

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan Consultation

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#### What is this consultation about?

This consultation is about gathering views from residents, businesses and stakeholders to help shape the future of Arborfield and Barkham.

It will inform the next stage of the Neighbourhood Plan, which is a planning document that can influence where development happens, what it looks like, and how it supports the community.

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#### Why is this consultation happening now?

There is increasing pressure for housing growth locally and nationally. The area has already seen significant development, and more is likely.

At the same time:

- Housing targets have increased
- National policy supports continued development
- The current Local Plan is becoming out of date

Updating the Neighbourhood Plan now helps ensure the community has a stronger voice in shaping future decisions.

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#### Does this mean more housing has already been decided?

No. This consultation is not about approving development.

However, it is realistic to expect that further growth is likely. The aim is to understand how that growth could be managed and what the community would prefer, rather than having decisions imposed without local input.

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#### What are the “growth scenarios”?

The growth scenarios are “what-if” examples of how development *might* happen in the future.

They are:

- Not proposals
- Not targets

- Not decisions

They are tools to help explore different options, understand impacts, and identify trade-offs.

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### **How many new homes are being considered?**

The scenarios test what might happen if around **4,000–6,000 homes** were built over the long term (up to 2050 and beyond).

This figure is used to explore impacts — it is not a confirmed number or target.

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### **What are the three scenarios?**

- **Build on all available land:** Faster, developer-led growth with less local control
- **Persistent urbanism:** Expanding existing towns and villages
- **Multi-modal travel push:** Higher density development focused around centres with better public transport and active travel

Each has different impacts on traffic, infrastructure, countryside and community character.

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### **What issues are most important to residents?**

Residents have told the Parish Councils that the key priorities are:

- Protecting rural identity and preventing settlements merging
- Managing traffic and transport
- Access to health and community infrastructure
- Protecting heritage, woodland and green spaces

These priorities are central to the consultation.

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### **Will this consultation stop development?**

The Neighbourhood Plan cannot stop all development.

However, it can:

- Influence where development goes
- Protect important areas
- Set design and infrastructure expectations
- Help secure community benefits

Without an updated plan, there is less ability to shape outcomes.

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### **What about traffic and infrastructure?**

Traffic and infrastructure are major concerns across all scenarios.

The consultation explores questions such as:

- How much growth the road network can handle
- Whether better public transport and active travel could reduce car use
- What infrastructure is needed to support future communities

Some infrastructure (like major roads or new GP surgeries) can be difficult to deliver, so choices may involve trade-offs.

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### **Will new schools and health services be provided?**

Future growth is likely to require:

- New primary schools
- Potentially a new secondary school
- Additional GP capacity

However, delivery depends on funding, location and coordination with providers, and is not guaranteed.

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### **What is “scenario planning”?**

Scenario planning is a way of thinking about the future by exploring different possibilities.

It helps:

- Understand long-term impacts
- Identify risks and opportunities
- Support better decision-making

It is not about predicting the future, but about being better prepared for it.

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### **How will the environment be protected?**

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is being carried out alongside the consultation.

This will:

- Identify important natural and heritage assets
- Assess potential impacts of growth
- Recommend ways to avoid or reduce harm

Protecting green spaces, woodland and local character is a key priority.

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### **How can I take part?**

You can take part by:

- Attending consultation events
  - Sharing your views on the scenarios
  - Highlighting priorities and concerns
  - Suggesting ideas for future improvements
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### **What happens next?**

Feedback from the consultation will be used to:

- Inform the updated Neighbourhood Plan
- Guide responses to the emerging Local Plan
- Shape how the Parish Councils respond to planning applications

The goal is to create a plan that reflects the community's priorities as strongly as possible.