The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Local Plan

Incorporating Alterations
adopted June 2003
FOREWORD

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan was adopted in July 1999. It represents the first statutory local plan to cover the whole of the Royal Borough. It will be used as the basis for making decisions on planning applications and development proposals in the period up to the year 2006.

Crucially, the local plan is intended to set out the council’s policies for promoting sustainable forms of development that maintain a buoyant local economy, meet identified local needs for housing, recreation and transport, and maintain the diverse, high quality environment of the Borough. The plan seeks to maintain and enhance the high quality of life of the residents of the Borough. The plan has been the subject of an environmental appraisal (June 1997), and broadly reflects the council’s own environmental policies.

The local plan has been a number of years in preparation. A consultation draft was originally published during 1993. The Deposit Draft Plan was published in 1994. Extensive consultation took place for both of these draft plans. Adoption of the plan took place after further consultation on three rounds of Proposed Modifications. There has been a huge volume of interest in the plan as it has passed through its various stages. The local plan therefore represents the Council’s careful consideration of many viewpoints, concerns and interests. I hope that it is accepted as a sound and robust framework for determining planning proposals in the Royal Borough and that it will now have the support of all sections of the community.

I would like to thank everyone who has taken part or contributed on the preparation of the local plan. That high level of involvement reflects the fact that the plan represents an important Council document to take the Borough into the new millennium.

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Chairman,
Planning and Environment Board,
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
Introduction and Overall Strategy
1. Introduction and Overall Strategy

1.1  INTRODUCTION

1.1.1  On the 27th November 1989, the Planning Committee of the Borough Council agreed that the preparation of a Borough-wide local plan would be the most expedient way of achieving an up-to-date local planning framework for the whole Borough. At that time, the adopted Green Belt Local Plan gave coverage to the non-urban areas of the Borough but there were only partially processed plans for the two main urban areas, Windsor and Maidenhead, along with a number of informal plans covering the smaller settlements of the Borough. The Windsor and District Local Plan has since been adopted in February 1992 (adoption means that the Plan has been taken through all the statutory procedures). However, most of the built-up parts of the Borough still do not have full local plan coverage; any plans that do exist relate to specific topics, e.g. Green Belt Local Plan 1985, or to relatively small areas, and are now somewhat out of date.

1.1.2  This Local Plan constitutes the first comprehensive document produced by the Council which sets out planning policy covering the whole of the Borough. The Plan provides detailed policies and proposals designed to co-ordinate development and guide day-to-day planning decisions during the period 1991-2006.

1.1.3  This section of the Plan provides background information on the need for and purpose of the Local Plan, along with a description of the processes which must be undertaken in the preparation of the Plan; sets out context information, particularly the current national, regional, strategic and other local authority policies which are relevant and have guided the preparation of the Plan and puts forward the Council's strategy and main aims.

1.2  THE NEED FOR A LOCAL  PLAN

1.2.1  Within the planning system, local plans, together with the County Structure Plan, provide the 'development plan' for a locality. There is a mandatory duty on district authorities to prepare a local plan covering the whole of their area. The provisions of the Planning and Compensation Act, 1991, consolidated a shift in national government advice on the preparation of single, district-wide local plans by every district council. At the same time, government advice is that decisions on planning applications, should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise¹. In effect, this introduces a presumption in favour of proposals which are in accordance with the development plan.

1.2.2  The Local Plan provides, within one document, detailed planning guidance for the whole area. It reviews and replaces various other documents which are currently used within the Royal Borough in considering applications for development as follows:-

- Various supplementary planning policies.

1.2.3  Berkshire County Council have prepared a new structure plan for the County. The new Structure Plan, known as the Berkshire Structure Plan 1991 - 2006, was adopted during November 1995. (Alterations to the Structure Plan were adopted in August 1997.)

1.2.4  The Borough Council's Local Plan does not repeat the Structure Plan's policies, although developers and others should be aware of them. The Local Plan must be in general conformity with the Structure Plan, but its purpose is to set out detailed policies and specific proposals for the development and use of land in the Borough in accordance with the strategic policy framework.

1.2.5 Under recent legislation, therefore, the local plan has gained significant importance in terms of the future planning of the Borough. On adoption, the Local Plan becomes, along with the Structure Plan, the prime consideration in the determination of planning applications. It is therefore an important document.

1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE LOCAL PLAN

1.3.1 The Planning and Compensation Act 1991, specifies that:—

"A local plan shall contain a written statement formulating the authority's detailed policies for the development and use of land in their area."

Under the Act, there is also a requirement to produce maps of proposals based on an Ordnance Survey map base.

1.3.2 A local plan has four main functions under the Planning Acts:—

1. to develop the policies and general proposals of the Structure Plan and other strategic policies and relate them to the area of the Borough;
2. to set out detailed policies for the control of development;
3. to provide a detailed basis for co-ordinating and directing development and the use of land and to allocate land for specific purposes;
4. to bring land use and land use related issues before the public and give local communities an opportunity to participate in planning choices about where development should be accommodated in their area.

1.3.3 Importantly, local plans are required to include policies in respect of:

1. the conservation and the natural beauty and amenity of the land;
2. the improvement of the physical environment;
3. the management of traffic.

1.3.4 Other advice from national government\(^2\) has indicated that local plans can contribute to the objectives of ensuring that development and growth are sustainable. The local plan policies and proposals should also be subject to an environmental appraisal during the course of plan preparation. Such an appraisal has been undertaken and its results are discussed below in Section 1.6.

1.4 THE STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK

1.4.1 It is a requirement that the development plan for an area has regard to the Government's national policy and to any regional guidance which has been issued in order to provide a framework for the preparation of County structure plans. A local plan also has to be in conformity with the County structure plan. A starting point in developing a local plan strategy must therefore consider the strategic planning framework.

National Policy

1.4.2 At national policy level, a considerable amount of guidance has been published on a wide variety of planning-related subject areas, in the form of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's), Minerals Planning Guidance and Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Circulars. In addition, at national level, there has been increasing general emphasis on promoting awareness of environmental issues in accordance with the 1990 White Paper on the environment which was entitled 'This Common Inheritance', and the 1994 publication, 'Sustainable Development, The U.K. Strategy'. This emphasis on the environment includes the following concerns:—

1. the protection and enhancement of the environment;
2. making the best use of available urban land to protect the countryside from encroachment;
3. promoting the value and contribution of green space and open areas within the built up areas;
4. encouraging energy conservation particularly in building design and transport;
5. encouraging alternative forms of transport to the private car to reduce congestion, pollution, etc;
6. reinforcing the importance of green belts but identifying opportunities for sport and recreation within these areas, particularly at the urban fringe.

\(^2\) PPG12 - 'Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance' - DoE/HMSO, March 1992
1.4.3 In particular, government legislation allows local planning authorities to require the submission of Environmental Impact Assessments with development proposals. The Berkshire Structure Plan 1991-2006, also sets out criteria relating to the need for environmental statements to accompany proposals for development. Structure Plan Policies LD1 to LD8 need to be considered in relation to all proposals for development.

Regional Planning Guidance

1.4.4 The latest Regional Planning Guidance for the South East was published in May 1994. The guidance covers the period 1991 to 2011. It sets out government policy on planning in the South East, providing guidance for structure plans and an overall context for investment decisions. The guidance emphasises a number of objectives:

- the need to foster economic growth;
- the need to revitalise older urban areas;
- the need to accommodate new development while conserving the countryside;
- the role of the region in the development of the U.K. economy;
- the need to co-ordinate land use and transport policies to meet environmental objectives;
- the need to protect the quality of the environment both in urban and rural areas;
- the achievement of a balance for development between the west and east of the region.

1.4.5 Under the Regional Policy Guidance, the Government expects a significant change in the balance of new development from the west to the east of the region. The guidance notes that the rapid pace of recent growth in the western sector has put stress on the available infrastructure and is unlikely to be capable of being sustained at the same rate in the future. Here, as elsewhere in the region, however, there will be a need to allow for restructuring of the local economy and to take advantage of the available development opportunities.

The guidance goes on to note that for the western counties, including Berkshire, a reducing rate of economic and housing development is appropriate. It notes that these areas are now entering a period of adjustment, enabling infrastructure and services to catch up with the rapid growth of the recent past.

1.4.6 The guidance deals with policy under a number of headings as follows:

Environment and Land Use

The policy seeks to achieve broad environmental objectives to encourage sustainable development patterns emphasising the re-use and redevelopment of urban land; protecting the cultural and natural environment while providing homes for jobs; the encouragement of a healthy environment; improving the quality of urban life; maintaining Green Belt; protecting areas of natural beauty and maintaining and enhancing wildlife habitats.

Housing

It is important that there is an adequate supply of housing to an acceptable standard within reach of all the Region's people. Account therefore needs to be taken of expected household numbers, involuntary sharing of dwellings, the relationship between economic factors and housing. Local authorities should, in particular, consider the age and size of households, the need for affordable housing and housing for special needs and other factors which will influence the kind of housing required. Policy should be designed to ensure that the needs of all sections of the population are met while maintaining the quality of the environment.

Transport

Policies for development need to be co-ordinated with policies and programmes for transport infrastructure and management of the transport system, in order to reduce the need to travel and to maintain or improve the environment. In particular, plans for new development and major changes in land use should take account of their effect on the transport system and encourage use of alternative forms of transport to the private car.
**The Structure Plan**

1.4.7 The Berkshire Structure Plan, 1991-2006, adopted in November 1995, sets out the broad strategy for the development of the County to the year 2006. The Plan lays great stress on protecting and enhancing Berkshire's environment; seeking sustainable levels of and locations for development; maximising the quality of life in all parts of the County; conserving natural resources; implementing an integrated transport strategy and seeking the provision of a greater proportion of low cost housing.

1.4.8 The Structure Plan points to the many problems in the County brought about by past levels of growth including the loss of countryside, damage to urban and rural environments, increasing congestion and the inability of services to keep pace with development. The quality of life in many parts of the County has declined; high land values have accelerated the decline of long established industries and accentuated problems, particularly in relation to the environment, of the rapid urbanisation of the County.

1.4.9 The overall strategy for the County recognises that some development is required to provide homes for local people, help maintain the prosperity of the local economy and meet reasonable demands for movement, shopping, recreation, tourism and mineral extraction in the County. However, the overall strategy indicates that growth needs to be kept down to levels which can be accommodated within the environmental limits of the County and which meet criteria of sustainability.

1.4.10 The Structure Plan identifies levels and broad locations for new development in housing, industry and commerce. For the Royal Borough the emphasis is on continued restraint; in this respect the Structure Plan identifies a requirement for 3,500 houses in the period 1991-2006. This is to be phased over three periods to reflect a planned gradual fall in the number of housing completions over the Plan period.

1.4.11 For employment related development the Structure Plan points out that existing commitments will provide more than sufficient space for employment needs up to 2006. No additional allocations are therefore proposed for business or industrial development.

1.4.12 It is expected that work on preparing a review of the Structure Plan will commence during 1999. The Structure Plan will be prepared under the guidance of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee which has been set up and will be serviced by the six new unitary authorities which were formed in April 1998, following reorganisation of local government in Berkshire.

**1.5 A STRATEGY FOR THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR & MAIDENHEAD**

1.5.1 The main themes running through national, regional and strategic planning policy in relation to the Royal Borough are:-

1. a continuing emphasis on restraint, particularly of Green Belt areas;
2. the need to protect and enhance the environment of both town and countryside;
3. the need to maintain a buoyant local economy but without leading to additional needs for housing, other services and facilities;
4. the need to achieve improvements to the quality of life for local residents and workers;
5. the desirability of promoting more sustainable forms of, and locations for, development and movement;
6. the priority which must be given to the provision for local needs, particularly in terms of low cost housing;
7. the need to contribute towards an integrated transport strategy.

These themes form the context for the development of a strategy for the Local Plan for the Royal Borough.
1.5.2 During the course of preparation of the Plan, a wide variety of development pressures and potential conflicts were examined and options for dealing with and resolving these pressures were considered. In particular the means of obtaining increased levels of much needed low cost housing for residents of the Borough were examined. However, the breadth of options which could be generated was limited by the primary consideration of the need to protect and maintain the long term permanence of the Green Belt policy in the Borough.

1.5.3 The Council’s strategy for the Local Plan is therefore to adopt a continuing approach of restraint. This means that existing policies, particularly those related to the Green Belt, will be maintained. However, the rate of development will be reduced over the Plan period although, where appropriate, development which meets the needs of local people will be promoted. As part of the strategy, concern for the environment and improvements in the quality of the environment are emphasised.

1.5.4 The Borough Council’s strategy is based on the following main components or aims:

1. TO MAINTAIN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS NATURALLY DIVERSE, SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE AND WHICH WILL MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN BOTH URBAN AND RURAL PARTS OF THE BOROUGH;

2. WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF RESTRAINT, TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE FORMS OF, AND LOCATIONS FOR, DEVELOPMENT WHICH MINIMISE THE CONSUMPTION OF ENERGY, LAND AND OTHER NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES AND WHICH MINIMISE THE POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT, TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND POLLUTION;

3. TO MAINTAIN A BUOYANT AND BROADLY BASED LOCAL ECONOMY WHILST RESTRICTING FURTHER MAJOR EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN ORDER TO AVOID INCREASING PRESSURE ON THE GREEN BELT, LOCAL HOUSING AND THE ENVIRONMENT;

4. TO PROVIDE FOR A LEVEL AND RANGE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE CHARACTER OF THE BOROUGH AND WHICH WILL ASSIST IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL POPULATION, PARTICULARLY FOR SOCIAL RENTED HOUSING;

5. TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE RECREATION, LEISURE AND PLAY FACILITIES IN THE BOROUGH, AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE INFORMAL ENJOYMENT OF THE COUNTRYSIDE;

6. TO ENCOURAGE ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TRANSPORT TO THE PRIVATE CAR AS PART OF THE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR BERKSHIRE AND IMPROVE ACCESS FOR PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO TOWN CENTRES AND WITHIN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS AND FACILITIES;

7. TO ENSURE THAT THE IMPROVEMENTS TO INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES AND AMENITIES MADE NECESSARY BY NEW DEVELOPMENT ARE PROVIDED.

The strategy and these main aims are translated into the wide range of policies and proposals which form the basis of the Local Plan.

1.5.5 Aims 2) and 6), set out above, relate to the concept of sustainable development. This is defined as "Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Various government guidance published over recent years, such as PPG6 on retailing, PPG7 on the rural economy, PPG13 on transport and PPG9 on nature conservation, places considerable emphasis on the need for, and the Government’s commitment to, sustainable development. They also provide some interpretation of the ‘U.K. Strategy on Sustainable Development’ which was published by the Government in January 1994.

1.5.6 Regional Guidance for the South East (RPG9) states that planning policies should be directed towards several broad objectives including sustainable development, protection and enhancement of the environment and reducing the need to travel while encouraging the use of energy efficient modes of transport.

1.5.7 The strategy of the Berkshire Structure Plan 1991-2006, places considerable emphasis on the need for sustainable development and the conservation and enhancement of the environment of the County. Policies such as Policy OS1, policies concerned with limiting the impact of development (Policies LD1-8) and various other policies in the Structure Plan seek to provide a framework for enabling sustainable development within the County.
1.5.8 The Local Plan has been prepared in conformity with the Structure Plan. Under Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, applications for development must be considered in accordance with the development plan.

1.5.9 The policies and proposals of the Local Plan have been subjected to an environmental appraisal and can be considered to be broadly in accordance with principles of sustainable development, in that new development is almost wholly directed to locations within existing built up areas. However, it is accepted that considerable further work needs to be undertaken to properly assess the impact of the Plan's policies and proposals on the environment and quality of life in the Borough. The Council also needs to ascertain what other planning policies and proposals are needed to address matters of concern in relation to the local environment. This further work will be undertaken as part of any review of the local plan in conjunction with the development of a variety of related initiatives:

- the establishment of an Integrated Transport Strategy and the preparation of a Transport Plan aimed at providing alternative modes of travel to the private motor car;

- strategies and reports prepared by the former Berkshire County Council supported by the District Councils in the County and by other bodies dealing with matters such as The State of the Environment/Berkshire Environmental Forum, the Landscape Strategy, Countryside Recreation Strategy, Rural Community Strategy, Footpaths/Rights of Way Statement, Renewable Energy Strategy;

- the preparation of a Corporate Environmental Charter by the Council, looking at environmental issues and impacts relevant to the Borough; the preparation of a Local Sustainability Strategy under Local Agenda 21.

1.6 ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL OF THE LOCAL PLAN

1.6.1 Under Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 (PPG12), planning authorities are required to "have regard to environmental considerations in preparing their general policies and proposals. Most policies and proposals in all types of plan will have environmental implications, which should be appraised as part of the plan preparation process." (DOE, 1992, para 5.52)

Accordingly an appraisal of the Local Plan was undertaken during the Summer of 1996. In October 1996 approval was given by the Council's Planning Board to endorse and publish the Local Plan Draft Environmental Appraisal for public consultation. The final document produced in light of these comments was endorsed and approved by the Planning and Environment Board in June 1997.

1.6.2 A commitment has been made by the Council to maintain and improve the environment for the benefit of all. The Environmental Appraisal marks the start of a process of assessing land use planning policies within the framework of the preparation of local plans.

1.6.3 Although there are no specific policies in the Local Plan which state that development should be sustainable (as contained in the Berkshire Structure Plan 1991-2006), the Local Plan is generally moving towards the aims of sustainability within the context of the planning framework. The main aims are concerned with:-

- protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment including statutory designated areas and sites specifically designated for nature conservation and built heritage value;
• reducing the need to travel through the concentration of development in the Borough's main settlements which are well served by public transport. The spread of development is also controlled by the Metropolitan Green Belt which covers the majority of the Borough;

• enhancing the quality of life of the Borough's residents through its policies for recreation and community services and in the control of pollution including measures for the control of noise. Such policies are carefully balanced with the Plan's policies for business and industrial development, shopping, and tourism and the provision of housing.

1.6.5 However, the appraisal identified a number of areas where improvements can be achieved in preparing a review of the Local Plan. Some of the main areas are:

(i) greater reference should be made in the Plan to sustainability to reflect sustainable development policies in the Berkshire Structure Plan; the Plan should more fully incorporate Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (Transport);

(ii) the Plan should more fully reflect the increased importance of the contribution of public transport towards the aim of reducing the need to travel and of improving energy efficiency in transport;

(iii) the Plan should incorporate policies on development on unstable land.

1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE LOCAL PLAN

Monitoring and Review of the Local Plan

1.7.1 The Local Plan is intended to provide a framework for planning and development within the Royal Borough for the period up to 2006. However, in that period, there will undoubtedly be changes stimulated by various external circumstances. A major influence will be government legislation and policy guidance which changes and is periodically refined. Such circumstances inevitably mean that the Local Plan will need to be reviewed before the year 2006. The Government advises that Structure and Local Plans should normally be reviewed and rolled forward about every five years.

1.7.2 Local planning authorities are required to keep under review those matters which may be expected to affect the development of their area and the planning of that area. Monitoring and review are an integral part of the planning process. Within the context of the Local Plan such monitoring will take place on an annual basis and will be published in the form of an Annual Monitoring Statement. This statement will contain information comparing housing and employment development with strategic requirements, various other development trend information and various monitoring information on progress in the implementation of policies and proposals within the Local Plan. In addition, it will set out clear priorities for future action in terms of the implementation of the Plan in the context of the Council's priorities, most of which are determined through the Council's annual budgetary process and corporate programmes.

1.7.3 It is the Council's current corporate policy to keep its citizens informed about the policies, proposals and activities of the Council and the various matters and issues affecting the Council. This involves the use of various forms of communication through statutory procedures, and consultation through channels such as press releases, newsletters, quarterly magazines and various other corporate publications, as well as through more formal consultations directly to Parish Councils, local organisations, interest groups, and other interested persons. These communications will be used to highlight matters arising from the Annual Monitoring Statement (Local Plan Update) and various other planning matters of interest to the citizens of the Royal Borough.

Preparation of the Local Plan

1.7.4 The Local Plan contains a written statement and proposals maps. The written statement presents policies to guide the use and development of land. These are shown in emboldened upper case, each policy having its own reference number. Specific proposals are also referred to in a number of the policies. Each policy is followed by explanations and justification in lower case lettering. Chapters 2 to 6 deal with specific topics, e.g. environment, economy, housing, etc. Chapter 7 deals with area-based policies for the town centres of Windsor and Maidenhead and for a number of the larger settlements within the Borough. Chapter 8 considers the implementation of policies and proposals, in particular, the need for development to provide or make contributions to the provision of infrastructure, services and facilities necessitated by development in the Borough. All policies in the written statement should be considered in conjunction with details shown on the proposals maps.
1.7.5 The preparation of the Local Plan has involved a series of processes and events. The Consultation Draft Plan was designed as an initial stage setting out the Borough Council's strategy, aims and resulting policies and proposals in relation to development in the Royal Borough in the period 1991-2006. The Consultation Draft Plan was published in April 1993. Following consideration of responses to consultation, the Council placed the plan on deposit in March 1994. The document was subject to a further period of consultation. A total of over 1,700 separate comments were received, of which nearly 1,400 were formally accepted as objections to the Local Plan.

1.7.6 Formal objections to the Deposit Draft Local Plan were considered at a Public Local Inquiry held between April 1995 and February 1996. The Inspector who conducted the Local Plan Inquiry submitted his report of the Inquiry to the Council in February 1997. The Inspector's Report was considered by the Council and nearly all the recommendations contained in the Report were accepted by the Council. However, a small number of recommendations were rejected or only partially accepted. Proposed Modifications to the plan were published in September 1997, Further Proposed Modifications and Third Round Proposed Modifications were published in June 1998 and March 1999 respectively.

Main Changes to the Deposit Draft Plan

1.7.7 As a result of the Local Plan Inquiry and the Report of the Inspector, the Council made a number of modifications to the Plan. Details of the reasons for the changes to each of the policies in the plan can be found in a separate document, "Response to the Recommendations of the Report of the Inspector who conducted an Inquiry into the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan ". 