



**WORKING TOGETHER TO SECURE A POSITIVE
FUTURE FOR FINCHAMPSTEAD**

Open Letter from the Chair of Finchampstead Future

June 2021

Dear Resident,

Update on the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP)

Earlier this year we consulted residents about the draft Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan. We provided summaries of the plan and asked for feedback on policies we are suggesting to guide development in the Parish in the period up to 2036. We were pleased to receive 350 responses and high levels of support, averaging about 85%, for the majority of our policy proposals.

It was our intention to adapt the plan in light of the consultation responses and then pass it to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), our strategic planning authority, for it to progress through the next stages of the process for getting it approved and adopted. However, the world has changed!

What has changed? The FNDP was crafted in the context of WBC's own wider Local Plan Update, for which they consulted on a Draft Plan in 2020. Central to WBC's plan was the development of a new 'garden village' near Grazeley, intended to deliver some 15,000 new homes to meet needs in the Borough over the long term. Around 3,750 of these were expected to be delivered in the period to 2036. Earlier this year a decision to extend the Burghfield AWE emergency planning zone caused the withdrawal of plans to develop Grazeley.

WBC therefore, to meet central government targets, need to find alternative locations for these homes and whilst they anticipate that most will be in the form of large developments elsewhere in the Borough, they have given us a formal early indication that additional housing will need to be spread across the borough, including an increased need for additional housing in Finchampstead.

Throughout the FNDP process we have worked closely with WBC and followed their guidance. We are frustrated by the Grazeley decision and lament the lack of contingency options. We have made our views known to WBC, but we also pragmatically recognise the new reality. The bitter truth is that whether we like it or not, some extra homes will come to Finchampstead beyond the numbers previously given in the FNDP. It is also the case that the FNDP will not be approved by WBC or the Independent Examiner unless it is amended to fit with the WBC's strategic plan.

We have a choice: ignore these facts and accept that the FNDP will be of little value in the future or accept reality and continue to work with WBC. By doing the latter, we will be able to ensure that new houses are in locations which protect the most important parts of our countryside and are consistent with the objectives and policies of the FNDP.

Finchampstead Future, and the Parish Council, believe the FNDP remains the most important thing we can do to exert influence over the future of our community. This means working with WBC to amend the FNDP, creating a joint plan which although containing more housing than originally envisaged, will help to protect our area from future speculative development.

This is not the news which we wanted to share, but we believe it to be the best option in the circumstances. Ultimately, the 'plan' only becomes the Plan after you have voted for it, so you still have the final say on what we propose.

We will bring you further and more detailed updates as soon as we can.

Continuing to work on your behalf for our neighbourhood,

Allan Gibson
Chair, Finchampstead Future