



The Wokingham Society

Registered as a Charity (No. 274988)

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Response to Local Plan Update Consultation

I am submitting the Response of the Executive Committee of the Wokingham Society to the Consultation on the Local Plan Update 2026-36. The Committee wishes to raise the following issues:

1. Nomination of Areas of Local Green Space

On 20 July 2018 the Chairman and Vice-Chairman met the Executive Member and the Deputy Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning, together with Growth and Development Management and Strategic Transport Manager and Team Manager to discuss provision for the nomination of local green spaces for protection within the Local Plan Update (LPU). It was indicated that arrangements to invite such nominations would be incorporated into the LPU process.

At the LPU drop-in session at St Sebastian's Memorial Hall on 7 January 2019 the Chairman consulted Mr Bellinger about progress on this matter and was invited to include reference to the scheme and to put forward some relevant green spaces for consideration for designation when submitting the Society's response to the consultation. We do so below, with reference to the criteria set out in the revised National Planning Policy Framework, as follows:

“The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquility or richness of its wildlife; and
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”.

Since our Constitution limits our remit to Wokingham town, we are putting forward green spaces within that area, but would point out that these are only a sample of such spaces and others might wish to come forward with additional nominations

(a) Elms Field, Wellington Road

The reconstructed park at Elms Field will be in the ownership of the Borough Council but its management is intended to be transferred to Wokingham Town Council for a specified period. This will not in itself guarantee protection from future development but it is vital for the provision of access to open space for those living or working in, or visiting, the town centre that this space be retained as a green lung for the benefit of all. Elms Field is of particular significance because it was transferred to the Council from the estate of the Ellison family, residents of The

Elms, for the use of the local community. It will continue to offer recreational value through the provision of a children's play area and facilities for public events such as fairs and performances. The open space will amount to some 1.4 hectares, and is thus not a large tract of land.

(b) Howard Palmer Gardens, Cockpit Path

This small park of 0.8 acres is located behind the Cockpit Path car park in the centre of Wokingham town. Well-used in summer lunch hours by those living and working in the town centre, the park was landscaped in 2014 with improved access and new seating areas. The park is managed by the Town Council, which had been given the land by Deed of Gift in 1968 in order to perpetuate the memory of Howard Palmer, a prominent local resident who had been Chairman of Huntley & Palmers, biscuit makers, of Reading. After his death in 1923 the land in question was converted by his family in 1931 into a memorial bowling club green, and by the Town Council into its present use following the closure of the bowling club.

(c) Langborough Recreation Ground, Gipsy Lane

This 5 acre ground is part registered as a village green. It has a football pitch, with changing rooms, and an area of play equipment for young children. It is also used for fetes and for general recreation. It came into the ownership of the then Wokingham Parish Council under the terms of an Inclosure Award in 1817, and was at that time used for the extraction of sand and gravel. Initial references in the local press saw it being used as a cricket field (from at least 1846), but, after 1885, it was called by its present name. It is well-used by residents in the Langborough Road and Murdoch Road Conservation areas.

(d) King George V Playing Field, Goodchild Road

Located off Goodchild Road and abutting St Crispin's School playing field, this 5 acre park, managed by the Town Council, also has a football pitch for hire. There is a children's playground divided into older and young children's play areas. It was acquired for the then Borough Council in 1935 by the Town Clerk, John Elliston Clifton, using funds from the King George V Trust appeal, which he had organised. The field is much valued by residents in the eastern section of the town, since they do not have access to the sports facilities at St Crispin's.

(e) Barkham Recreation Ground, Latimer Road

This area is owned by the Borough Council and is some 6 acres in size. It houses two football pitches, which can be used for senior games (unlike some of the exclusively youth facilities available elsewhere). It is bordered by an avenue of six lime trees, planted to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935. It is surrounded by houses in Latimer Road and Ormonde Road, and provides sporting and recreational facilities for residents in the local built-up area south of the town centre.

2. Promoted areas

The Committee notes that the following sites, previously included in the list of sites suggested for potential allocation through the Managing Development Delivery Development Plan Document in Aug 2011, have been put forward again. In each case the sustainability appraisal concluded that the sites were either unlikely to provide significant opportunities for economic growth or could be harmful to the high quality landscape or both. They were not included among the sites

selected for potential development and in one case the Council has successfully resisted an application to develop the land for housing. Since the circumstances of each site remains unchanged, we expect the Council to reach the same decisions about unsuitability and thus not to include them in the list of selected sites:

5WK034 Land to the east and west of Blagrove Lane
5WK037 Land East of Finchampstead Road
5WK038 Land at Woodcrae Manor
5WK028 Land at Blagrove Lane.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Must". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Peter Must
Chairman