

Please comment on the Neighbourhood Plan by March 29th 2024

- either online www.hungerford-tc.co.uk/hungerfordNP
- or in paper form at the Hub / Library.

Below, are some of the main questions asked about the Plan, answered by Richard Hudson, the chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan and why does Hungerford need one?"

It's a plan for Hungerford parish's future between now and 2040. Neighbourhood planning was introduced in the Localism Act 2011. It is an important and powerful tool that gives communities statutory powers to shape how their communities develop. House builders will also allocate more of the Community Infrastructure Levy directly to Hungerford which will fund additional facilities.

Why does Hungerford need a minimum of 55 houses?

This is the minimum number of new dwellings as set out by West Berkshire District Council in their emerging Local Plan, covering the whole district. Note that this is less than the previous Plan which allocated a minimum of 100 dwellings, now constructed at Lancaster Park.

How were the locations of the developments chosen?

There was an open invitation to all landowners to put forward their land as a development option. This was then carefully evaluated against the Neighbourhood Plan objectives which led to three sites being assessed as representing sustainable options. There were five potential combinations of these three site options that could deliver the minimum requirement of 55 dwellings. These were consulted on with the community in late 2023, with the preference expressed resulting in the two sites that have been allocated in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

When considering housing locations was traffic impact on the High Street, Church Street and routes to the M4, A4 and railway considered?

Traffic and travel impacts were a major consideration for all sites and was the most common concern during the consultation, notably the wish to the minimise impact on the High Street. All sites will have some impact both during construction and when occupied. The preferred locations are in part chosen as they are within a reasonable walk to facilities and shops.

How will our streams be protected from pollution?

An environmental assessment has been carried out that will ensure our streams will be protected. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) looks at all the protections in detail and comments on the SEA are also welcomed. When a planning application comes forward on either of these sites, planning policy ensures that the development does not pollute rivers.

How many low-cost affordable houses will be provided?

We can expect 40% to be affordable which would total about 22 dwellings.

Will there be any extra facilities or recreation areas for the new housing?

Yes, most notably the Smitham Bridge site will mean that the allotments on Marsh Lane will be transferred to the Town Council permanently. As referred above, there will be some more developer funding available that we can spend on local facilities.

How will the current sewage systems cope with extra housing?

Thames Water have been consulted regarding the number of additional housing and no objection was raised by them. There is likely to be a connection charge per dwelling to help cover the additional demand on the system.

There will be increased traffic from the new housing estates. Will there be any highway improvements such as roundabouts?

A transport assessment or transport statement will have to be submitted with the planning applications. These will assess any detailed impacts. However, given the volumes of additional traffic generated, it is not expected to require major new highway infrastructure.

What happens next?

After this consultation, all representations made will be considered and revisions made where appropriate. The plan will then be sent to West Berkshire District Council which will arrange a further six weeks public consultation. Then there is an Examination undertaken by an independent examiner who will review the plan. Subject to the plan being acceptable, it then goes to a referendum for the parish to say Yes or No. All these things take time, and the public referendum should take place later in 2024 or early in 2025.