



Barkham Parish Council

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy,
Land Use and Transport Policy,
Policy and Partnerships,
Wokingham Borough Council,
PO Box 157, Shute End,
Wokingham,
Berkshire RG40 1WR

26th September 2008

Dear Sirs,

Re: Submission of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan Document to the Secretary of State- Local Development Framework 2006-2026

Barkham Parish Council has met and considered the Wokingham District Core Strategy up to 2026 and would wish to make the following representations, which are considered to be key issues:

Scale of the New Settlement at Arborfield Garrison SDL (CP19.1)

Policy CP 19 envisages the phased delivery of 3,500 dwellings at Arborfield Garrison SDL. This is 1000 more homes than those contemplated in the South East plan and the Secretary of State's proposed changes published on 17th July 2008. The Parish Council questions the sustainability of these extra homes, as it is unclear where the resources (including financing) to provide additional infrastructure required will come from or whether adequate forms of sustainable transport can be provided for such a large settlement. We consider this is contrary to paragraph 4.36 of the core strategy, which says "To help achieve sustainable development, proposals likely to generate significant demands for travel movements should be located in areas with best access to existing good services". Arborfield Garrison SDL is the least well located of the four SDL's from the perspective of access to local retail centres and employment areas outside the Garrison itself, yet its being allocated the highest number of homes.

We therefore respectfully ask that no more than 2500 homes be built at Arborfield Garrison and that CP19 sub-paragraph 1 be amended to reflect this change. This change, we believe will make the Core Strategy sound as it will ensure that the housing allocation for Arborfield Garrison SDL will conform with the allocation considered to be sound by the Independent panel on the South East plan and will ensure that Arborfield Garrison SDL is developed in a sustainable manner as per CP1 and obviate unnecessary additional carbon emissions.

We are surprised to note from a recent planning policy update briefing for Parish and Town councils that Arborfield Garrison was partly considered as an SDL, because it is regarded as a Brownfield location. This appears to be misleading, as in actual terms, only a small proportion of the proposed development zone is regarded, as Brownfield. In fact most of it is classified as Countryside.

Improvements to Barkham Road/Langley Common Road (CP19.8)

Policy CP 19.8 envisages measures to improve accessibility by non-car transport modes along the A327, B3030, B3349 and B3430 corridors, especially on the routes to Bracknell, Reading, Winnersh and Wokingham. The principal route north of the Arborfield Garrison SDL towards Wokingham is along Langley Common Road and Barkham Road. As much of this road is built-up on both sides of the roadway there seems little scope for road widening to create bus priority lanes or cycle tracks, thereby making accessibility “by non-car transport modes” extremely difficult.

We request that any increases in highway capacity on these routes should have regard to retaining the character and identity of Barkham and respect the amenity of occupiers who’s homes front onto Langley Common Road and Barkham Road. Therefore, we ask that any measures to improve accessibility by non-car transport modes along the above routes be done without having an adverse impact on the landscape or the amenity of frontages. This change we believe will make the Core Strategy effective, as it will ensure that bus lanes and cycle tracks are only constructed along routes or sections thereof, where there is appropriate space.

Improvements to Public Transport (CP10)

Policy CP 10 includes several high quality express bus services, but these are not along routes serving Arborfield. Only in general terms is there any mention of improvements to the quality and frequency of public transport services along part of the network, although it is highlighted in Paragraph 2.69 that people within Arborfield Garrison “travel further to reach facilities and services than those in other parts of the Borough”.

In outlining the proposed improvements to transport infrastructure for Arborfield Garrison SDL (as per Appendix 7), there is no analysis as to the range of employment locations where wage earners are likely to travel to work. Without this data for each phase of the plan period, it is difficult to determine what proportion of residents will require rail network access to London, as opposed to those involved in cross-country journeys (where public transport is not feasible). Given this lack of data, the Core Strategy lacks justification. Neither does the Core Strategy address the issue of increasing the capacity of the rail network to carry extra passengers.

In order to improve the transport situation, we believe it is vital that the spreadsheet in CP10 be amended to include high quality express bus services serving routes from Arborfield Garrison, as follows :

“12a- High quality express bus services, especially at peak hours, linking Arborfield Garrison SDL with Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell as well as the railway stations at Winnersh and Twyford”

This change will make the Core Strategy sound, as it will provide for sustainable forms of transport as per CP6, thereby mitigating the adverse effect on the transport network of building the new settlement at Arborfield Garrison SDL and help to reduce carbon emissions.

Development in ‘limited development locations’ (e.g. Barkham) –CP 9.3

In accordance with sub-paragraph 3) of Policy CP 9, Barkham among certain other locations is classified as a ‘limited development location’, under which development proposals “should generally not exceed 25 dwellings”.

This particular policy is not justified because it is inconsistent with CP18 (Housing Delivery), which provides that the aggregate number of dwellings to be built on sites to be identified in the nine limited development locations over the plan period is 100.

It is also inconsistent with the Council’s objective of minimising the development of greenfield sites outside Strategic Development Locations pursuant to CP1 (Sustainable Development).

We therefore would ask that sub-paragraph 3) of CP 9 be amended to read:

“The limited development locations of Arborfield Cross, Barkham Hill, Charvil, Finchamstead, Hurst, Risely, Sindlesham, Sonning and Swallowfield, where they should generally not be built on greenfield sites and not exceed [say] 10 dwellings”

This change we believe will make the Core Strategy sound as it will ensure that development in limited developments is more evenly spread between the nine limited development locations and on a more phased basis, as well as discouraging unsustainable development of greenfield sites.

Removal of Wokingham Station level-crossing (CP10)

It is noted that Policy CP10- Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network, provides for the re-building of Wokingham Rail Station, but omits to provide for the removal of the level-crossing adjacent to the Station, which traverses a very busy and dangerous crossroads.

We are of the view that the Core Strategy is not effective because sustainable transport by road along the east-west route through Wokingham (including to and from Arborfield Garrison SDL) cannot be delivered as per CP6, unless congestion generated by the level-crossing is eliminated by its removal as part of the station redevelopment.

Consequential, we consider it necessary that the spreadsheet in CP10 be amended to include **“4a- Removal of level-crossing adjacent to Wokingham station”**

This change we believe will make the Core Strategy sound, as it will remove a major obstacle to the deliverability of improved transport capacity on the western side of Wokingham (including routes to and from Arborfield Garrison SDL)

Infrastructure Provisions and ‘Park and Ride’ (CP10)

We consider it essential that adequate road infrastructure is put in place before any development commences at Arborfield Garrison SDL and ask that this be delivered in accordance with CP 10, along with the amendments we have proposed in sub-paragraph 12a, as shown above under the section- ‘Improvements to public transport’.

Further to the improvements to public transport, as per CP10, we believe it would considerably ease traffic congestion and reduce carbon, if a ‘Park & Ride’ was to be established in the vicinity of Arborfield Garrison SDL. In this way, residents wishing to travel to and from Reading or Wokingham will be encouraged not to drive into these towns.

Paragraph 3.21 refers generally to “the provision of appropriate educational, community, faith and retail facilities together with adequate accessible public transport services and transport infrastructure which will improve the sustainability of the Garrison”. Whilst CP 19 and Appendix 7.13, relating to Infrastructure delivery for Arborfield makes specific mention of two new primary schools and a secondary school, along with appropriate retail centres and leisure/recreation/youth/community facilities, including childrens’ centres, community gardens, playing fields and primary health care centres (i.e. a GP Surgery. **We need to be assured that delivery of these infrastructure provisions will be put in place at the outset of any development of the site and that such facilities are fully capable of supporting the proposed mix of residents within Arborfield.**

Alternative forms of Transport

Whilst we note that new roads and by-passes have been proposed under the Core Strategy, it does not appear that consideration has been given to other alternative transport modes in the form of a Light railway or tram system. It would seem that the cost of such a system (for which grants may be available) could be considerably less than the provision of a new road, with the added benefit it takes up less space and is environmentally better for the countryside. A transport system of this nature could run between Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell with a pick up point within the vicinity of Arborfield Garrison and should certainly help to ease the congestion on the roads. **We would be interested to know if this was considered in your vision of transport modelling exercises at the time of planning.**

Widening of Bridge on Barkham Road (CP 6)

There is often chronic traffic congestion at the lower part of Barkham Road, especially at peak hours, caused by the narrow bridge, which can only be accessed by one car at a time. **To allow traffic to flow smoothly at this juncture, we believe the bridge will need to be widened at the outset of any development at Arborfield Garrison SDL. Without doing so CP 6 (Managing Travel Demand) cannot be effectively delivered.**

We hope that you will find the foregoing comments helpful and will be able to give full consideration to all the above issues, in finalising the Core Strategy Development Plan.

Yours Sincerely

Pam Stubbs
Chairman to Barkham Parish Council

CC: Ms Susan Law, Chief Executive, Wokingham Borough Council,
Cllr Gary Cowan, Executive Member for Local & Regional Planning,
Mr Jim Dunning, Principal Development Planning Officer,
Cllr. David Lee, Leader of Wokingham Borough Council,