



Working Together to Secure a Positive Future for Finchampstead

Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP)

Newsletter – September 2022

Our Plan has been Submitted to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC)

We are very pleased to say that the FNDP was formally submitted to WBC on August 30th. It has involved a great deal of work and a considerable challenge to get to this point because of the unexpected difficulties we faced. It has taken longer than we expected (two and a half years). We have had to cope with Covid and the need to re-work our thinking to take account of the loss of WBC's plan to develop a new garden town at Grazeley to meet governmental targets over the next fifteen years. This required making amended proposals for a small number of additional sites for housing and going out for a second round of consultation. We also needed to have external, independent reports undertaken around strategic environmental impact which also took a few months.

Despite all the challenges, we have got there and produced a plan with new policies which we think will help to ensure that Finchampstead retains its semi-rural character and protect those things about living here that you have told us are most important to you.

What's in the plan? What are its key features? Here are a few headlines:

- Policies on separation of settlement areas: a 'Green Wedge' around Sandmartins' area; a 'Key Local Gap' for Sandhurst Road; two 'Important Areas of Separation' – Reading Road around Park Lane and New Mill Road and the gap between Nine Mile Ride and the Finchampstead Church Conservation Area
- Designation of 13 'Local Green Spaces' of importance to the community and supporting policy
- Identification of four 'Outstanding Views' and policy covering adverse impact
- Policies dealing with the sustainment of rural character, historic assets, ecological diversity, and trees
- Policy presumption of development within existing Development Limits rather than in Countryside
- Sites for additional housing identified on a small number of sites equating to 200-250 units over the 16-year period of the plan. This equates to about 16 new homes per year.

How can I see the plan?

The 'submission' version of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022-2038 and other important supporting documents can be accessed on the Finchampstead Future webpage, on the Finchampstead Parish Council (FPC) website:

<https://www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk/community-projects/neighbourhood-development-plan/documents>



What happens next?

The focus of activity now moves from our team to WBC who firstly will check that all the correct documents have been submitted in accordance with planning regulations. The next steps involve:

- WBC's Executive providing the authority to consult on the Plan (under Regulation 16) at its meeting on 29 September and to start the process to appoint an independent examiner.
- 'publishing' our plan and holding a further round of public consultation on it (minimum six weeks) starting in early October, which WBC will control
- The appointment of an 'independent Examiner'
- WBC will collate the responses to the consultation and send this with our plan to the Examiner
- Examiner checks everything and decides on a number of things and may seek additional clarification about consultation responses and other matters - this usually does not involve a public hearing but may do in exceptional cases
- Examiner will issue a Report: verifying compliance, indicating any modifications that may be needed and whether these amount to 'a significant change' to the plan. Will conclude as to whether the plan can either 'go forward to a referendum unchanged, or 'go forward to a referendum with modifications' or finally 'not go forward'
- WBC, in collaboration with FPC, decide whether to accept Examiner's Report and any modifications and WBC will then decide whether and when to hold a Referendum
- Referendum held – needs a majority to proceed further
- If successful at referendum, WBC will formally adopt the plan and it is 'made'.

All of this will take several months and if all goes well, the earliest that we can hope to have our NDP 'made' is the first half of 2023.

Final thoughts

We have come a long way and but there are still challenges ahead. The Finchampstead Future team remain convinced that the work to produce and adopt an NDP is well worth the trouble and that it remains the most effective thing local people can do to influence and affect what happens to their neighbourhood regarding development.

We look forward to your continuing support!

Allan Gibson
Chair, Finchampstead Future