

SUMMARY OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Preparing the Neighbourhood Plan

The Plan Area comprises the whole of Arborfield and Newland Parish and Barkham Parish. The two Parish Councils worked together to produce a joint Neighbourhood Plan. At this time, the parishes faced great changes, with the Arborfield Green garden village being developed on the site of the former Arborfield Garrison and with the new Arborfield Cross Relief Road being constructed.

The plan was prepared by a Steering Group consisting of councillors and residents drawn from both parishes. It was the intention throughout the process of preparing the Plan to encourage participation by residents of the parishes, hence the strap line 'A plan for the community by the community' which has been widely used in publicity material. Participation has been achieved through a number of channels: focus groups, a dedicated web site, e-mail updates, social media postings, parish newsletters and three public events.

Work completed included a Residents' Survey in late 2016, a number of focus groups researching relevant topics including sustainability and greenways, analysis of housing needs and some public drop-in events including the "Shaping Our Future" event held in Autumn 2017. A further event was held in June 2018 to present a draft of the plan which launched the public consultation.

Arborfield and Barkham Parish Councils submitted their proposed Neighbourhood Plan to Wokingham Borough Council in May 2019. The plan sets out a vision and objectives for the future of the area and contains planning policies to guide the development and use of land in Arborfield and Barkham parishes.

In line with legislation, a six-week consultation on the proposed Plan was carried out between 8 July and 19 August 2019. The Borough Council appointed an independent examiner who received copies of all the documentation and representations received and undertook the examination of the plan in September and October 2019.

Approval of the Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan referendum was held on 6 February 2020. Residents voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Plan. The result was as follows:

YES votes	1,164 (94%)
NO votes	72 (6%)
Total votes cast	1,236 (24%)

The Steering Group is delighted that the Plan received such a substantial endorsement from the community and thanks them for their support.

Following a successful referendum, it carries real legal weight. Decision makers are obliged to consider proposals for development in the neighbourhood against the neighbourhood plan.

With the completion and approval of the Plan, its ownership reverts to the two parish councils.

The main Neighbourhood Plan document contains fourteen policies. In addition to the policies, there are a number of supporting papers, shown as Annexes, many of which have been prepared by the Focus Groups. These provide additional background information about the parishes and supporting material and evidence relating to the policies. The main document, along with the Annexes, maps and other material can be viewed on the web site www.arborfield.org.uk in the Neighbourhood Plan folder.

Policies

The Neighbourhood Plan policies fall into four main groups:

- Identity and Rural Setting (IRS policies)
- Thriving Communities (TC)
- Appropriate Development (AD)
- Getting Around (GA)

All the policies are shown below along with some additional explanatory notes.

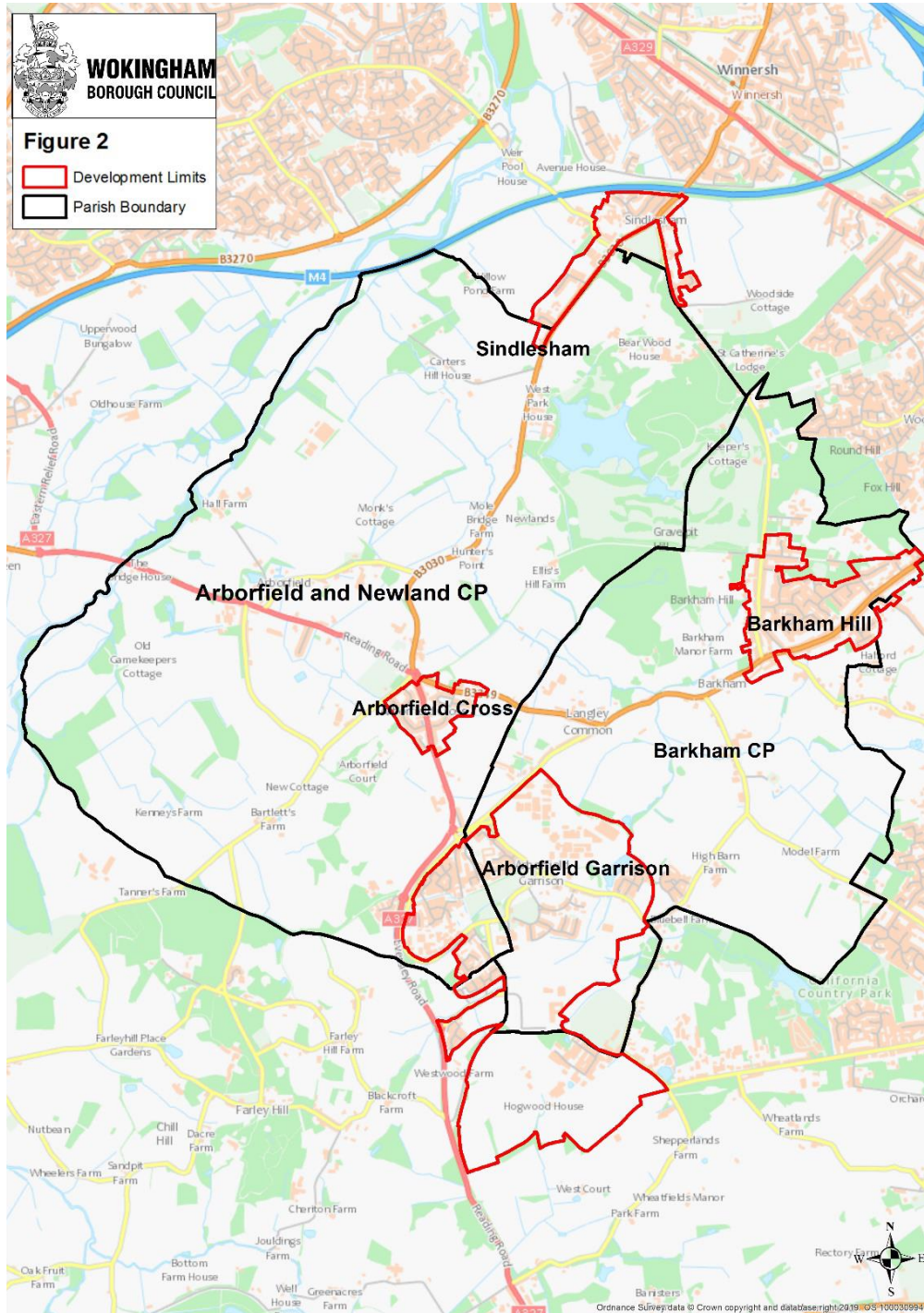
POLICY IRS1: PRESERVATION OF SEPARATION OF SETTLEMENTS

In order to protect the separation of settlements, development proposals outside of development limits designated in the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 will be required to comply with Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and:

- a) Preserve the character and appearance of the countryside; and
- b) Not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements.

Notes

The policy makes clear that separation of the various settlements is a priority and a high bar is required to justify any development in the countryside. The development limits are shown in the map below.



POLICY IRS2: RECOGNISE, RESPECT AND PRESERVE IDENTITY AND RURAL SETTING OF SETTLEMENTS

1. Development proposals must recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements, with regard to:
 - a) Scale and form of the development
 - b) Density of the development
 - c) Materials used in the development to reflect local character
 - d) Tree and hedgerow planting that reinforces and reflects local biodiversity in the parishes and
 - e) The distinctive character of the varied landscapes of the area and outstanding views.
2. Applications should demonstrate how the design of new development complies with the guidance set out in the Village Design Statements for Arborfield and Barkham (Annexes I and II) or any document adopted by the LPA that updates them.

Notes

The Arborfield and Barkham Village Design Statements provide guidance on items a) to d) of Policy IRS2. The Landscape and important views are considered in some detail in Annex V.

POLICY IRS3: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN SPACES

1. Development proposals should conserve and enhance the natural environment and green spaces of the area, specifically:
 - a) Ensure that there is no loss of biodiversity and normally provide a net gain. Where there is likely to be a loss of biodiversity, development will only be acceptable if mitigation measures can be put in place to ensure there is no net loss of biodiversity, through the creation of like for-like habitats.
 - b) Take any opportunities to protect, enhance and extend wildlife corridors between existing open spaces and habitats as a means of mitigating the impacts of development on biodiversity.
 - c) Conserve the environment for nocturnal species, through the avoidance of lighting and mitigating the impact of external lighting likely to increase night time human presence.
 - d) Contain measures that will help to mitigate the impacts of, and adapt to, climate change
2. Development on Public Open Spaces should enhance the use of the site for public open space or be consistent with paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework if loss of the space is proposed. The following sites are designated as Public Open Space and shown on Map L:
 - a) Arborfield Park
 - b) Junipers Field
 - c) Rooks Nest Wood
 - d) Hazebrouck Meadows
 - e) Pound Copse
 - f) The cricket and rugby pitches within the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location
3. Locally valued natural assets have been identified within the plan as follows (see Map K) and development proposals should conserve and where possible enhance them:
 - a) The Coombes woodland and adjacent areas
 - b) The Holt woodland
 - c) Rhododendron avenue along Bearwood Road

Notes

More information about biodiversity is shown in the Neighbourhood Plan text (see paras 4.18 to 4.20) and in Annex VI.

The public open spaces are defined in Map L.

The valued natural assets are considered to be important elements of the local character. Further background is included in the Neighbourhood Plan text (see paras 4.25 to 4.28)

POLICY IRS4: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF THE AREA

1. Development proposals will need to demonstrate how they protect or enhance the historic and natural character of the area, specifically:
 - a) Arborfield Cross Conservation Area
 - b) Chamberlain's Farm Area of Special Character
 - c) The Barkham Street Area of Special Character
 - d) The local historic environment, including the setting of Listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments and other historically significant buildings
2. Locally valued heritage assets have been identified in the plan as follows (see Map K) and development proposals should protect and enhance them where possible:
 - a) The historic chestnut avenue in Arborfield, linking The Old Rectory to the remains of the old church.
 - b) The lime grove at Nashgrove Ride in Barkham.
 - c) Carters Hill
 - d) The granary in Barkham Street

Notes

The valued heritage assets are considered to be an important contribution to the local character of the area. Further background is included in the Neighbourhood Plan text (see paras 4.32 to 4.37)

POLICY TC1: RETENTION OF EXISTING VALUED COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Proposals for new development which involve existing community facilities, will be supported only if the proposal does not result in the loss of, or have an adverse effect on, the asset or facility concerned, unless

- a) Satisfactory alternative facilities are provided or
- b) It can be evidenced that such assets are no longer required; or
- c) They will provide sufficient community benefit to outweigh the loss of the existing facility

Notes

There are a number of well-utilised community facilities located throughout Arborfield and Barkham providing a wide range of services to a broad cross-section of residents. These work alongside other bodies such as pubs, religious organisations and local businesses to establish strong, vibrant and thriving communities (refer also to Annex VIII Community Facilities and Annex IX Recreation & Open Spaces).

POLICY TC2: PROPERLY PLANNED AND DESIGNED NEW FACILITIES

1. Proposals for new community facilities should
 - a) Incorporate sufficient flexibility to allow for present needs and future planned growth to be accommodated on the one site.
 - b) Be inclusive and provide appropriate access for all generations.
 - c) Incorporate adequate off-street parking.
 - d) Be appropriately designed for the prospective use and users.
 - e) Support and facilitate safe access on foot and bicycle.
2. Proposals will be considered more favourably where clear evidence of long-term viability is provided.

Note

The development of the former Arborfield Garrison has meant that some new facilities are available to the local communities, in particular Bohunt School, a state of the art secondary school and a gymnasium using an ex-military facility. Additionally, new open spaces have been created at Hazebrouck Meadows nearby. A new Village Centre is proposed as part of the development.

POLICY TC3: CONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND AGRICULTURE

1. New or existing businesses in the countryside are encouraged to re-use lawful buildings that are vacant, derelict or unviable provided that:
 - a) The scale of the proposal is appropriate for a rural location, and
 - b) Proposals assess and address their potential impact on immediate neighbours and the natural environment, and
 - c) New or expanding activities do not cause excessive encroachment away from the original buildings, and
 - d) Site access and parking arrangements are appropriate for the scale and nature of the uses.
2. Best and most versatile agricultural land should be protected.

Notes

There are a number of small and medium sized business in the Plan Area. It is considered that the rural nature of local business should be encouraged.

Unfortunately there are many locations where business is carried out without the necessary land use permissions, hence the requirement to specify re-use of lawful buildings only. Many of these sites have been the subject of enforcement action.

POLICY AD1: NEW DEVELOPMENT WITHIN DEVELOPMENT LIMITS

1. Where they meet other policy requirements in this Neighbourhood Plan and the local plan, the principle of new housing within the current Development Limits is supported, (including the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location). However the use of brownfield sites will be preferred.
2. Applicants should demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community particularly with regard to design issues and are encouraged to:
 - a) Engage in early discussion with the local community and Wokingham Borough Council to clarify design expectations;
 - b) Incorporate, as appropriate, the views of the community in the design of proposals; and
 - c) Incorporate a Statement of Community Consultation with an application where appropriate.

Note

The development limits are shown in the map after Policy IRS1 (above).

POLICY AD2: PRIORITISE HOUSING FOR LOCAL NEEDS

1. All proposals for new housing development must demonstrate how the types of homes provided will contribute to a balanced mix of housing and meet the needs identified in the most current assessment of housing needs – at the time of publication this is the Arborfield and Barkham Housing Needs Analysis 2019 (Annex XI).
2. In all new housing developments providing affordable housing, the purchase of affordable homes for sale is encouraged to be prioritised for key workers locally in the first instance, with the local connection proposed to be within the neighbourhood area firstly and then within the borough of Wokingham.
 - a) 'Key workers' refers to school teachers and medical staff employed locally.

Notes

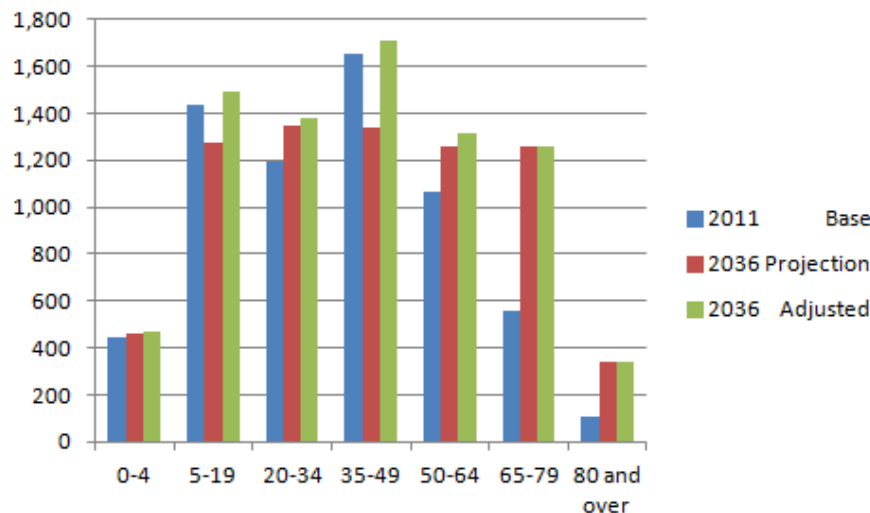
A detailed Housing Needs Assessment was prepared as part of the Neighbourhood Plan and is included as Annex XI.

The projection of just over 900 homes is roughly a half of the Core Strategy commitment of 1,800.

Based on the Housing Needs Assessment, the greatest requirement is for houses for the 60+ age group.

However, it can be expected that the majority of this group will remain in family houses that they acquired in earlier years. Some of these houses could be released, but only if suitable accommodation is provided to permit downsizing. Besides space, requirements of this group will include lower maintenance properties and premises adapted to allow easy movement in the event of disability.

Chart of Population Projections



POLICY AD3: HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT WITH GENEROUS OPEN SPACE, PROPERLY LANDSCAPED

All new developments must reflect the rural character and historic context of existing dwellings within the Plan Area. New development must deliver good quality design. In order to achieve this, all new development must wherever possible:

- Recognise, in the design of developments, the distinctive local character of the area and contribute sensitively in order to create dwellings of a high architectural and rural quality, referring to the published Village Design Statements.
- Consider the density of any new development which must be in character with the surrounding area, respect the rural nature of the area and be designed to give an impression of spaciousness and variety with uniform houses and plots being avoided.
- Recognise possible impacts of climate change and consequently reflect sustainable development standards.

Notes

The recommended building styles are outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan text (paras 6.23 and 6.24) which reinforce the Village Design Statements.

Climate change is addressed in the Sustainability Paper (Annex IV). It is apparent that this is increasingly becoming a concern locally and nationally.

POLICY AD4: ADDRESS LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Planning applications for development must ensure that:

- The principles of flood risk management, including SuDS are fully addressed at the outline planning stage and, ideally, in pre-application discussions. This includes SuDS maintenance plans and funding for the lifetime of the development.
- Applications must show how they have addressed Wokingham Borough Council's SuDS strategy* (and any replacement strategy) and have designed appropriate SuDS accordingly.
- Confirmation from the water company during planning that there would be adequate capacity in the sewerage system prior to occupation of new homes.
- Provide measures to slow the rate of water run-off by adequate provision of swales, ponds and other SuDs measures.
- Encourage tree planting to reduce run-off rates. As an ideal a new tree should be planted to replace every one that is removed.
- Account is taken of known local flooding problems.

Note

The Neighbourhood Plan text lists known local flooding problems in para 6.32 of the main document.

POLICY GA1: MINIMISE ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC ON UNSUITABLE ROADS

1. Development proposals must consider, assess and address their impact on junctions and the roads and other PROWs that connect them, including road safety, and implement measures of mitigation as required. In establishing the capacity of individual roads, consideration must also be given to the general frontage land-use and its sensitivity to traffic.
2. Proposals should recognise and respond as appropriate to the fact that there are many narrow country lanes with no footway in the neighbourhood area, already under pressure from current traffic levels.

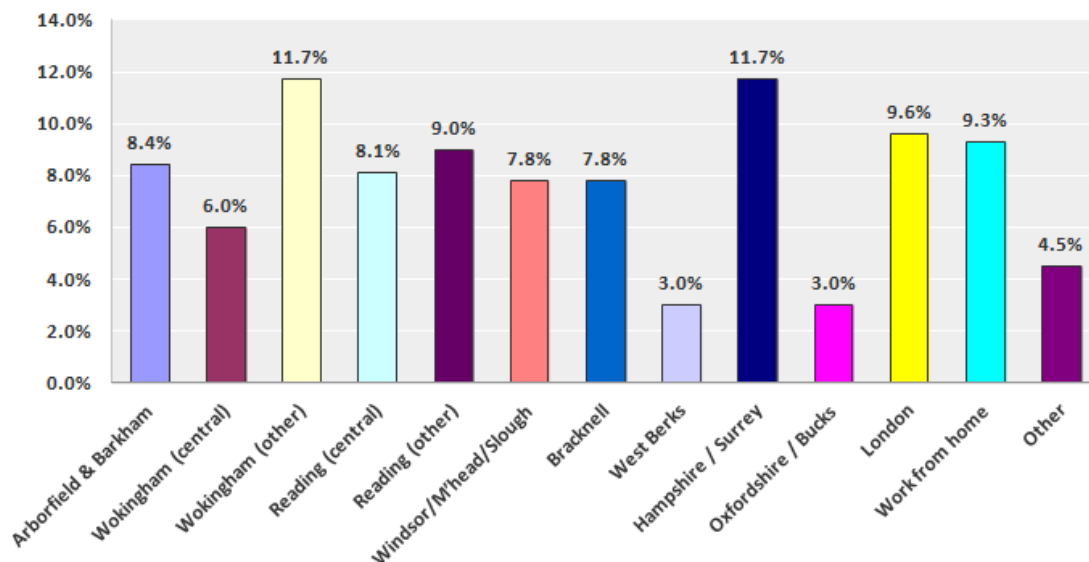
Notes

It should be taken into account that additional traffic affects the environment of residents if there is too much traffic channelled along residential roads.

The Neighbourhood Plan text lists examples of local roads that are unsuitable for a number of reasons (see paras 7.10 to 7.13 of the main document).

Travel to work, not unexpectedly, produces a very complex picture with a wide spread of destinations, as is shown in the following chart.

Residents' Survey Q3 – Where do you travel to get to work/education each day?



The largest groups are Wokingham (other) and Hampshire/Surrey. Figures exclude the 'not applicable' group (mainly retirees). The free format box demonstrated the complexity of modern life, with residents working in more than one place, or who commute (presumably not on a daily basis) to overseas locations.

POLICY GA2: IMPLEMENT LOCAL NETWORK OF GREEN ROUTES FOR NON-MOTORISED USERS

Development proposals should not inhibit the delivery of the wider network of Greenways and other PROWs. Proposals should where possible support:

- a) The achievement of a network of all-weather routes.
- b) The provision of safe crossings for the benefit of non-motorised users, wherever PROWs meet primary routes.
- c) Better connectivity throughout the Plan Area, including the new developments proposed in the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location.
- d) Creation of opportunities for sustainable transport including safe routes to schools.
- e) Provision of better access to the countryside and surrounding destinations for amenity purposes.

Note

The Greenways Focus Group produced a comprehensive report outlining local issues and recommending key routes which should be created over the course of time. This can be viewed as Annexes XII and XIII.

POLICY GA3: PUBLIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS WITH LONG TERM VIABILITY

As a general principle, improvements to public transport will be supported, recognising that schemes must have the prospect of long-term viability.

Note

There is good evidence that there are increased resident numbers using the recently improved bus services. It is disappointing, however, that there is little sign of a shift away from car use for travel to work or education. This is a consequence of the complex travel patterns with such a wide range of destinations, and the absence of safe walking or cycling routes for many journeys.

Project List

The following list includes a number of topics which have emerged during the preparation of this plan but which are not land use issues appropriate for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan policies. The two parish councils will endeavour to progress these items as the opportunities arise. (Relevant Policy Groups shown in brackets.)

- a) Task force of residents to recommend environmental improvements in centre of Arborfield Cross, taking opportunity to improve traffic management on completion of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road. (IRS/GA)
- b) There are potential Areas of Special Character under review at Carters Hill and at Hall Farm including Hall Farm House, the Old Rectory (listed) and neighbouring buildings. (IRS)
- c) Targets for additional designation include: (IRS)
 - The Coombes woodland and adjacent area
 - The Holt woodland
 - The Rhododendron avenue along Bearwood Road
 - The historic chestnut avenue leading to the remains of the old church at Arborfield, which is a scheduled monument
 - The lime grove at Nashgrove Ride in Barkham
 - An area at Carters Hill and at Hall Farm including Hall Farm House, the Old Rectory (listed) and neighbouring buildings
- d) The Parish Councils will work with the developers, the Borough Council and other stakeholders on the planning of the new Village Centre at Arborfield Green.
- e) Superfast broadband to be made available to all houses and businesses. (TC)
- f) Management of allotments. (TC)
- g) Encourage shared use of community facilities e.g. school/public use. (TC)
- h) Ensure long term viability of community facilities by developing business plans. (TC)
- i) The Parish Councils will participate in the development of plans for progressing a suitable and viable use of the historic infirmary stables. (IRS/TC)
- j) Maintain and protect existing farming activity. (TC)
- k) The Parish Councils will work with the Highway Authority on the following; (GA)
 - Bring forward traffic management measures for Arborfield village centre, to be implemented as part of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road Scheme; (see also a) above
 - Progress to completion the widening of Barkham Bridge and the Nine Mile Ride Extension
 - Reduce speed limits to 30mph (or less) along all residential roads
 - Reclaim quiet lanes by providing appropriate traffic management schemes
 - Provide safe footways along busy roads.
 - Provide safe crossing areas on major roads by managing speed limits and ensuring good sight lines
 - Improve crossings where existing Public Rights of Way cross main roads
- l) Create additional signposted walking routes on the lines of the Barkham Way and The Coombes Circular walk. (GA)
- m) Review effectiveness of public transport to enhance local services. (GA)