

West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

6 Delivering Housing

Approach to Housing Delivery

Policy SP12

Approach to Housing Delivery

Provision will be made for at least 9,270 net additional homes in West Berkshire for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2041; an average housing requirement of 515 dwellings per annum.

New homes will be located in accordance with policy SP1: Spatial Strategy, policy SP3: Settlement hierarchy and policy DM1: Development in the Countryside.

There should be no net losses from the existing stock of homes in West Berkshire. Existing homes should be retained in residential use (or replaced at least in equal numbers, normally on the proposed site), unless there is a reasoned justification in the form of a benefit to the wider community for a change of use. Developments should utilise opportunities to make better use of the existing housing stock.

To meet the housing requirement, the following sources will ensure a continuous supply of land for housing across the plan period:

- a. Sites allocated within the Local Plan and made neighbourhood plans;
- b. Existing planning commitments on unallocated sites;
- c. Existing planning commitments for communal accommodation (Use Class C2); and
- d. A windfall allowance.

Sites to be allocated in Neighbourhood Plans

The Council will supply a housing requirement figure to those qualifying bodies either preparing or updating a neighbourhood plan that intends to include residential allocations.

For those plans currently in preparation, it will be necessary to identify sites to meet the following levels of development:

- Hungerford: approximately 55 dwellings
- Lambourn: approximately 25 dwellings.

Sites allocated within this LPR cannot be counted towards the housing requirement supplied to qualifying bodies.

Supporting Text

Housing need and the housing requirement

6.1 The NPPF states that “to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing needs assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach.... Any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for”.

6.2 Details of the standard method for calculating the local housing need figure (LHN) are set out in the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment section of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). Using the 2014-based household projections, and an uplift based on the ratio of house prices to workplace-based earnings published by the Office for National Statistics on 22 March 2023, the LHN for the District is 515 dwellings per annum using a baseline of 2023.

6.3 The LHN is not necessarily the same as the housing requirement, and the PPG outlines circumstances where it may be appropriate to plan for a higher number. These include, but are not limited to, situations where increases in housing need are likely to exceed past trends. This can include unmet needs from adjoining authorities, strategic infrastructure requirements that are likely to drive an increase in the local housing needs, and growth strategies for the area that are likely to be deliverable, for example where funding is in place to promote and facilitate extra growth.

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6.4 Although the NPPF no longer refers to 'Housing Market Areas' (HMAs), the PPG provides a definition of a housing market area which refers to the importance of key functional linkages between places where people live and work. The Berkshire (Including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA, February 2016)⁽⁷⁵⁾ found that West Berkshire has a strong functional relationship with Wokingham Borough, Reading Borough and Bracknell Forest. As a result, there was much collaborative working between these authorities on housing matters and associated infrastructure which informed the LPR.

6.5 The Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019) identified a shortfall of 230 dwellings that was anticipated to arise in the latter part of plan period. The local authorities which make up the Western Berkshire HMA agreed a Statement of Common Ground for the purposes of local plan-making. This recognises Reading's unmet need set out in the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan and the principle that the need should be met within the West of Berkshire area. This agreement relates only to Reading's need as calculated by the SHMA, not by any alternative calculations of need.

6.6 Reading Borough Council now expects to deliver enough homes over the remainder of its adopted Local Plan period (to 2036) to more than meet its own adopted housing requirement including its previously identified unmet need. Reading Borough Council therefore does not expect the West Berkshire LPR to make specific provision for the unmet need as outlined in the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan.

6.7 No shortfall was identified from other adjacent authorities or any of the other authorities within the Western Berkshire HMA.

Meeting the housing requirement

6.8 Several sources will ensure a continuous supply of land for housing across the plan period. These include:

- Sites allocated within the Local Plan and made neighbourhood plans;
- Existing planning commitments on unallocated sites;
- Existing planning commitments for communal accommodation (use class C2); and
- A windfall allowance.

a. Sites allocated within the Local Plan and neighbourhood plans

Previous Local Plan and Stratfield Mortimer NDP allocations:

6.9 The plan period of the LPR (2023 - 2041) overlaps with the previous plan period (2006 – 2026) and account therefore has been taken of sites that were allocated in the Core Strategy, the HSA DPD and the made Stratfield Mortimer NDP. The relevant policy criteria for the previous Local Plan allocations included in Chapter 8 of this LPR still apply to these sites to cover events such as revised schemes being submitted or a planning permission lapsing.

6.10 This element of the supply consists of allocations with and without planning permission at 31 March 2023. Where a site has an extant permission, the number of dwellings permitted has been used for the purposes of calculating the housing supply. For those sites without permission at 31 March 2023, the number allocated within the policy has been used.

Allocations in the previous Local Plan which have not been retained:

6.11 Several sites that were allocated within the Core Strategy and HSA DPD have not been retained in the LPR and this is because at 31 March 2023 development was at an advanced stage of construction. At 31 March 2023, there were 451 units outstanding on these sites.

New sites allocated in the LPR:

6.12 The Council's overall approach to identify land for allocation is set out in policy SP1 and in policy SP3. Assessment of the availability, suitability and viability of individual sites took place through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)⁽⁷⁶⁾ and further technical and sustainability assessments were undertaken. Sites allocated for residential and mixed use development are detailed in policies SP13 and SP14, as well as policies RSA1 to RSA29, and these include additional housing supply on newly allocated sites of some 2,400 homes. This includes the strategic allocation at North East Thatcham for up to approximately 2,500 homes, with approximately 1,760 homes expected to be delivered within the plan period.

75 Berkshire (Including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (February 2016): <https://westberks.gov.uk/shma>

76 Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/helaa>

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Sites to be allocated in neighbourhood plans:

6.13 The NPPF requires that within the housing requirement for the whole District, strategic policies should also set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations.

6.14 Should any qualifying body decide to prepare a neighbourhood plan that includes residential allocations or update a made neighbourhood plan to include residential allocations, then the Council will supply a housing requirement figure.

6.15 In meeting this requirement, the policy clarifies that sites allocated within this LPR cannot be counted towards meeting the figure supplied to a qualifying body. In addition, policy SP3 also makes clear that any NDP allocations within defined settlement boundaries will not count towards meeting the housing requirement figure in policy SP12 either. This is because there is a presumption in favour of development within defined settlement boundaries and to do so would be inconsistent with the assumptions made in the LPR about the District's overall housing land supply.

6.16 A number of neighbourhood plans are in preparation within the District. Whilst it is not compulsory for neighbourhood plans to include allocations, approximately 80 dwellings will be allocated through the neighbourhood plans for Hungerford and Lambourn. The delivery of these neighbourhood plans will be monitored by the Council to ensure the housing requirement is met. The Council reserves the right to identify opportunities to address any shortfall if the Hungerford and Lambourn neighbourhood plans are not made within two years of the adoption of the LPR.

b. Existing planning commitments on unallocated sites

6.17 Existing permissions for housing on unallocated sites also contribute to supply. Over 1,729 units on these sites already had permission or prior approval for permitted development at 31 March 2023.

c. Existing planning commitments for communal accommodation (Use Class C2)

6.18 The housing supply and delivery section of the PPG requires local planning authorities *"to count housing provided for older people, including residential institutions in Use Class C2, as part of their housing land supply. This contribution is based on the amount of accommodation released in the housing market."* The Housing Delivery Test Measurement Rulebook gives the ratio for communal accommodation based on the national average number of adults in all households as 1.8 based on the 2011 Census. For example, a 90 bed care home would equate to 50 net dwellings ($90 \div 1.8 = 50$).

6.19 At 31 March 2023 there were existing permissions for residential institutions in Use Class C2 which equate to 91 units.

d. Windfall allowance

6.20 The NPPF states that local planning authorities *"should support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes"* (para. 69). Policies within the LPR identify the most sustainable settlements and direct development to the built up areas within settlement boundaries. The Council also publishes and maintains a register of brownfield sites⁽⁷⁷⁾ that are available and potentially suitable for residential development across the District.

6.21 The Council has assessed the contribution likely to be made from windfall sites based on past trends. It is clear that windfall sites have consistently played an important role in the housing supply of the District: approximately 72% of completions in the period 2006 - 2023 were on unallocated, windfall sites. The windfall allowance of 140 dwellings per annum is, in comparison, relatively modest and will add flexibility to the supply over the plan period. It is based on the average annual delivery on small sites of less than 10 units over the period 2006 – 2023. The calculated allowance set out in Table 2 takes account of existing small permissions that are already included in the supply by deducting these from the allowance of 140 dpa over the period 2023 to 2041. Any future windfall sites of 10 units or more are not included in the windfall allowance calculations, which introduces flexibility to the figures.