

Mr. Andy Couldrick - Chief Executive  
Mr. Keith Baker - Leader of the Council  
Mr. Mark Ashwell – Executive Member for Planning  
Mr. John Spurling – Service Manager, Land Use and Transport  
Rt. Hon. Theresa May – Member of Parliament

Dear Sirs,

**Local Plan and Site assessment – Northern Parishes  
Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment**

You will already have received individual communications from each of the Northern Parishes concerning their separate assessments of the proposed development sites within their parishes. However, when considering the potential scale of the new developments being proposed, there are a number of very significant issues which would impact the northern parishes as a block. To this end, the Councillors of these parishes have jointly assessed the key criteria upon which the overall development plan should be assessed, and against which each separate site should be evaluated. Our combined input to this Land Availability Assessment is therefore summarised below.

**Floodplain:** Over the past few years there have been a very considerable number of high-profile examples country-wide, of houses (both new and old) being lost or damaged through flooding, and a number of Northern Parishes have separately provided evidence of such events within their parishes. The cost of such disasters to individuals, Councils and the country, has been very significant. However, despite this recent history, we note again that a number of the proposed sites lie in the floodplain (mainly level 1 & 2, but also in Level 3 – the most at risk). It must also be remembered that the Thames Catchment Flood Management Plan relies heavily on the flood plains around its tributaries not being over-developed, and that doing so would endanger both the new developments and also many existing developments. We therefore cannot support yet further development within floodplains.

**Greenbelt:** The parishes note that a number of the proposed sites would involve the loss of either or both Green Belt and/or Grade 1 or 2 Agricultural Land. The Amec Foster Wheeler report supports the continued protection of the local greenbelt in its entirety, and the Northern Parish Councillors support this assessment. Similarly the NPPF has a presumption against the development on Grade 1 or 2 Agricultural Land. We strongly believe that such sites should not be 'in the mix' if the overall character of the Borough is not to be severely impacted.

**Transport Infrastructure:** It is an unfortunate fact that the main roads within the northern parishes are already at (or indeed over) capacity, particularly during the morning and evening busy periods. These roads and junctions (even the A4) were not initially designed for the level of traffic which they now carry, and hence many of the access points and feeder roads are already severe bottlenecks. Consider as examples the road through the centre of Hurst (which cannot reasonably be widened) and the centre of Twyford. The same is true for many other locations and most of the numerous river and rail bridges, particularly Sonning Bridge which is already severely stressed and would be further affected by the proposed developments in Berkshire as well as by similar development proposals in South Oxfordshire. As regards parking, we note particularly that the Twyford station car park (and the surrounding area) is already 'over capacity' on weekdays, a situation which can only be exacerbated with additional housing.

It is clear that the CIL contributions from these developments would amount to nowhere near the costs involved in upgrading the road infrastructure to an acceptable level, and additional sums from central government are notoriously inadequate and slow in coming (if at all). On

this subject, one only has to consider Winnersh where the promised relief road from the previous development is only just now progressing, and this is on the back of yet further development.

**Social Infrastructure:** In this category we refer to all the various ancillary infrastructure which would be required in order to support the suggested level of additional housing. This would include schools/nurseries, hospitals, doctor's surgeries etc. Each of these facilities in the borough is already over-full, and again, the CIL from these developments will be woefully inadequate to address the need. Take as an example the new primary school in Charvil, (only three years old) which last summer already was obliged to turn-away children from immediately across the road.

### Summary

Wokingham Borough is characterised by a series of villages and market towns surrounded by open countryside; and because of this character Wokingham is an attractive place both to live in and to visit. The Borough therefore gets credit from the trade which this brings; however, the volume of additional housing suggested would severely impact this character and impose unacceptable pressures on already over-stretched facilities. Therefore, while it is accepted that some volume of additional housing is required, we consider that the numbers proposed are wholly inconsistent with genuine 'sustainability', and would change the character and the maintenance of the Borough in its current form.

The above concerns are drawn from the local knowledge and experience of both Parish and Borough Councillors, and their long experience within the parishes. Having provided a brief summary of their key concerns, it is clear that the plans outlined for the area are wholly impractical on the scale currently envisaged, and are likely also to incur considerable fierce opposition from local residents and civic societies.

The Northern Parishes are therefore united in requesting you to take into account the above serious concerns during the ongoing assessment following the Local Plan Update Call for Sites, and to provide the necessary support to prevent the character of this area from being irretrievably harmed.

Yours faithfully,



Lucy Moffatt, Clerk to Twyford Parish Council and Ruscombe Parish Council



Lesley Bates, Clerk to Sonning Parish Council



Miranda Parker, Clerk to Charvil Parish Council

*W Bradshaw*

Maria Bradshaw, Clerk to Hurst Parish Council

*Paul Sermon*

Paul Sermon, Clerk to Remenham Parish Council

*Stephen Hedges*

Stephen Hedges, Clerk to Wargrave Parish Council

*Emma Hobbs*

Emma Hobbs, Ward Councillor to Charvil

*John Jarvis*

John Jarvis, Ward Councillor to Twyford

*Lyndsay Ferris*

Lyndsay Ferris, Ward Councillor to Twyford

*John Halsall*

John Halsall, Ward Councillor to Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe

*Bob Pitts*

Bob Pitts, Ward Councillor to Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe

Wayne Smith, Ward Councillor to Hurst

*Wayne Smith*

*Mike Evans*

Mike Evans, Ruscombe Parish Council

Mike Haines, Ward Councillor to Sonning