing alternative strategies. At the time of agreeing this statement, it is not possible to confirm whether sufficient developable housing land can be identified to accommodate all housing needs or whether that need, if it is to be met, can be achieved with a consistent trajectory.
- 4.7 The four authorities have also worked together on how to assess capacity for housing (as well as economic development uses). WBDC, RBC and WBC, together with RBWM and Slough Borough Council (SBC), jointly developed a methodology for Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments, which was finalised in November 2016. This follows Planning Practice Guidance, but provides more guidance from a local perspective. This should form the basis for carrying out such assessments within those authorities. BFC has its own methodology which it developed in advance of the joint methodology, but the methodologies are broadly compatible, and BFC was involved in the development of the joint methodology.
- 4.8 WBC, BFC and WBDC have also commissioned needs assessments for affordable housing and other housing needs. The Wokingham Borough Local Housing Needs Assessment was produced in January 2020, whilst the Bracknell Forest Housing Needs Assessment reported in July 2020 (and was amended in March 2021 to correct a small error). The West Berkshire Updated Housing Needs Evidence was produced in May 2020.
- 4.9 SBC, RBWM and Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils³ have been co-operating on a Wider Area Growth Study that examines how growth, including unmet need, can be accommodated. Part 1, defining the area of search, reported in June 2019. Part 2, examining supply, capacity and constraints, has not yet reported. The four Western Berkshire authorities have been involved as stakeholders, and will work together to understand any implications for the area.

B. EMPLOYMENT NEED AND SUPPLY

- 4.10 The six Berkshire authorities co-operated on a Functional Economic Market Area study which reported in 2016, that defined the functional areas for consideration of economic development needs. These differed from the Housing Market Areas. It defined three Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs), as follows:

³ On 1 April 2020, Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils ceased to exist and were replaced by Buckinghamshire Council

- A Western Berkshire FEMA (consisting of West Berkshire only);
- A Central Berkshire FEMA (consisting of Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest and Windsor and Maidenhead); and
- An Eastern Berkshire FEMA (consisting of Slough, South Bucks, and, again, Windsor and Maidenhead).

As Windsor and Maidenhead's economy looked two ways, the study essentially considered that the authority formed an overlap between two FEMAs and should be defined within both.

4.11 The area covered by this Statement therefore incorporates all or part of two FEMAs, one of which also includes the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM). RBWM is not a signatory to this statement, but relevant information is included below to allow for a picture of the whole HELAA.

4.12 The situation in terms of employment needs and plan targets within the West and Central Berkshire FEMAs is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of economic development needs and plan targets

Authority	Economic development floorspace need to 2036 (sq m net)	Source	Plan target (sq m net)	Unmet need (sq m net)
West Berkshire	62,000 (office) 65,000 (industrial, storage & distribution)	West Berkshire Employment Land Review	62,000 (office) 65,000 (industrial, storage & distribution) (DRAFT)	None
WEST BERKS FEMA TOTAL	62,000 (office) 65,000 (industrial, storage & distribution)	West Berkshire Employment Land Review	62,000 (office) 65,000 (industrial, storage & distribution)	None
Bracknell Forest	18,000 (office) 46,000 (industrial & warehouse) (or 12 ha)	Bracknell Forest Employment Land Needs Study	68,000 (BIDS)	None
Reading	53,000 (office) 148,000 (industrial & warehouse) To 2036	Central Berks EDNA	53,000-112,000 (office) 148,000 (industrial & warehouse)	Up to 59,000 sq m <u>surplus</u> (office)
Windsor and Maidenhead	81,223 (office) 24,543 (manufacturing B2) 24,921 (warehousing B8) To 2033	Sensitivity analysis of Central & Eastern Berks EDNAs	81,300 (B1) 24,500 (B2) 24,900 (B8)	None

Authority	Economic development floorspace need to 2036 (sq m net)	Source	Plan target (sq m net)	Unmet need (sq m net)
Wokingham	No additional need (office) 19,245 (industrial & warehouse) (or 5 ha)	Wokingham Employment Land Needs Study	Not specified	N/A
CENTRAL BERKS FEMA TOTAL	152,223 (office) 262,709 (industrial & warehouse)	Various	Not specified	None

4.13 Originally, all six Berkshire authorities co-operated jointly on three Economic Development Needs Assessments that considered the need for additional floorspace for economic development uses, and expressed this as a range made up of three scenarios. However, several authorities were concerned about the realism of the identified development needs, based on each authority's knowledge of local circumstances. Some authorities have subsequently carried out additional work on the EDNA results which comes to different conclusions. RBWM carried out a local sensitivity test in producing their local plan, whilst BFC, WBC and WBDC commissioned updated assessments of employment land needs in their areas. The Wokingham Employment Land Needs Study reported in January 2020, with the Bracknell Forest Employment Land Needs Study produced in April 2020. The Employment Land Review for West Berkshire reported in August 2020. The case for each authority will need to be considered individually.

4.14 The situation at the current time is that no authority anticipates a specific unmet need for employment arising that will need to be met in another authority. As three of the four authorities are in the process of plan preparation, any changes to this situation will be reflected in a future review of this SOCG. There is a potential surplus of office space in Reading, due largely to existing permissions, which could contribute towards meeting any unmet needs in other authorities in the Central Berkshire FEMA, should that arise.

4.15 The six Berkshire local authorities are co-operating with the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVBLEP) on the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS). This looks at how economic growth to 2030 is to be achieved, and it was secured local approval in October 2019.

C. GYPSY, TRAVELLER AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE ACCOMMODATION NEED AND SUPPLY

4.16 The identified need for gypsy and traveller accommodation is set out in table 3 below, together with identified sites in each authority to meet this need.

Table 3: Summary of needs for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople and plan targets

Authority	Needs (net)	Plan target (net)	Unmet need (net)
Bracknell Forest (to 2037)⁴	3 permanent pitches (PPTS) 8 permanent pitches (cultural) 0 travelling showpeople plots Transit site (as part of a cross boundary solution)	8 permanent pitches (cultural) Transit site	Transit site (as part of a cross-boundary solution)
Reading (to 2036)⁵	10 permanent pitches (PPTS) 17 permanent pitches (cultural) 5 transit pitches 2 travelling showpeople plots	2 travelling showpeople plots	10 permanent pitches (PPTS) 17 permanent pitches (cultural) 5 transit pitches
West Berkshire (to 2036)	TBC, pending April 2021 update to GTAA	TBC	TBC
Wokingham (to 2036)⁶	26 permanent pitches (PPTS) 90 permanent pitches (cultural) 5 transit pitches	10-74 pitches	None

4.17 There is no agreed position across the authorities in terms of meeting needs for gypsies and travellers across authority boundaries. Each authority will seek to meet its own needs in respect of permanent pitches in the first instance. Where that is not possible, as has for instance been the case in the Reading Borough Local Plan, there will need to be further discussions around unmet needs, but there is no presumption that any specific authority(ies) will meet these needs.

4.18 It should also be recognised that gypsy and traveller issues are not necessarily tied to the HMA boundaries, and discussions around unmet needs may also take in authorities outside West of Berkshire.

D. RETAIL, LEISURE AND TOWN CENTRES

4.19 The four main town centres within the area are Reading, Newbury, Bracknell and Wokingham. Bracknell town centre has recently undergone a significant retail expansion, and regeneration is ongoing, whilst Wokingham town centre is also currently undergoing regeneration to strengthen the town's current

⁴ Need derived from [Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment, October 2017](#)

⁵ [Reading Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Houseboat Dweller Accommodation Assessment, September 2017](#)

⁶ [Wokingham Borough Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment, September 2017](#)

role and adapt to changes in the role of town centres. The town centre of Reading will continue to be a focus for meeting much of the town's development needs. In general, Reading serves a regional role, whilst the other town centres serve catchments based on the respective towns and their local areas. These four main town centres are supported by a network of smaller district and local centres which fulfil a more limited role.

- 4.20 The authorities recognise that planning for town centre development such as retail and leisure is a strategic matter, as catchments do not generally reflect local authority boundaries. Significant development in one centre, or an out of centre location, may detrimentally affect the vitality and viability of other centres, which may be in neighbouring authorities.
- 4.21 The four authorities have co-operated on the production of a Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Assessment, which reported in April 2017. This examined quantitative and qualitative need for new floorspace and facilities within the four authorities, and forms a basis for plan-making. BFC has subsequently commissioned and published a Retail Needs Technical Review (November 2020)⁷ which looks at the original assumptions made and the possible impact of the opening of the Lexicon. Whilst it touches on the possible impact of Covid-19, it is too early to draw any firm conclusions.
- 4.22 The levels of identified need and the amount each local plan plans for are set out in table 4. It should be noted that changes to planning use classes in 2020 to form the new commercial use Class E and the impacts of Covid-19 have made it more difficult to plan specifically for retail and some forms of leisure, and have therefore created considerable uncertainty in the context in which local plans are prepared.

Table 4: Summary of retail needs and plan targets

Authority	Retail floorspace need to 2036 (sq m net)	Plan target (sq m net)	Unmet need (sq m net)
Bracknell Forest	9,100 (comparison) to 2031 1,900 (convenience) to 2031	Not specified	0
Reading	54,400 (comparison) -19,500 (convenience)	34,900 (total)	0
West Berkshire	25,600 (comparison) -2,100 (convenience)	0	0

⁷ [Bracknell Forest Retail Needs Technical Review, November 2020](#)

Authority	Retail floorspace need to 2036 (sq m net)	Plan target (sq m net)	Unmet need (sq m net)
Wokingham	5,000 (comparison) 12,000 (convenience)	Not specified	TBC
WESTERN BERKS HMA TOTAL	94,100 (comparison) -7,700 (convenience)	Not specified	TBC

4.23 In terms of leisure, particular qualitative needs highlighted were only in Reading (additional cinema facilities and entertainment venue) and West Berkshire (small-scale 'boutique' cinema provision in Newbury and/or Hungerford).

4.24 The authorities do not intend for significant changes in the existing network and hierarchy of centres, but that the focus of new development will be on better serving centre's existing catchments. New facilities can also support new strategic development areas, and, depending on the location, may require cross-boundary co-ordination.

E. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

4.25 The four authorities co-operate with one another, and with SBC, RBWM and TVBLEP, through the Berkshire Strategic Transport Form at officer level and the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BTLB) which includes local members and business representatives. The BTLB is responsible for prioritising funding for local major transport schemes devolved from the Department for Transport in Berkshire.

4.26 The following have been identified as strategic transport priorities in the area:

- Rail station at Green Park (under construction);
- Infrastructure and/or regeneration of rail station at Twyford;
- New road/public transport/pedestrian/cycling infrastructure in key areas for development;
- Third Thames River Crossing to the East of Reading and associated infrastructure;
- An A33 corridor study to examine opportunities for improvement;
- Improvements to the M4, M3, A34, A4 and A329(M) corridors and the key routes to these;

- New/expanded park and ride facilities (including North Reading, West Reading and Coppid Beech);
- Expanded existing park and ride facilities (including at Winnersh Triangle, Theale and Mere oak);
- Fast-track public transport corridors, including future phases of the South Reading Mass Rapid Transit scheme;
- Alternatives to the private car/modal shift through the provision of joined-up public transport, walking and cycling facilities; and
- Specific transport infrastructure required to support strategic development sites with cross-boundary implications.

4.27 The list above is not exclusive, and where other strategic priorities emerge, the authorities will co-operate on assessing and understanding the issue and identifying transport solutions.

4.28 Delivery of transport schemes will require co-operation and potentially forward-funding from Government and statutory bodies such as Homes England, Highways England and Network Rail to enable the area to meet its growth requirements. Part of the benefit of this Statement is the co-ordinated approach which enables the four authorities to approach government statutory bodies with a single voice. All four authorities also co-operate through Transport for the South East, a partnership covering Berkshire, Kent, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Surrey, East Sussex and West Sussex consisting of local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and representatives of protected landscapes and national delivery agencies.

4.29 The nature of the area may mean that there are instances where development on one side of an authority boundary have infrastructure implications on the other side, and may mean that funding through Section 106, CIL or other funding routes needs to be considered on a cross-boundary basis. This applies to other forms of infrastructure as well as transport. The authorities will continue to explore this as and when it arises.

F. EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE PROVISION

4.30 The amount of growth expected to take place within the West of Berkshire area will have implications for infrastructure provision, including for education and healthcare. Education and healthcare facilities serve areas which typically cross local authority boundaries, and this is therefore an important strategic matter.

4.31 Each unitary authority is a local education authority, responsible for schools within its own area. The following represent approximate guidelines for the

new education provision required as a result of residential development, as set out in the West of Berkshire Spatial Planning Framework. However, it will vary from case to case, and will be influenced by the type of homes being planned for and capacity of existing schools.

Table 5: Approximate provision level for new education

Type of provision	Approximate provision level
Primary	1 x 1FE per 1,000 dwellings
Secondary	1 x 6FE per 5,000 dwellings
Special Education Needs	Approx 1% of child population
Other	Further and higher education; lifelong learning.

- 4.32 Wokingham, West Berkshire and Reading are covered by the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), whilst Bracknell Forest is covered by the Berkshire East CCG, along with Windsor and Maidenhead and Slough. New development may give rise to needs for additional primary healthcare provision, and this will need to be discussed with the relevant CCG.

G. UTILITIES PROVISION

- 4.33 The Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has undertaken a Utility Infrastructure Study Update Report 2018⁸ to cover the area of the six Berkshire unitary authorities. This gives a gap-analysis of current electricity, gas, potable and foul water infrastructure capacity, considers potential future demands of growth in Thames Valley Berkshire and how these may be met.
- 4.34 In overall terms, there was considered to be adequate electricity infrastructure to deliver the anticipated growth. At district level, sufficient capacity in Bracknell Forest, Reading and Wokingham was identified, but growth in West Berkshire would require further works involving reinforcing the local 132 kV networks, which would need to be programmed at an early stage to avoid restricting growth. With the growth in low-emission vehicles, the capacity for charging and demand management issues will need to continue to be considered.
- 4.35 For gas infrastructure, upgrades were identified as being likely to be required in networks affecting West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham. Capacity in Bracknell Forest was considered to be sufficient. However, this will need to be considered in the context of the need to reduce reliance on fossil fuels to tackle the climate emergency.

⁸ [Utility Infrastructure Study Update Report 2018](#)

- 4.36 In terms of potable water, there are no significant concerns across the area, although there will need to be further consideration in some cases as the scale and timing of growth becomes clearer. For foul water, the main capacity issues are likely to come in Wokingham, but there may be a need for upgrades across the area. The responsibility for securing necessary reinforcement as of April 2018 lies with Thames Water.
- 4.37 The authorities will continue to work together on strategic infrastructure provision, which will also include provision of communications infrastructure (including digital infrastructure, 4G/5G and superfast broadband), and on sharing relevant monitoring data.

H. FLOOD RISK

- 4.38 The floodplains of the principal watercourses in West of Berkshire (the Rivers Thames, Kennet and Loddon, as well as smaller tributaries) cross local authority boundaries. Development which affects the flood plain in one authority may have implications for flood risk in another authority.
- 4.39 Each authority is responsible for its own Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. The dates of the most recent assessments are set out below:

Table 6: Summary of Strategic Flood Risk Assessments

Authority	Assessment	Date
Bracknell Forest	Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment ⁹ plus two further Addendums Level 2 SFRA, plus an Addendum	July 2018 September 2019
Reading	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment ¹⁰	June 2017
West Berkshire	Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment ¹¹	June 2019
Wokingham	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment ¹²	February 2020

- 4.40 A summary of fluvial flood risk across the area is shown on Figure 2. It shows that each authority contains significant areas at risk of flooding. It should be noted that in all authorities, flood risk affects many of the areas which are less constrained by designations such as Green Belt and AONB.
- 4.41 Given that areas at risk of flooding overlap local authority boundaries, significant levels of development in one authority may have implications for

⁹ [Bracknell Forest Level 1 SFRA](#)

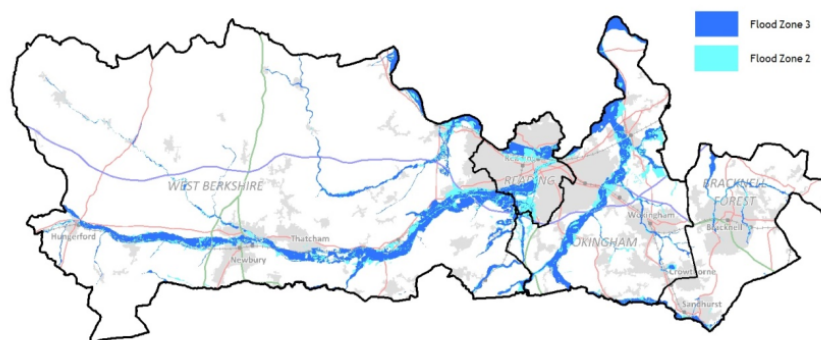
¹⁰ [Reading SFRA](#)

¹¹ [West Berkshire Level 1 SFRA](#)

¹² [Wokingham SFRA](#)

flood risk in another. It is therefore vital that consideration of flood risk across local authority boundaries is taken into account when considering strategic development proposals. BFBC have also undertaken a Cumulative Flood Risk Assessment¹³ in December 2020 which considers cross-boundary issues.

Figure 2: Flood Zones 2 and 3



4.42. It should also be noted that there are other sources of flooding not highlighted above, and these may also have strategic implications on which joint working will be required.

I. BIODIVERSITY

4.43 There are habitat designations of national and international importance within the area, which themselves cross local authority boundaries and/or may be subject to impacts from developments over a wide area.

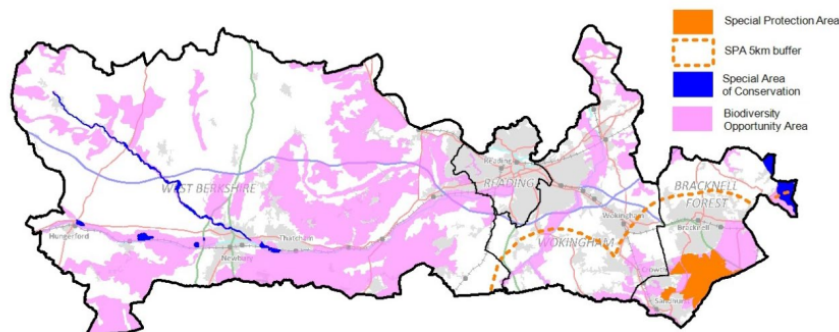
4.44 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area is designated for its role in supporting populations of ground nesting birds. The designation includes areas within Bracknell Forest and very close to Wokingham, as well as a number of other local authorities within Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey. A 5km buffer has been set by Natural England around the SPA in order to prevent detrimental impacts upon the habitat through increased recreational use, through provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) monies, and this also includes a small part of West Berkshire. BFC and WBC are part of the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership, along with other affected local authorities, and co-operate within that grouping. This SOCG does not therefore deal with the recreational impacts further, but there are also cumulative air quality impacts upon the species of interest and habitat sites

¹³ [Cumulative Flood Risk Assessment, December 2020](#)

from development across the area which are being taken into account through air quality assessments.

- 4.45 BFC has been proactive in securing SANG capacity for Wokingham development sites in the past and will continue to do so on a case-by-case basis. There are a number of third party controlled SANGs in the north of Bracknell Forest which can provide SANG capacity for Wokingham sites if needed.
- 4.46 There are also Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) in the area, which include the River Kennet (wholly in West Berkshire), the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain (mostly within West Berkshire) and Windsor Forest and Great Park (which is partly within Bracknell Forest), and the Thames Basin Heaths SPA also partly overlaps with designated SAC. There are also a significant number of other internationally-designated sites in close proximity to the West of Berkshire, impacts on which will need to be assessed. Should assessments identify the need for a cross boundary approach to mitigation measures or monitoring, local authorities will work cooperatively to address this.
- 4.47 Internationally designated sites, as well as those with national designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), will be protected in Local Plans, as will those features identified as being of particular local significance. Authorities will plan for protection and enhancement of biodiversity in a way that acknowledges the cross-boundary nature of habitats and wildlife links.
- 4.48 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas are those focus areas identified by the Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum and agreed by the South East England Biodiversity Forum (SEEBF), where biodiversity improvements are likely to have the most beneficial results at a strategic scale. These include land in all four authorities, and often cross local authority boundaries. The authorities will co-operate on identifying opportunities for improvement within Local Plans where these areas cross authority boundaries. Cooperative working across the four authorities, and also with others, will also apply in establishing Nature Recovery Networks, which are a part of the Environment Bill 2019-2021.

Figure 3: Strategic Biodiversity Designations



J. LANDSCAPE (INCLUDING GREEN BELT AND AONB)

- 4.49 The main strategic landscape constraints for this part of Berkshire are for Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The extent of AONB and Green Belt is shown on Figure 3.
- 4.50 Wokingham and Bracknell Forest Boroughs both contain land designated as part of the Metropolitan Green Belt. Approximately 380 ha (35%) of Bracknell Forest and 270 ha (15%) of Wokingham are within the designated Green Belt. BFC and WBC jointly produced a Green Belt Review in June 2016, which tests areas of the Green Belt in each authority against the five purposes set for it in national policy to determine the extent to which it is contributing to those purposes. This forms a consistent basis for further consideration of Green Belt boundaries in the two authorities.
- 4.51 A significant proportion (74%) of West Berkshire is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Together with the other constituent local authorities in Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, WBDC works in partnership, at a strategic level, as a core member of the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners to manage and implement the statutory North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan. In addition the authority also contains 25,000 ha of Ancient Woodland which is not just constrained to the NWDAONB.
- 4.52 No part of Reading is within Green Belt or AONB, but the Borough’s north west boundary does adjoin the Chilterns AONB, as do parts of West Berkshire and Wokingham’s northern extents.
- 4.53 The main river corridors (the Thames and Kennet) also form strategic landscape features crossing local authority boundaries. The Thames corridor, which passes through West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham, has a wide flood plain, and the river and immediate environs have a particular function for leisure. The Kennet corridor, which runs through West Berkshire and

L. HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

- 4.57 West of Berkshire has a rich and varied historic environment with a wealth of heritage assets across the whole area, having been continuously settled since prehistoric times. Almost all settlements in the area, as well as many of the surrounding rural areas, have identified heritage assets of both national and local interest. In general, the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment will be a matter for each individual authority to deal with within its boundaries, in conjunction with stakeholders such as Historic England. However, there are heritage assets and their settings which span or adjoin boundaries, which will require co-operation between authorities. This will be undertaken as and when required, and does not require further agreement within this statement.

M. CLIMATE CHANGE

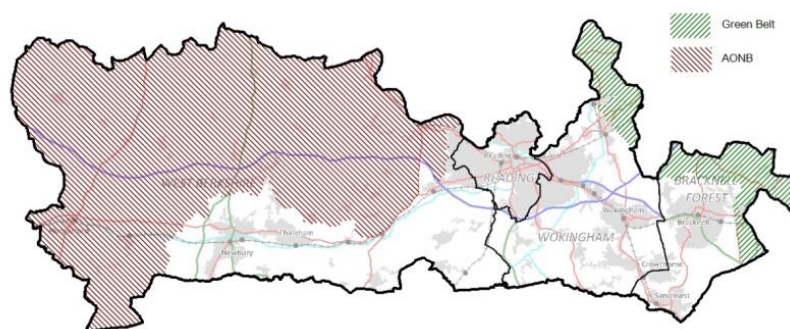
- 4.58 Climate change, by its nature, is a matter which crosses authority, as well as national, boundaries, and which is listed as one of the matters that may need to be subject to the duty to co-operate. Three of the authorities have declared a climate emergency – RBC in February 2019, WBC and WBDC in July 2019. The four authorities agree that they will set out policies to both reduce the contribution to and adapt to climate change, and will work together to share evidence wherever possible. Individual policy approaches will be a matter for each authority to consider. Should cross boundary issues come to light, such as those relating to infrastructure or individual projects, the authorities agree to engage. No further agreement is required within this statement.

N. ATOMIC WEAPONS ESTABLISHMENT

- 4.59 The Atomic Weapons Establishment is a key part of the UK's nuclear deterrent, and is responsible for the design, manufacture, maintenance and decommissioning of nuclear warheads. It operates two sites in the area, at Aldermaston and Burghfield. Both locations are situated within West Berkshire, with the AWE Burghfield site located close to the boundary with both Wokingham and Reading, whilst the AWE Aldermaston site adjoins the boundary with Basingstoke and Deane. For this reason, planning for any development that may affect those facilities is a strategic matter.
- 4.60 The Detailed Emergency Planning Zone for the Burghfield site changed in March 2020 in response to a review under the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 (REPPiR 2019). WBDC, as the authority responsible for the off-site emergency plan, led on defining the DEPZ and also leads on joint emergency planning guidance for the authorities. The DEPZ around the Burghfield site includes areas in West Berkshire, Wokingham and Reading, whilst the DEPZ around the Aldermaston site includes areas in West Berkshire and Basingstoke and Deane.

Reading, includes the Kennet and Avon Canal, and therefore has a navigation role, as well as important biodiversity significance. The authorities agree that the character and function of these river corridors will be conserved and enhanced.

Figure 4: Green Belt and AONB in West of Berkshire



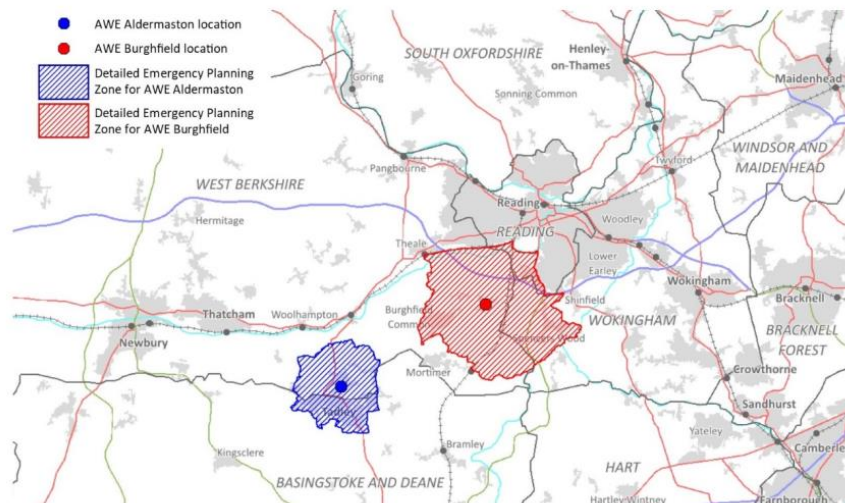
K. OPEN SPACE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

- 4.54 Green infrastructure is “a strategically planned and managed network of green spaces and other environmental features vital to the sustainability of any urban area”¹⁴. It includes formal parks and open spaces as well as much less formal amenity areas and natural features. The use of the term network makes it clear that there are likely to be areas where green infrastructure crosses administrative boundaries, and where there will be a need for the authorities to co-operate, particularly where they form part of an urban area, such as the wider Reading area. Examples include the Kennet meadows, spanning the boundary between West Berkshire and Reading, and the University of Reading campus in Reading and Wokingham.
- 4.55 The planning for, and protection of, more formal areas of open space is generally a matter for each local authority to consider through their own Local Plan process. There are instances, particularly where authority boundaries pass through urban areas, where an area of open space in one authority partially serves a community in another. This will be a matter for co-operation between authorities on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.56 The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is related to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, and therefore is addressed in the comments in paragraph 4.44.

¹⁴ Definition from the Eco Towns Worksheet

4.61 The affected authorities liaise on an ongoing basis with one another and with the Office for Nuclear Regulation as well as AWE, both in terms of land use planning and emergency planning, and this will continue.

Figure 5: Detailed Emergency Planning Zone for AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield



O. MINERALS AND WASTE

4.62 WBDC is producing its own Minerals and Waste Local Plan to be submitted by July 2021, whilst RBC, WBC, BFC and RBWM are producing a Joint Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which was submitted for examination on 25th February 2021. Statements of Common Ground relevant to the production of those plans have been produced separately.

5. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

- 5.1 The West of Berkshire Strategic Planning Group, which consists of the portfolio holders for strategic planning and senior officers including Chief Executives and planning leads from the four authorities, meets periodically to discuss strategic planning matters. This Group will take the lead on preparing and updating the SOCG, and proposals to update the SOCG will be brought to that group in the first instance.
- 5.2 The signatories to the SOCG will generally be the four lead members for strategic planning in each local authority. These are the same lead members who sit on the West of Berkshire Strategic Planning Group.

6. TIMETABLE FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER CO-OPERATION

- 6.1 The SOCG will be updated as and when required to feed into the Local Plan processes of the four authorities. The key milestones for Local Plan production in each authority are summarised below. Reading's Local Plan was adopted in November 2019, whilst the other three authorities are expecting to submit during 2021 or 2022.

Table 7: Local Plan Timetables (NB for current plans where several DPDs exist, only Core Strategy shown)

Authority	Current Plan Adopted	Review date	Reg 18 consultation	Reg 19 consultation	Submission	Adoption
Bracknell Forest	Core Strategy Feb 2008	TBC	Jun/July 2016 Feb/Mar 2018 Sept 2018 Oct-Dec 2019	Mar - May 2021	Early summer 2021	Spring 2022
Reading	Local Plan Nov 2019	Summer 2024	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
West Berkshire	Core Strategy Jul 2012	TBC	Nov 2018 Dec 2020	May 2021 July	Dec 2021	Dec 2022
Wokingham	Core Strategy Jan 2010	TBC	Aug 2016 Nov 2018 Feb 2020 Late summer/ autumn 2021	TBC	TBC	TBC

- 6.2 With the current Local Plan timescales in mind, it is expected that this statement will need to be reviewed regularly to update on plan progress and reflect any changes in the context. It may also need to be reviewed to reflect proposed national planning changes.
- 6.3 Further co-operation will be undertaken throughout these local plan production processes and beyond. Each authority is subject to the duty to co-operate with the other authorities within the area, outside it and with a number of other organisations. Three of the four authorities have published documents setting out how they will undertake the duty to co-operate for emerging local plans and identifying the strategic issues and key partners, and these have informed this SOCG. More information can be found in the following documents:

- [Bracknell Forest Duty to Co-operate Framework \(February 2016\)](#)
- [Reading Duty to Co-operate Scoping Strategy \(December 2015\)](#)
- [Wokingham Duty to Co-operate Statement \(July 2016\)](#)

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

7.1 Further information can be found in the locations set out below.

Information on development plans in each authority

- [Bracknell Forest Council](#)
- [Reading Borough Council](#)
- [West Berkshire District Council](#)
- [Wokingham Borough Council](#)

Cross-boundary evidence documents

- [West of Berkshire Spatial Planning Framework, December 2016](#)
- [Berkshire \(including South Bucks\) Strategic Housing Market Assessment, February 2016](#)
- [Western Berkshire OAN Sensitivity Report, March 2018](#)
- [Berkshire Functional Economic Market Area Study, February 2016](#)
- [West Berkshire Economic Development Needs Assessment, October 2016](#)
- [Central Berkshire Economic Development Needs Assessment, October 2016](#)
- Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Assessment, April 2017:
 - [Main report](#)
 - [Plans and appendices 1](#)
 - [Plans and appendices 2](#)
 - [Plans and appendices 3](#)
 - [Household survey results](#)
 - [Bracknell in-centre survey results](#)
- [Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough Joint Green Belt Review, June 2016](#)
- [Berkshire HELAA Methodology, November 2016](#)

- [Berkshire Utility Infrastructure Study Update Report, May 2018](#)
- October 2017 [Memorandum of Understanding regarding Reading's unmet need](#) (see Appendix 5)
- [add new MOU when available]

Other evidence

- [Bracknell Forest evidence base documents](#)
- [Reading evidence base documents](#)
- [West Berkshire evidence base documents](#)
- [Wokingham evidence base documents](#)

Appendix E – Environment Agency Memorandum of Understanding

Memorandum of Understanding between Environment Agency and Wokingham Borough Council 2024

Parties

Environment Agency

Wokingham Borough Council

Background

Wokingham Borough Council is preparing a new local plan to manage where and how development is delivered in the borough to 2040 – the Local Plan Update (LPU).

The LPU will include policies and proposals for specific sites to meet housing, employment, environmental and social needs of the area, supported by key infrastructure. Policies and proposals will include the allocation of specific sites for new homes and economic uses. The suitability of sites for any of these uses depends on a wide range of factors, including the consideration of the risk of flooding from all sources.

The Environment Agency is a non-departmental public body responsible for a number of areas including water quality and resources, conservation and ecology, and managing the risk of flooding from main rivers, reservoirs, estuaries and the sea. The Environment Agency is not responsible for surface water and ground water flood risks, these being the responsibilities of the Lead Local Flood Authority, which for the plan area of the LPU is Wokingham Borough Council.

The preparation of the LPU provides an opportunity to work collaboratively towards the achievement of environmental objectives.

The Environment Agency and Wokingham Borough Council have a history of coordinated working on strategic planning issues. This includes Wokingham Borough Council's commissioning of Strategic Flood Risk Assessment evidence and Water Cycle Studies, in which the Environment Agency have been fully engaged in their preparation.

Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is to demonstrate a collaborate working relationship between the Environment Agency and Wokingham Borough Council. Its scope is limited to matters relating to the risk of flooding and the water infrastructure only. Additional MoUs relating to other areas will be produced as necessary.

Statements of understanding

The parties agree the following statements of understanding:

- a) An assessment of flood risk from all sources has been undertaken through the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 1 and Level 2 2023 (produced by JBA Consulting). The SFRA provides a suitable and robust evidence base from which policy and strategy decisions for the LPU can be made.

- b) That the Environment Agency Loddon Model (as updated by JBA Consulting with latest climate change uplifts and updated hydrology to inform the SFRA in 2023) is sufficiently robust to inform policy and strategy decisions.
- c) That the Arborfield 2023 model (produced by JBA Consulting to inform the SFRA in the absence of mapped flood zones for the watercourse) is sufficiently robust to inform policy and strategic decisions.
- d) That whilst the Environment Agency Loddon Model (as updated in 2023) and the Arborfield 2023 model are sufficiently robust to inform policy and strategy decisions, an alternative model could be used to inform future planning applications following validation by the Environment Agency.
- e) That, given the nature of Wokingham Borough and reasonable alternatives to manage development, including the availability, suitability and achievability of land, constraints such as the Green Belt and the AWE Burghfield Emergency Planning Zone and the nature of flood risk, it is not possible to allocate land to meet development needs in areas wholly outside of flood zones. However, all allocations can be demonstrated as safe for their lifetime through the application of the sequential and exception tests.
- f) That the draft LPU policies relating to flooding and drainage are consistent with national policy and guidance.
- g) That there are no flood risk barriers that would prevent the delivery of the proposed new community on land between Shinfield, Sindlesham and Arborfield Cross (known as Hall Farm / Loddon Valley), including the delivery of road infrastructure through the flood plain linking the site internally and with Lower Earley Way to the north.
- h) That continued collaborative working is necessary to ensure that any necessary mitigations are secured, funded and delivered at the appropriate time, including maximising opportunities for the design of infrastructure to achieve flood betterment downstream.
- i) That an assessment of the impacts of growth is required and that the Wokingham Borough Water Cycle Study (Phase 1) (2019), and Water Cycle Study (Phase 2) (2023) provide a suitable basis for informing the new local plan and further engagement. [NB: The EA have not formally agreed point i). The Water Cycle Study Phase 2 has been shared with the EA and formal confirmation is expected in the future]
- j) That this Memorandum of Understanding demonstrates the existing and future commitment to collaborative working of the parties as evidence to the Local Plan Inspector.

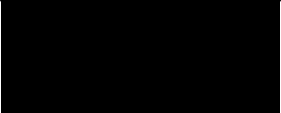
Duration and variation

This Memorandum of Understanding has immediate effect. It will be kept under review and will be updated/replaced at key milestones in the local plan process to reflect the most up-to-date evidence and understanding/agreement.

Any proposals to vary or amend this Memorandum of Understanding must be approved in writing by both parties.

Signatories

Signed on behalf of the Environment Agency	
By:	Judith Montford
Title:	Planning Specialist - Thames Sustainable Places
Date:	23 February 2024

Signed on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council	
By:	 Trevor Saunders
Title:	Assistant Director Planning (Interim)
Date:	23 February 2024

Appendix F – South East Water Memorandum of Understanding

Memorandum of Understanding between South East Water and Wokingham Borough Council 2023

Parties

South East Water

Wokingham Borough Council

Background

Wokingham Borough Council is preparing a new local plan to manage where and how development is delivered in the borough to 2040 – the Local Plan Update.

The new local plan will include policies and proposals for specific sites to meet housing, employment, environmental and social needs of the area, supported by key infrastructure. Policies and proposals will include the allocation of specific sites for new homes and economic uses. The suitability of sites for any of these uses depends on a wide range of factors, including the supply of potable water.

South East Water provides clean potable water in the east of the borough. For completeness, South East Water do not provide sewerage and wastewater treatment services to any part of the borough.

The preparation of the new local plan provides an opportunity to work collaboratively towards the achievement of environmental objectives.

South East Water and Wokingham Borough Council have a history of coordinated working on strategic planning issues. This includes Wokingham Borough Council's commissioning of Water Cycle Studies, in which South East Water have been fully engaged in their preparation.

Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is to demonstrate a collaborate working relationship between South East Water and Wokingham Borough Council.

Statements of understanding

The parties agree the following statements of understanding:

- a) The new local plan will need to plan to ensure water quality and support the delivery of adequate water infrastructure, as set out in the national Planning Practice Guidance: Water supply, wastewater and water quality.
- b) That an assessment of the impacts of growth is required and that the Wokingham Borough Water Cycle Study (Phase 1) (2019), and Water Cycle Study (Phase 2) (2023) provide a suitable basis for informing the new local plan and further engagement.
- c) That development proposals in the new local plan will be integrated into future Water Resource Management Plans (WRMP) in line with the statutory WRMP process and timetable.

- d) That infrastructure upgrades required to facilitate developments as proposed in the new local plan will be incorporated into South East Water’s delivery programme.
- e) That based on the delivery profile of potential development, any necessary upgrades can be delivered at the appropriate time, including those necessary to support the proposed South Wokingham Strategic Development Location Extension.
- f) That continued collaborative working is necessary to ensure that any necessary mitigations are secured, funded and delivered at the appropriate time.
- g) That Wokingham Borough is within an area of water stress, and that measures in the new local plan to ensure the efficient use of water, particularly potable water, are appropriate.
- h) That collaborative working will continue to ensure and improve the water quality of water courses across the borough.
- i) That this Memorandum of Understanding demonstrates the existing and future commitment to collaborative working of the parties as evidence to the Local Plan Inspector.


Duration and variation

This Memorandum of Understanding has immediate effect. It will be kept under review and will be updated/replaced at key milestones in the local plan process to reflect the most up-to-date evidence and understanding/agreement.

Any proposals to vary or amend this Memorandum of Understanding must be approved in writing by both parties.

Signatories

Signed on behalf of South East Water	
By:	Andrew Halliday
Title:	Water Resources Strategy Manager
Date:	2 nd November 2023

Signed on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council	
By:	 Trevor Saunders
Title:	Assistant Director Planning
Date:	16 February 2024

Appendix G – Thames Water Memorandum of Understanding

**Memorandum of Understanding between
Thames Water and Wokingham Borough Council
2023
Parties**

Thames Water

Wokingham Borough Council

Background

Wokingham Borough Council is preparing a new local plan to manage where and how development is delivered in the borough to 2040 – the Local Plan Update.

The new local plan will include policies and proposals for specific sites to meet housing, employment, environmental and social needs of the area, supported by key infrastructure. Policies and proposals will include the allocation of specific sites for new homes and economic uses. The suitability of sites for any of these uses depends on a wide range of factors, including the supply of potable water, and sewerage network and wastewater treatment capacity.

Thames Water provides clean potable water in western and northern parts of the borough, including the areas of Woodley and Earley, and sewerage and wastewater treatment services to the entire borough.

The preparation of the new local plan provides an opportunity to work collaboratively towards the achievement of environmental objectives.

Thames Water and Wokingham Borough Council have a history of coordinated working on strategic planning issues. This includes Wokingham Borough Council's commissioning of Water Cycle Studies, in which Thames Water have been fully engaged in their preparation.

Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is to demonstrate a collaborate working relationship between Thames Water and Wokingham Borough Council.

Statements of understanding

The parties agree the following statements of understanding:

- a) The new local plan will need to plan to ensure water quality and support the delivery of adequate water and wastewater infrastructure, as set out in the national Planning Practice Guidance: Water supply, wastewater and water quality.
- b) That an assessment of the impacts of growth is required and that the Wokingham Borough Water Cycle Study (Phase 1) (2019), and Water Cycle Study (Phase 2) (2023) provide a suitable basis for informing the new local plan and further engagement.
- c) That development proposals in the new local plan will be integrated into future Water Resource Management Plans.


- d) That there are no significant infrastructure upgrades required that would affect the achievability of development as proposed in the new local plan.
- e) That based on the delivery profile of potential development, any necessary upgrades can be delivered at the appropriate time, including those necessary to support the proposed new community on land between Shinfield, Sindlesham and Arborfield (known as Hall Farm / Loddon Valley).
- f) That continued collaborative working is necessary to ensure that any necessary mitigations are secured, funded and delivered at the appropriate time.
- g) That Wokingham Borough is within an area of water stress, and that measures in the new local plan to ensure the efficient use of water, particularly potable water, are appropriate.
- h) That collaborative working will continue to ensure and improve the water quality of water courses across the borough.
- i) That this Memorandum of Understanding demonstrates the existing and future commitment to collaborative working of the parties as evidence to the Local Plan Inspector.


Duration and variation

This Memorandum of Understanding has immediate effect. It will be kept under review and will be updated/replaced at key milestones in the local plan process to reflect the most up-to-date evidence and understanding/agreement.

Any proposals to vary or amend this Memorandum of Understanding must be approved in writing by both parties.

Signatories

Signed on behalf of Thames Water	
By:	
Title:	REGIONAL PLANNING LEAD
Date:	22/1/23

Signed on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council	
By:	 Trevor Saunders
Title:	Assistant Director Planning
Date:	16 February 2024