Local Development Framework

Options Consultation March 2009

The Royal Borough

Windsor & Maidenhead

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Foreword

We are at a crucial stage in planning for the future of the Royal Borough. That's why it is so important to have your thoughts on how and where we plan development for the future.

Many of you will already be aware that decisions about how many new homes should be built in the borough over the next 20 years are made at national and regional levels. This council has opposed the level of housing growth allocated to the borough, but it appears that our objections to the numbers of additional houses have fallen on deaf ears.

That's why we face a difficult challenge in managing future development to protect the borough's special character and bring the widest possible benefits to the community.

This Options Paper set the context to the borough before setting out a draft vision of the place we want the Royal Borough to be. It continues by setting out three main ways that development could be managed, based on the preferred density of development in our towns, followed by a number of more detailed policy areas.

The council is here to serve its community and your views are essential for us to plan effectively for the future. We look forward to receiving any ideas you may have for planning for the future and in particular your response to the questions set out in this options paper.

Alison Knight
Lead Member for Planning and Development

Glossary

Glossary

Table 1 Glossary of Terms

Development	The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations, in, on, over, or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of a building or other land.
Development Plan	Consists of the Regional Spatial Strategy and Development Plan Documents contained within the council's Local Development Framework. Until the LDF is fully in place it will also include "saved" policies from the council's Local Plan.
Development Plan Document (DPD)	A spatial planning document within the council's Local Development Framework which sets out policies for development and the use of land. Together with the Regional Spatial Strategy they form the development plan for the area. The preparation of DPD are subject to independent examination.
Local Development Documents	The generic terms given to documents within the council's Local Development Framework.
Local Development Framework (LDF)	Consists of a number of Local Development Documents which together form the spatial strategy for development and use of land across the Borough.
Local Plan	A Borough-wide planning document setting out policies for development and the use of land. It will be replaced by the Local Development Framework.
Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)	A series of notes issues by the Government, setting out policy guidance on different aspects of planning. They will be replaced by Planning Policy Statements.
Planning Policy Statement (PPS)	A series of statements issues by the Government, setting out policy guidance on different aspects of planning. They will replace Planning Policy Guidance.
Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)	A long-term plan for the region which sets out strategic policies for development and the use of land. It allocates a quantum of development to each local authority. The development plan for the area comprises the RSS together with the Development Plan Documents within the council's Local Development Framework.
South East Plan	A plan produced by the South East England Regional Assembly which, once approved by Government, will form the Regional Spatial Strategy for the area.
Structure Plan	A county-wide planning document setting out policies for development and the use of land. It will be replaced by the Regional Spatial Strategy.
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	A spatial planning document within the council's Local Development Framework which provides supplementary guidance to policies and proposals contained within

Glossary

	Development Plan Documents. They do not form part of the development plan, nor are they subject to independent examination.
Sustainability Appraisal	The appraisal of plans, strategies and proposals to text them against broad sustainability objectives.
Sustainable Development	"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (The World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Glossary

The Local Development Framework

1 The Local Development Framework

1.1   The council is required to plan for the future of the Royal Borough with the preparation of a Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF, along with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), will guide how the planning system will shape your community[1].

1.2   The LDF can be thought of as a folder comprising two three different types of Local Development Documents:

1.   Development Plan Documents (DPDs);
2.   Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs); and
3.   Supporting documents.

1.3   DPDs are the primary policy documents within the LDF. They outline the key development goals of the LDF, by setting the overall strategy and related policies for the development and use of land. DPDs are subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement, consultation and independent examination. Once adopted, development control decisions must be made in accordance with DPDs and the RSS unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.4   The council intends to produce three DPDs as part of the LDF, namely:

1.   Core Strategy DPD
2.   Delivery and Development Principles DPD
3.   Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP)[2]

1.5   Further information is provided on the role of each below.

Core Strategy DPD

1.6   The Core Strategy DPD is the heart of the LDF. It sets out the long-term vision for how the area and places within it should develop. It will contain a set of strategic policies focusing on key issues and provide a delivery strategy for addressing these, such as how much development is intended to happen where, when and by what means. It should be informed by an analysis of the area's characteristics, including its constituent parts, and the key issues facing them. The vision should be in general conformity with the RSS and closely relate to the Sustainable Community Strategy for the area.

Delivery and Development Principles DPD

1.7   The Delivery and Development Principles DPD will contain detailed policies for the development and use of land. It will allocate where necessary to ensure the Royal Borough meets the requirement to provide homes, jobs, shopping and recreation in line with the approach established by the RSS and the Core Strategy.

Maidenhead Town Centre AAP

1.8   The Maidenhead Town Centre AAP will focus on the implementation of the Core Strategy within this particular area. It will provide an important mechanism for ensuring coordinated development of an appropriate scale, mix and quality for the town centre, including the allocation of sites for redevelopment.

Previous Work on the Local Development Framework

1.9   The council began work on establishing the LDF in 2005. Following extensive community consultation, the council prepared and submitted in November 2006 a Core Strategy DPD to the government for independent examination. This Core Strategy was supported by the community and extensive evidence, including details on the potential to accommodate development within existing settlements.

1.10   The Inspector published his report in October 2007. Whilst supportive of development being focused within settlements, and noting the wide measure of community support, the Inspector concluded that it was not certain that the long-term development needs could be satisfied within existing settlement boundaries. In the Inspector's

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1   Following the implementation of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004, LDFs have replaced the system of Structure Plan and Local Plan. Until the LDF is fully established, the existing Structure Plan and Local Plan policies continue to be relevant in planning decisions.
2   An Area Action Plan (AAP) is a DPD focused on a specific location.

1 The Local Development Framework

opinion, a Core Strategy DPD would need to adopt a more positive approach to the identification and delivery of land to provide greater certainty that strategic requirements will be met. If additional sites are to be identified to ensure compliance with Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3), it will be necessary to look at land currently beyond existing settlement boundaries. In this respect, the Inspector considered that a review should be focused on Maidenhead as the largest and most sustainable location for new development. In addition to satisfying housing and employment land requirements, the Inspector also considered that a review of Green Belt land could also be supported to avoid over supply of high density apartment development and to aid the supply of affordable housing. In light of his findings, the Inspector found the plan to be unsound and directed its withdrawal.

1.11   This Options Paper builds on previous work and the outcomes of past community engagement.

Options Paper - Approach and Content

1.12   In order to inform the preparation of the LDF, the council has produced a series of reports looking at specific subjects such as flood risk, the availability of land for housing development and the need for employment and retail floorspace. Additionally, the council has a pool of opinion from the wider community expressed through the previous work on the LDF and other council surveys. From this "evidence base" it is possible to establish the characteristics and issues facing the Royal Borough as a whole and for the places within it.

1.13   The Options Paper presents key information and challenges. It then describes a vision for the Royal Borough which provides a broad aspirational framework within which the LDF will be developed. Aims are then defined which set out how the vision might be achieved through the planning process. A series of options (approaches) are then identified that describe the ways in which the LDF can contribute towards addressing the key issues and challenges whilst realising the vision and aims.

1.14   While the council will prepare the LDF, the government, through its regional office, require it to conform with national and regional planning policy, including the amount of development to be delivered.

Which Option - Your Chance to Comment

1.15   This Options Paper is the first stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy DPD, the Delivery and Development Principles DPD and the Maidenhead Town Centre AAP. This is your opportunity to get involved in drawing up these plans. The figure overleaf shows the process for the Core Strategy. The timetable for key stages are shown within the council's Local Development Scheme. Please also refer to Figure 1.1 which outlines the key stages of the Core Strategy DPD. It is anticipated that the Core Strategy will be adopted by the council in December 2010.

1.16   A number of questions are included at various stages in this paper. These are intended to prompt you to think about issues which we would particularly welcome your view.

1.17   The options presented in this paper are not necessarily definitive and you may feel an alternative approach is more suitable. Any suggestions you have have are welcome. In providing your response, it would be of help if you could expand on why you have reached your opinion.

1.18   The council is encouraging on-line responses via its web-link http://consultation.limehouse.co.uk/index.do?identifier=rbwm. Representations can be made and submitted directly via this website or by writing to the postal and email address below.

> Planning Policy Manager
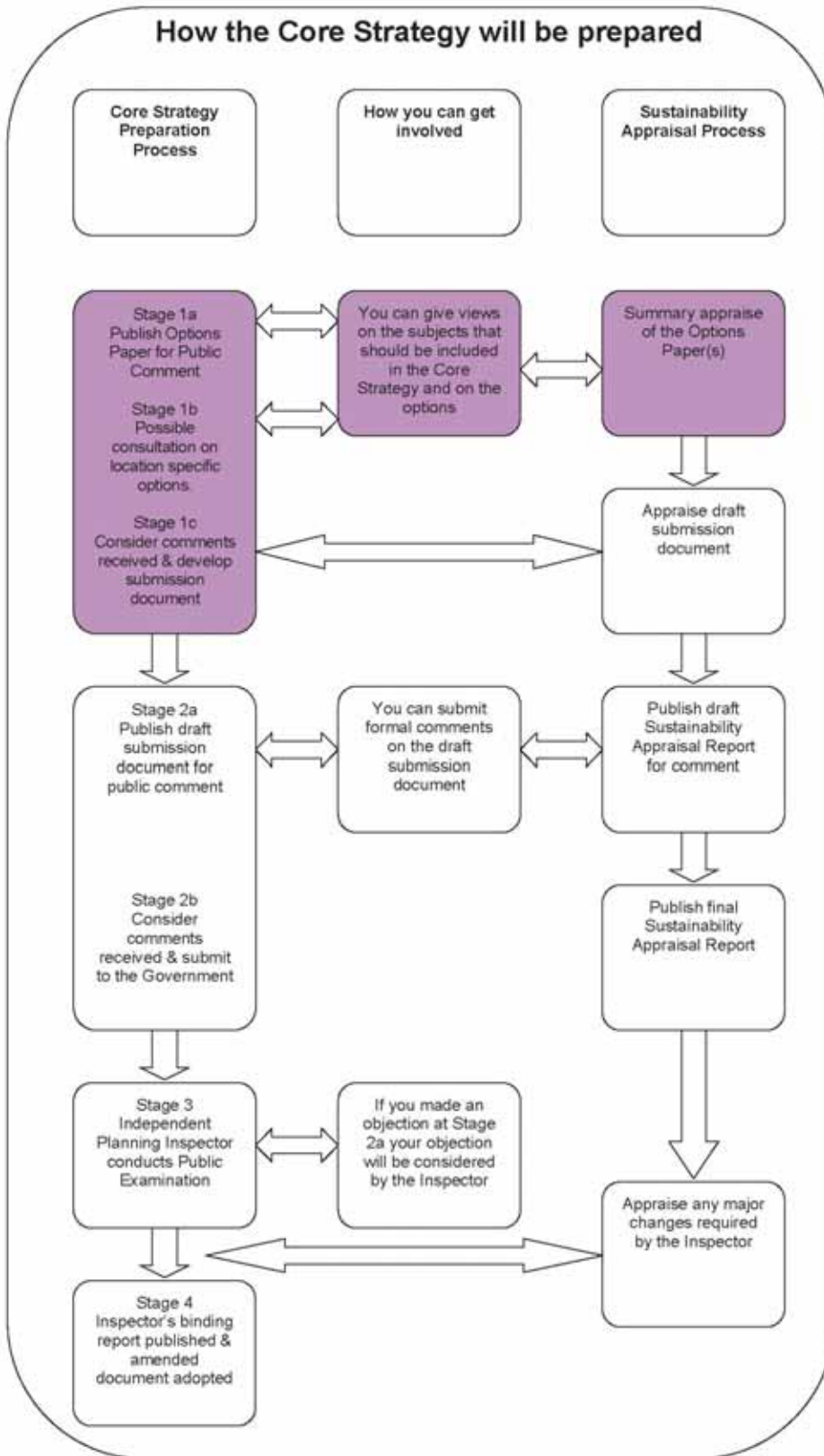> Planning and Development Unit
> Town Hall
> St Ives Road
> Maidenhead
> SL6 1RF
>
> Planning.Policy@rbwm.gov.uk

1.19   All responses must reach the council by 20th April 2009.

The Local Development Framework   1

Figure 1.1 How the Core Strategy will be prepared.

How the Core Strategy will be prepared

Core Strategy Preparation Process

How you can get involved

Sustainability Appraisal Process

Stage 1a Publish Options Paper for Public Comment

Stage 1b Possible consultation on location specific options

Stage 1c Consider comments received & develop submission document

You can give views on the subjects that should be included in the Core Strategy and on the options

Summary appraise of the Options Paper(s)

Appraise draft submission document

Stage 2a Publish draft submission document for public comment

Stage 2b Consider comments received & submit to the Government

You can submit formal comments on the draft submission document

Publish draft Sustainability Appraisal Report for comment

Publish final Sustainability Appraisal Report

Stage 3 Independent Planning Inspector conducts Public Examination

If you made an objection at Stage 2a your objection will be considered by the Inspector

Appraise any major changes required by the Inspector

Stage 4 Inspector's binding report published & amended document adopted
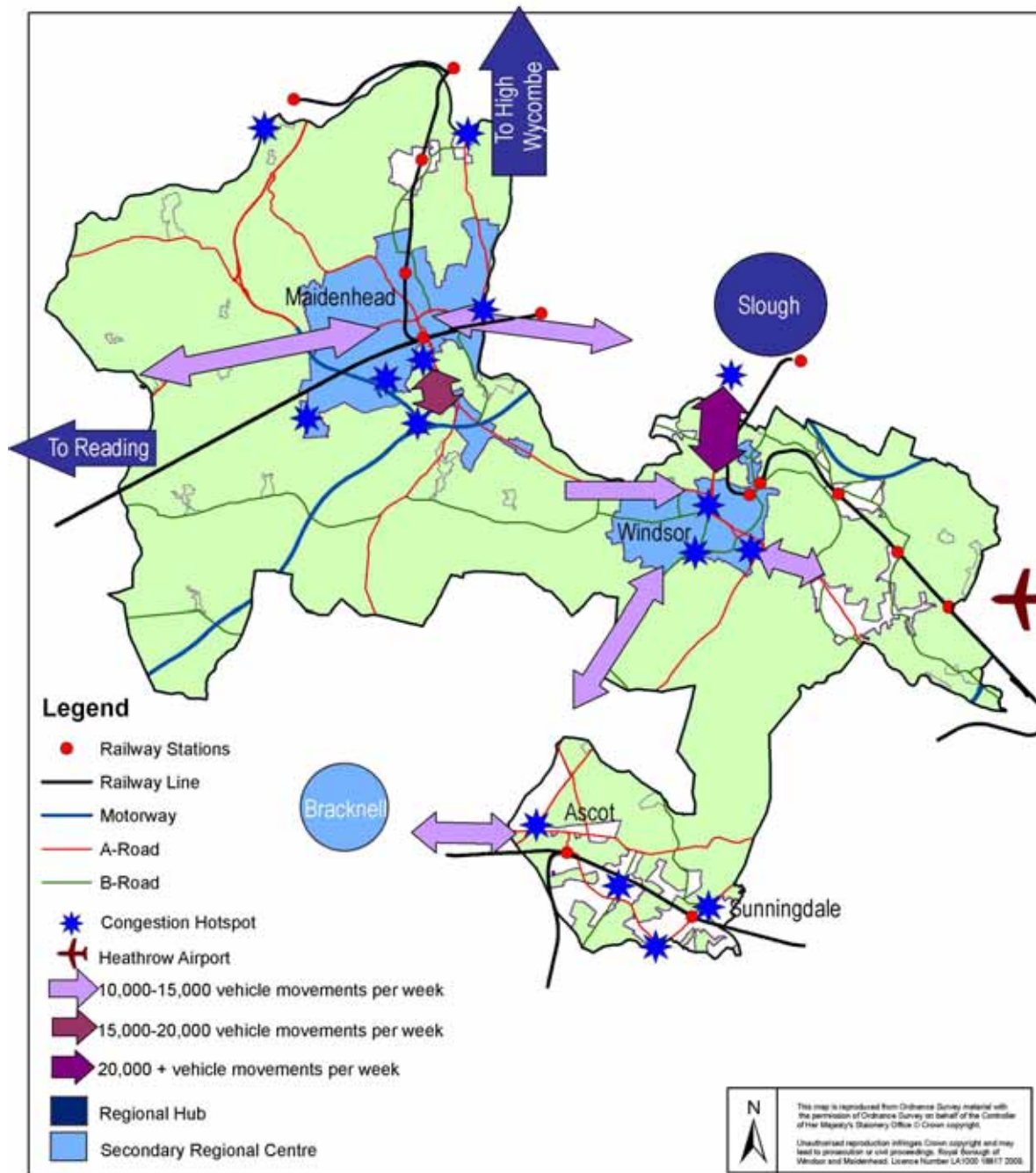
An Introduction to the Royal Borough

2 An Introduction to the Royal Borough

2.1   An understanding of the Royal Borough is the initial step in the preparation of the LDF. This section seeks to paint a spatial portrait of the Royal Borough, describing the regional and sub-regional context before going on to discuss what makes the area distinct as a place. Consideration is given not only to the main characteristics of the Royal Borough but also the settlements or areas within it which face particular issues and challenges.

2.2   It is not the intention of this section to be overly descriptive on statistics, but instead to identify issues which are relevant to the preparation of the LDF. More detailed statistical information is available in the Sustainability Appraisal process[3].

Travel

Figure 2.1 Travel Context

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3   See the Revised Scoping Report: Core Strategy DPD and Delivery and Development Principles DPD, June 2008.

An Introduction to the Royal Borough

Road

2.3   The Royal Borough has excellent road links to London, the south-east and beyond. The M4 motorway dissects the borough with 3 junctions in close proximity to the Maidenhead and Windsor urban areas. The M25 runs just inside the eastern boundary of the borough and the M3 runs just to the south of the borough, and the A404 also provides direct access to the M40. These provide a good link to the regional and national motorway network and to Heathrow airport.

2.4   At the local level there are a number of locations where congestion occurs at peak times. These include Junctions 7 and 8/9 of the M4 as well as on a number of A and B-Roads.

2.5   Due to heavy levels of commuting both in and out of the Royal Borough, a number of the borough's roads have a large number of vehicle movements particularly between Maidenhead, Windsor and Ascot, and neighbouring centres such as Slough, Marlow, High Wycombe, Reading and Bracknell. As a result of these high numbers of vehicle movements and congestion, there are two Air Quality Management Areas, one in Windsor and one in Maidenhead. These require the careful management of vehicle movements to limit the impact on air quality from vehicle emissions.

Rail

2.6   The borough has 10 railway stations including mainline stations at Maidenhead, Windsor & Eton, Ascot and Sunningdale. These offer good connections with a number of regional centres, London and the wider National Rail Network. Branch lines run from the Great Western Railway line at Maidenhead to Cookham Rise, and to Windsor & Eton Central from Slough.

2.7   Rail is a popular transport method of choice for many commuters, and the general population, with over 3.5 million people entering and exiting from Maidenhead station in 2006/2007, and over 1 million entries and exits in Ascot, Windsor & Eton Central and Windsor & Eton Riverside during the same period. Rail usage appears to have been increasing when comparing these figures to previous years. In the 2001 census only 6.34% of the working population used trains, but it is understood that this figure has increased.

Commuting

2.8   The borough experiences high levels of both in and out commuting. These commuter journeys amount to some 30,000 people coming in to the borough, and 28,000 people going out. The majority of these commuter journeys are undertaken by private car which has implications for congestion levels and for air quality in the borough. The journey's made by commuters in private motor vehicles are mainly between the borough and other local centres including Reading, Slough and Bracknell.

Bus

2.9   There are a number of bus services which serve the urban and rural population with links between the Royal Borough's main towns and villages and also to the sub-region's major urban areas. These services have been expanded and improved in recent years which means that a greater number of the population are within 15 minutes of a local centre by public transport. This represents a significant improvement to allow modal choice by the population, and has seen a large increase in usage, particularly in the Maidenhead and Windsor areas. Continued improvements may further reduce the number of car journeys.

Cycle

2.10   The National Cycle Network (NCN) is a 10,000 mile network of safe and attractive routes throughout the UK, and is coordinated by the charity Sustrans. Routes 4, 50 and 61 of the Network pass through the northern areas of the borough to Reading, West London and High Wycombe. Sections of the route are being built or improved as opportunities arise. There are also a number of local and county-wide cycle routes in the borough through both the rural and urban areas. The borough offers cyclists attractive rural and urban routes, and has a fairly flat topography. The major towns are also accessible to cyclists with specific cycle routes, although much of this is shared with pedestrians or motor vehicles. Analysis has shown that there has been a decrease in cycle usage in recent years on routes coming into the town centres of Maidenhead and Windsor.

2

An Introduction to the Royal Borough

Air

2.11   Heathrow airport is located to the east of the borough providing excellent transport links across the world. This is a big attraction for many residents of the borough, however it does bring its problems; particularly with regards to air quality and noise from the planes. The approved construction of a 3rd runway is also something that will affect people in the Royal Borough.

Economic Context

2.12   The borough remains a prime location for business, particularly because of its good transport links and attractive environment. It is home to a number of international companies, particularly in the telecoms and IT industries, many of which have headquarters within the borough. Office rents and take up remain high in the borough compared to the South East and the UK but land constraints limit the potential for new employment development.

Figure 2.2 Economic Context
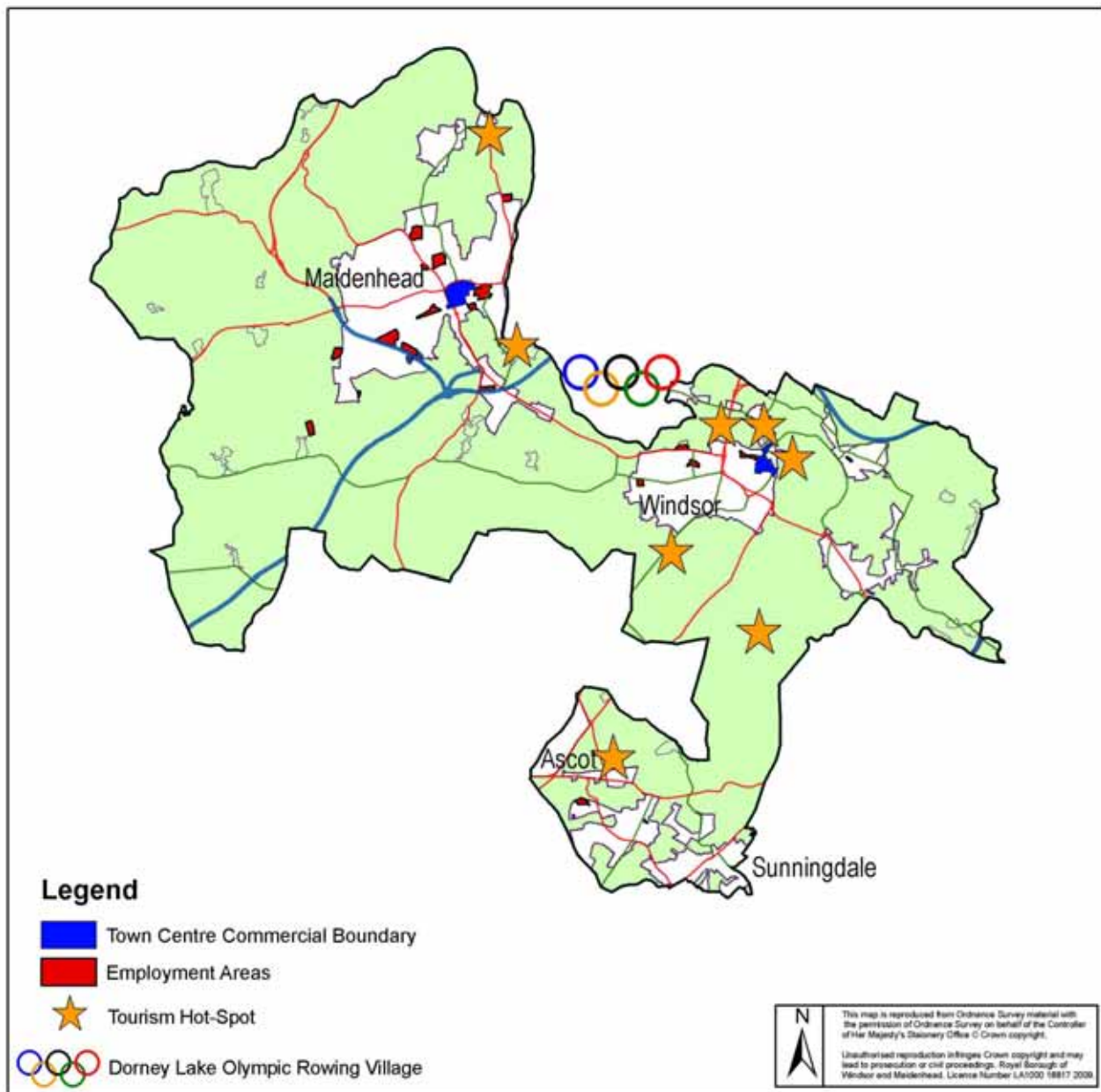
An Introduction to the Royal Borough

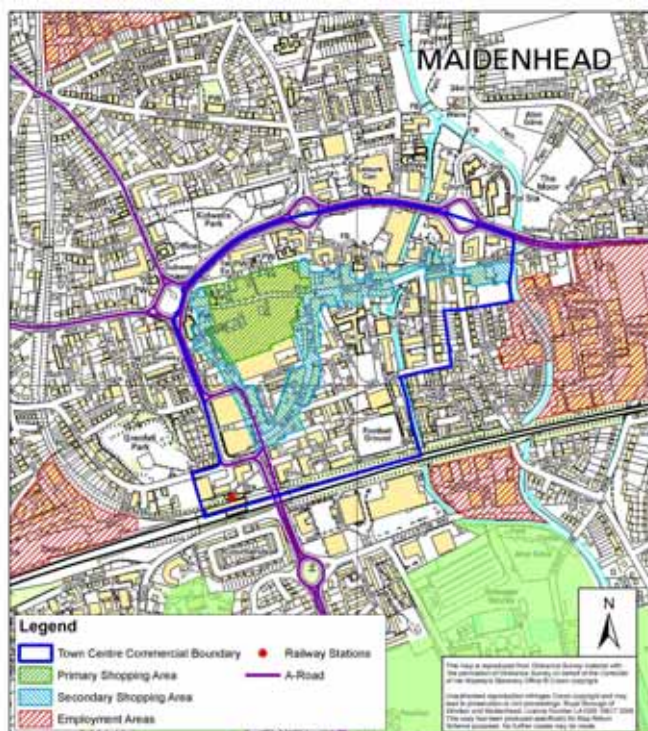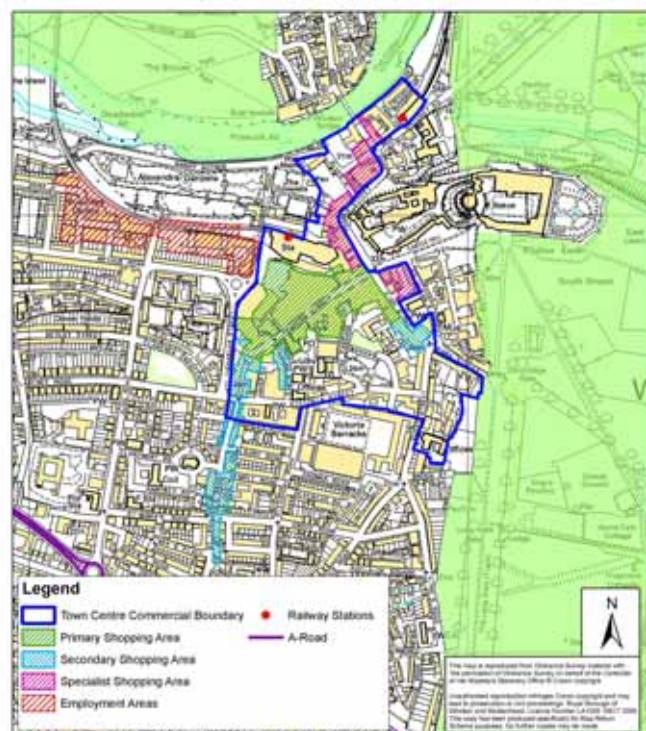Figure 2.3 Maidenhead Town Centre

Figure 2.4 Windsor Town Centre

Employment

2.13 Employment is concentrated in the service and office based sector which accounts for nearly 90% of all jobs in the borough and nearly 10% of the population are employed within the tourist industry. The local population is highly skilled and educated, however only approximately half of the population work within the borough, the rest commute in from the surrounding area. Levels of unemployment remain low in the borough compared to the national and regional figures.

Retail

2.14 Windsor and Maidenhead town centres are the major shopping destinations and are very different in character. Windsor has a range of specialist and convenience shops which provide for the local population and also the many visitors to the town. Maidenhead provides more for the local population with a range of convenience and specialist shops. However, Maidenhead has suffered in recent years as a result of improved shopping centres in neighbouring towns including Slough, High Wycombe and Reading. It will be necessary to make significant improvements to Maidenhead town centre in order to ensure its competitiveness with these other centres. 'Footfall figures'[4] have remained fairly consistent in both Windsor and Maidenhead, however, there are signs that there has been a trend of reductions in figures in Maidenhead which could, if unchecked lead to serious problems for businesses in the town centre.

2.15 Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale remain local centres with a range of shops that suit the local population with high end specialist retailers and also convenience shops.

Tourism

2.16 Tourism remains a major driver of the local economy, with approximately 7 million visitors per year. The borough has two of the UK's Top 20 attractions in Windsor Castle and Legoland Windsor, which both attract in excess of 1 million visitors per year. Tourism is worth over £40 million per year to the borough and employs in the region of 11,000 people. Other local attractions include:

* Eton College and town;
* Savill Gardens;

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4   Figures are collected annually over 2 days in Maidenhead and Windsor town centres. Figures are available in the council's Annual Retail Health Check

An Introduction to the Royal Borough

- Windsor Great Park;
- Ascot Racecourse;
- Windsor Racecourse;
- River Thames;
- Stanley Spencer Gallery in Cookham; and
- Bray's top-rated restaurants.

2.17   Some of these attractions can cause traffic congestion problems during special events. These problems should continue to be managed in order to minimise the effect on the surrounding communities and to further the success of the attractions. (Refer to Figure 2.2)

Social Context

Population Demographics

2.18   The population demographics of the borough generally mirror national trends. This means that there are relatively few young people of 15-24 years old and that a large proportion of the population is over 65. The population is clearly ageing and will lead to higher requirements for accessible homes that can accommodate the elderly or infirm.

Figure 2.5 Leisure Centres, Deprivation and Open Space Context

Legend

- Public Leisure Centres
- IMD 2007 Output Areas in 2nd Lowest Quartile
- Parks and open Space
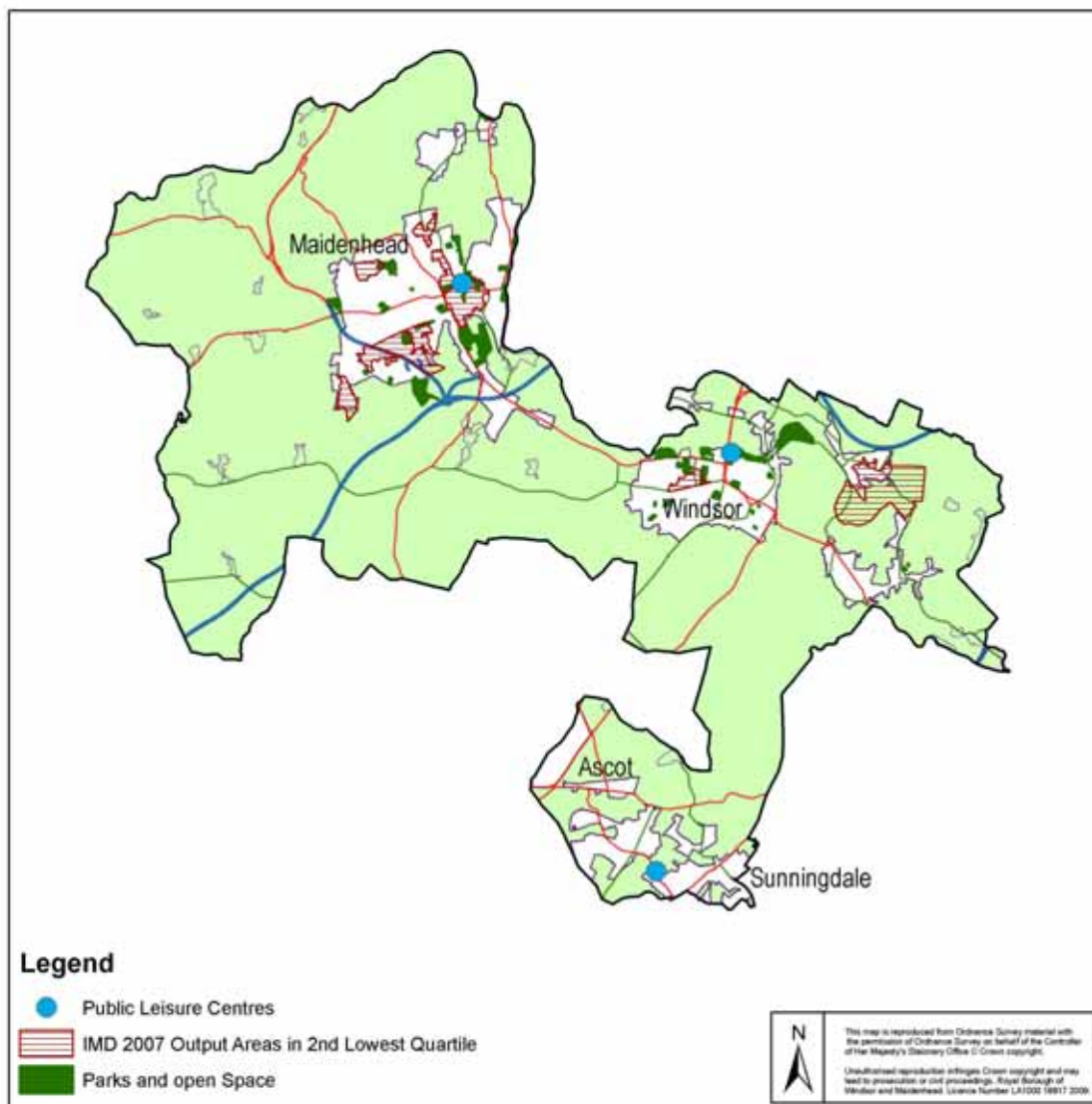
An Introduction to the Royal Borough

Deprivation

2.19   The 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2007) measures deprivation at small local area levels. The borough scored well in the IMD 2007 with no output areas falling in the most deprived quartile in the country. The borough as a whole was ranked 323rd out of 354 meaning that it was one of the least deprived boroughs or districts in the country. However, there are 10 output areas that fall within the second most deprived quartile in the IMD 2007. These are within Pinkney's Green, Oldfield, Belmont and Cox Green Wards in Maidenhead; in Clewer North Ward in Windsor, in Datchet Ward and in Hurley and Walthams Ward. This means that there are pockets of population across the borough where the population experience a higher level of deprivation. (Refer to Figure 2.5)

Open Space, Leisure and Recreation

2.20   There are three indoor public sports centres - one in Maidenhead, one in Windsor and one in Sunningdale. The centres in Maidenhead and Windsor also have indoor swimming pools. There are also a number of private leisure centres, including Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre, that are open to the public. Outdoor leisure facilities are available in locations across the borough, and there are a number of golf courses in the borough, including Sunningdale Golf Course, which are available to the Royal Borough's population.

2.21   The borough has large areas of open land in the rural area that are accessible to the public including Windsor Great Park and areas of National Trust land. There is a wide variety of types of open space across the Royal Borough including a number of formal and informal areas of open space, and open space for leisure uses in the urban areas. There are locations around the borough where further provision of particular types of open space will be encouraged .[5]

2.22   The River Thames is a major leisure destination for the population. The stretch of the Thames that runs through the borough is attractive and offers a number of recreational activities including walking, boating and canoeing. This stretch will need to be properly maintained and improvements sought in order to continue its attractive and accessible character.

Health and Education

2.23   Residents in the borough generally enjoy better levels of health than the national averages - 75% of residents enjoy good health compared to 69% nationally [6] and the Royal Borough is ranked as the 12th healthiest authority in the country. However some residents experience social and economic deprivation which is linked to poor health. The council supports, in principle, the provision of healthcare and is aware of proposals to reorganise healthcare provision in East Berkshire, by the Hospitals Trust and the PCT. The reorganisation focuses on making the best use of existing NHS sites in the borough (i.e. Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot; St. Mark's Hospital, Maidenhead; and King Edward VII Hospital, Windsor), both in terms of acute and primary healthcare facilities.

2.24   The education system is generally successful. There are some some localised capacity pressures including primary provision in Windsor, East Maidenhead and most notably both primary and secondary education in the Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale area. These capacity issues will need to be taken into account with new development as further pressures on the schools in these areas could lead to a requirement for new schools, or changes to catchment areas.

2.25   The built quality of the schools are generally quite high, although some of the schools do not comply with new standards set by the Government and so will need extension or improvement in the near future.

2.26   There are two types of schooling system within the borough. In Windsor a three-tier system is used with First, Middle and Upper schools in contrast to the majority of the country. Across the rest of the borough a more standard two-tier system is used with Primary and Secondary schools. (Refer Figure 2.6)

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5   Open Space Study December 2008
6   (2001 Census)

An Introduction to the Royal Borough

Figure 2.6 GP and School Capacity Context
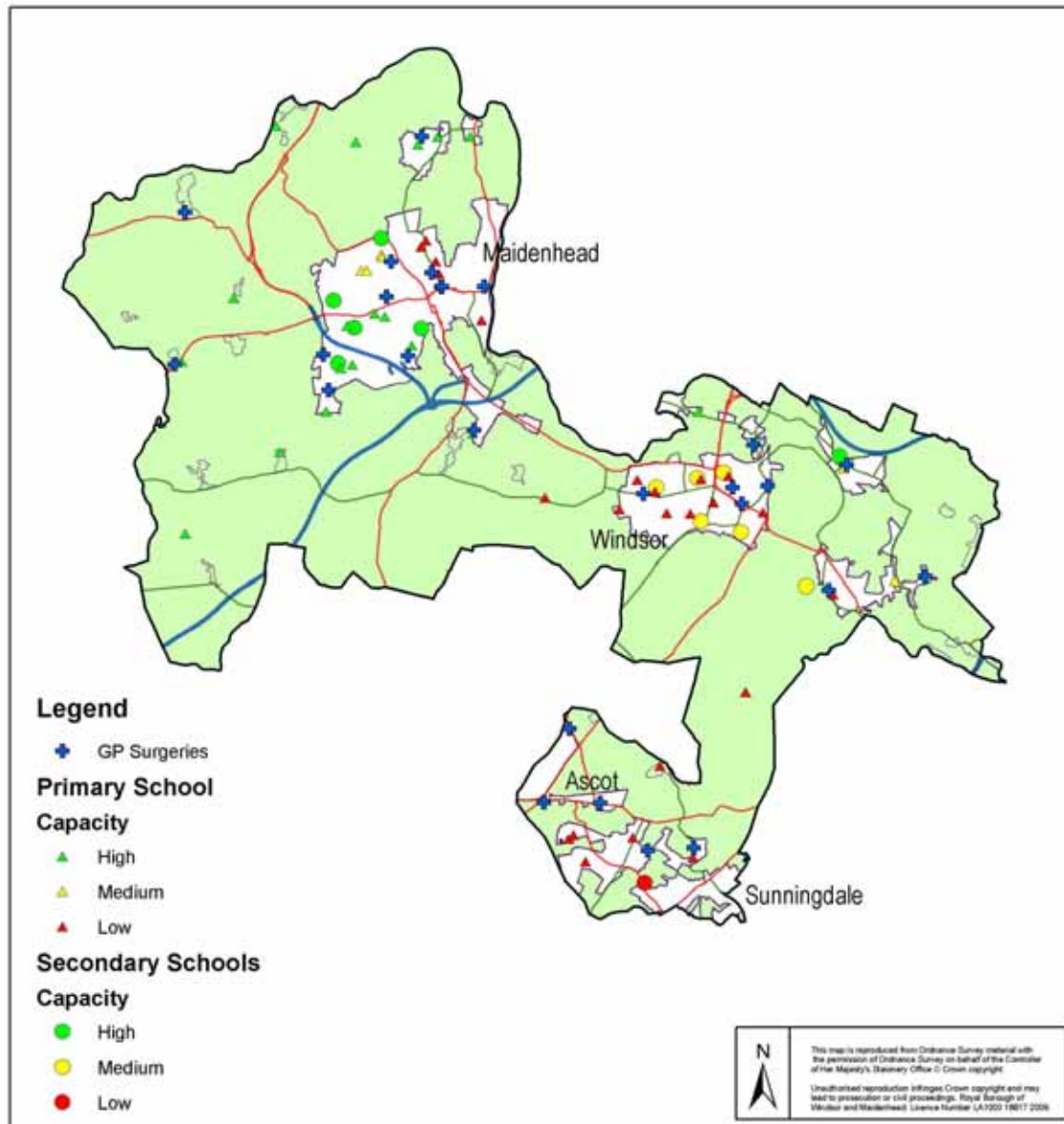
Housing

2.27   One person households make up over a quarter of the borough's households with the majority of these households being located in the southern area, around Ascot and Sunningdale. A third of the housing in the borough is detached compared to a national figure of 23%[7], reflecting the relative wealth of the area.

2.28   House prices in the borough remain high despite the recent economic downturn. The average house price in the borough is approximately £165,000 more than national averages[8]. Although income is significantly higher than the national average, the borough has the 19th highest income to house price ratio in the country showing that affordability continues to be a major issue here.[9]

2.29   Housing land is in short supply and urban potential is limited due to a number of constraints across the borough. This shortage has led to pressure on the urban areas that in turn has led to intensification in places.

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7   (2001 Census)
8   (Land Registry, Crown Copyright)
9   (CLG Live tables on housing market and house prices)

An Introduction to the Royal Borough

Access to Services

2.30   Improvements to the public transportation system in the borough has led to improved access to services. There have been considerable increases in the percentage of the population who can access services such as GPs, hospitals, primary schools, secondary schools, employment areas and major retail centres within 30 minutes by public transport or walking since 2004.

Environmental Context

Green Belt

2.31   83% of the borough is currently made up of Green Belt with 21 recognised settlements falling within it. The extent of the Green Belt can be seen in Figure 2.7. Designation as Green Belt means that there are strict controls on development which prevent urban sprawl and protects the open character of the countryside.

Flooding

2.32   One of the borough's main assets is its waterways. The Rivers Thames and Colne provide attractive landscapes and a number of opportunities for a variety of leisure pursuits. However, with the rivers comes a high risk of flooding in many areas. 27% of all properties in the borough are at risk from flooding, with a large number being at high risk of flooding. The Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton flood alleviation scheme, known as the the Jubilee River, became operational in 2003 and seeks to reduce the risk and extent of flooding in these areas.
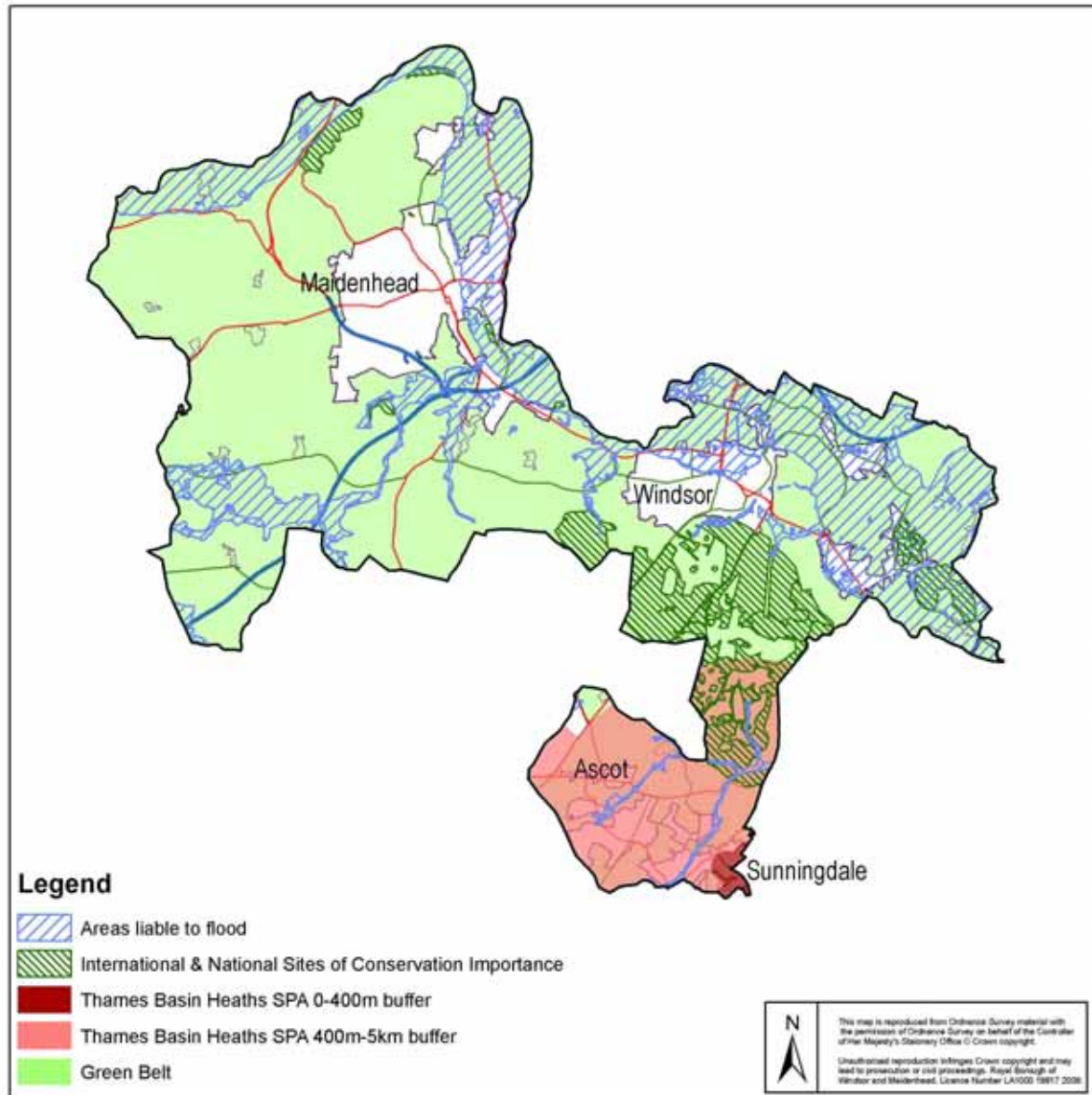
Biodiversity

2.33   Large parts of the borough are recognised for their ecological value by international and national designations. These include 3 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), 2 RAMSAR sites, and 11 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). There is also a large number of locally and county designated areas.

2.34   The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is a network of heathlands designated for their internationally important heathland bird populations of Dartford warbler, nightjar and woodlark, across the south east. The SPA is made up of a number of SSSIs including Chobham Common SSSI near Sunningdale (of which a small portion is located within the borough's boundary) and the Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI to the South of Ascot (which is located to the south).

The SPA is protected by the European Community Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, which is transposed into English Law by the "Habitats Regulations" 2004. [10] Natural England currently advise that residential developments up to 5km from the boundary of the SPA has a significant cumulative impact and should only be permitted where impacts can be avoided or mitigated. Furthermore, Natural England advise that development within 400m cannot be avoided or mitigated due to the proximity and therefore should not be permitted.

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10   Conservation (Natural Habitat & c.) Regulations 2004

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An Introduction to the Royal Borough

Figure 2.7 Environmental Constraints

Legend
- Areas liable to flood
- International & National Sites of Conservation Importance
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA 0-400m buffer
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA 400m-5km buffer
- Green Belt

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Built and Historical Environment

The Royal Borough is steeped in history as a result of the area's importance throughout the past. There are 27 conservation areas around the borough which shows the widespread historical importance of a number of settlements and areas within settlements. There are also 943 entries on the listed buildings register across the borough which incorporate 1,538 individual buildings, again showing the historical significance of many local buildings. Beyond this there are also 17 scheduled ancient monuments and 9 historic parks and gardens which contribute to the historical character and attractiveness of the borough. (Refer to Figure 2.8)

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Figure 2.8 Built and Historic Environment
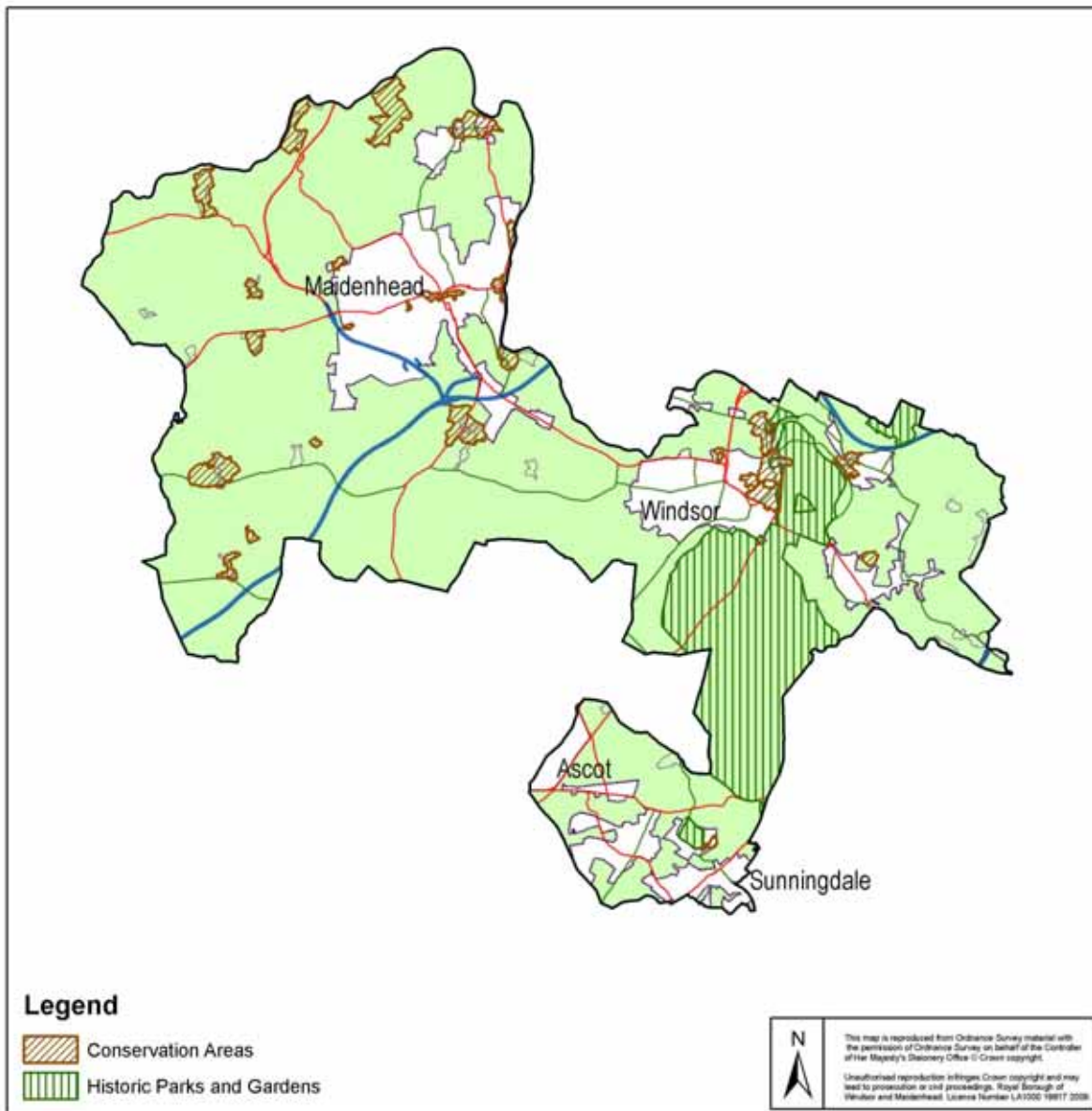
Land Availability

2.35   As already outlined, developable land is in short supply for many uses in the Royal Borough due to constraints including flooding, Green Belt and sites of biodiversity importance.

2.36   The borough has a range of employment areas and currently has approximately 850,000 sq.m of A3, B1-B7 and B8 Use floorspace.[11] It has been highlighted that in order for the borough to meet the forecasted demand, a further 130,000 sq.m of floorspace of B1, B2 and B8 uses will need to be accommodated by 2018.[12] The borough has experienced strong economic growth, but housing and population growth has not kept up with this economic growth.

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11   Planning Commitments for Employment Uses, JSPU
12   Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Employment Land Review, 2006

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Figure 2.9 Land Availability
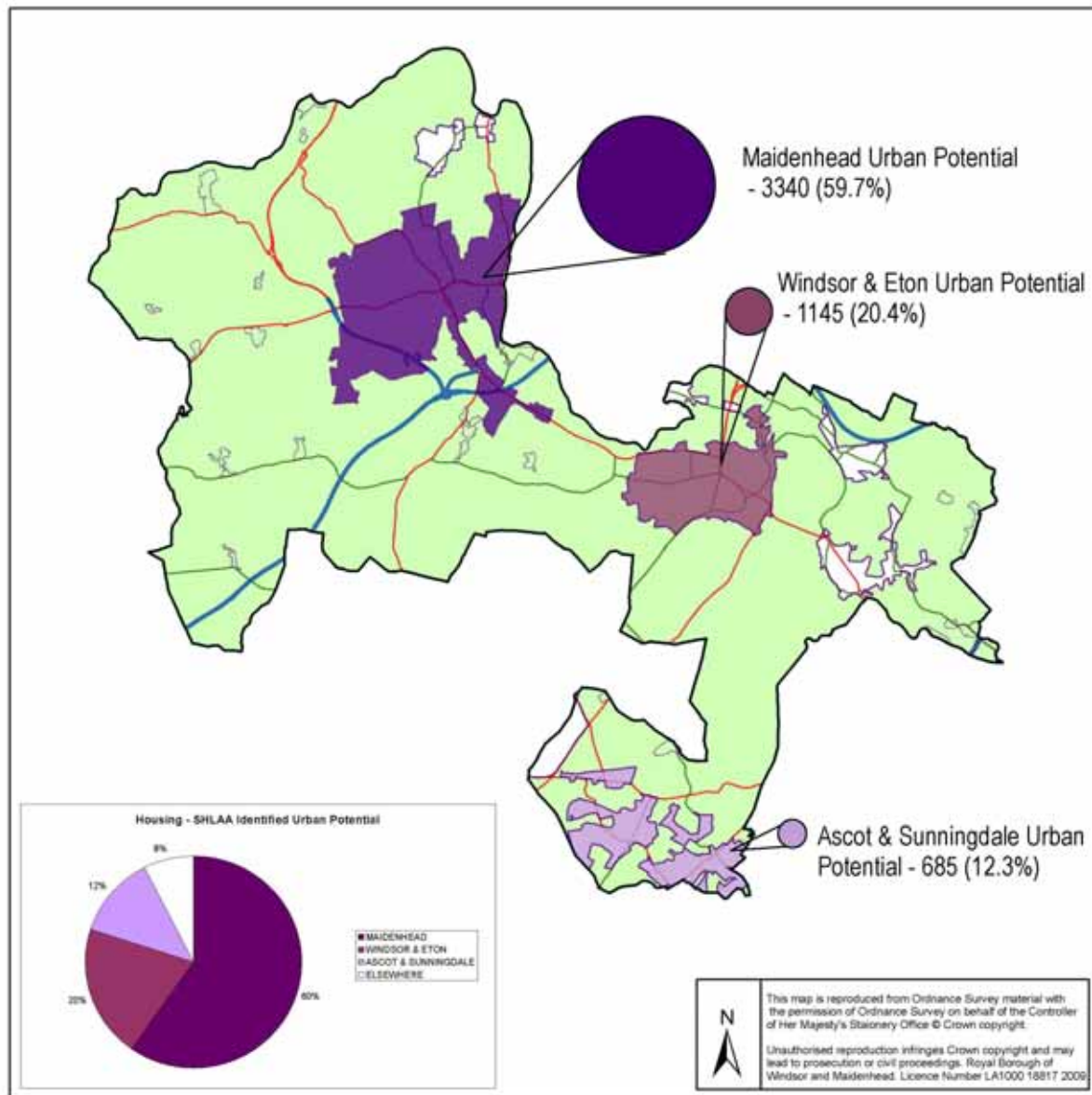
2.37   The Royal Borough is required to accommodate 346 net additional dwellings per annum from 2006 to 2026 (this amounts to a total of 6,920 dwellings). This figure comes from the emerging South East Plan and is higher than the rate previously required (approximately 280 dwellings per annum). The council has sought to identify the potential amount of development that can be accommodated within urban areas through intensification and redevelopment of non-residential buildings. This is generally referred to as urban potential. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment undertaken in 2008 identifies the urban potential for the Royal Borough as approximately 5,500 dwellings over the plan period 2006 to 2026. The vast majority of this urban potential is identified in Maidenhead and Cox Green with the next largest contribution from Windsor. This urban potential represents a significant proportion of the housing requirement, however there is a shortfall of approximately 1,700 dwellings. This shortfall will need to be addressed in order to satisfy an Inspector that the target can be met.

Key Issues and Challenges

3 Key Issues and Challenges

3.1   The Introduction to the Royal Borough in the previous chapter points to a number of issues, problems and challenges facing the Royal Borough as a whole as well as specific areas. This section highlights those key issues which will need to be considered in the preparation of the LDF. It is these that will form the broad backdrop to the Core Strategy DPD and the Delivery and Development Principles DPD.

Demographic Changes:

- Although population changes are predicted to rise slightly it is also predicted that the number of households will increase at a much higher rate. This increase will have implications for the number, type and size of housing required.

- The population is ageing and this trend is likely to continue. In order to meet the needs of an ageing population the LDF must ensure that the type, location and physical design of development will be appropriate and accessible for the elderly and infirm, particularly healthcare development.

Housing:

- The Royal Borough has been set the task of delivering 346 dwellings per year during the plan period. The challenge for the council is to find land to provide this housing and will require some hard choices about how best to accommodate this development given the many constraints in the borough.

- The Royal Borough remains an expensive place to live despite the current economic downturn. High property prices make it difficult for many households to access appropriate housing for their needs which can in turn influence commuter patterns.

Protecting Local Character and Distinctiveness:

- One of the most attractive elements of the Royal Borough to businesses, visitors and residents is the local built and natural environment. It is central to local identity and faces pressures from a number of sources including climate change and development. The need to protect the environment, while accommodating the high demand for housing and business development, places importance on design and landscape considerations, and will influence the form, scale and location of development.

The Economy:

- The location of the Royal Borough, its attractive built and natural environment and its good transportation links have led to a buoyant local economy. Development pressures for further economic development will need to be suitably managed in order to maintain and strengthen the economy and to ensure the protection of local infrastructure and the environment.

Retail:

- The retail offer of the majority of the Royal Borough is adequate and appropriate for the areas which it serves. However, Maidenhead town centre, as a secondary regional centre, will need to expand its facilities by improving its retail offer. The town centre should be the focus of a regeneration initiative to attract visitors and to accommodate a mix of uses that are appropriate for a town centre and will encourage a 24-hour economy.

- Elsewhere the retail areas will continue to serve the local population and visitors successfully and at a scale suitable for their location. It may be necessary to monitor the centres if increases in residential development lead to pressures on them.

3   Key Issues and Challenges

Tourism:

- The Royal Borough already gains a large amount of income from tourism and it is also a key employer in the area. It will be important to maintain this current position in attracting visitors from elsewhere in the country and the world.

- With the Olympics in 2012, it will be important for the Royal Borough to make the most of the opportunity of an increase in tourist numbers and awareness, and ensuring local benefit.

Infrastructure:

- New development can place an increased burden on existing infrastructure and facilities. Key infrastructure such as waste sites, and water provision networks are two of the key issues facing the south east. It is essential that all necessary infrastructure should be in place prior to development taking place.

- Transport impacts should be a key consideration for all development to ensure that congestion not worsen and that air quality can be managed in the identified problem areas. Where possible opportunities should be taken to improve public transportation and discourage the use of the private motor car.

Climate Change

- Large areas of the Royal Borough are at risk of flooding. The need to manage and reduce flood risk is recognised, particularly in light of climate change predictions. This will involve avoiding new developments in areas at unacceptable risk of flooding and designing what development occurs to be able to continue operating during and after floods.

- The need to reduce the consumption of non-renewable resources and the amount of harmful emissions is widely recognised. Lifestyle and consumption trends generally result in an increase of demands for energy and material resources. Climate predictions for Britain are for more intense weather conditions. These changes will have implications on how buildings are designed and constructed. Efforts should be made to reduce the impact of the community and future development on the climate, and to promote the use of renewable energy sources, where appropriate.

Protecting Biodiversity:

- The local environment has a rich diversity of both habitat and species, that exist in the nationally and internationally designated areas, and also in the locally designated locations. There is a need to ensure that development, and its associated and cumulative impact, does not adversely affect these sites of recognised importance. Where possible enhancements should be sought for these sites.

Travel:

- There is a high level of vehicle trips both within and through the Royal Borough. This has resulted in congestion at peak times and reductions in air quality. The challenge is to ensure that new development is such that its users are able to access more sustainable modes of transport, and that travel patterns are managed in an efficient and effective manner.

- It is important to ensure that the standard of public transportation is maintained, or where possible improved. Improvements to the rail hubs should be sought, particularly with the introduction of Crossrail. It will also be important to ensure that any transportation improvements such as high speed rail links or a 3rd runway at Heathrow do not harm the quality of life for residents of the Royal Borough.

Key Issues and Challenges

Question 1

Do you agree that the key issues and challenges identified above accurately reflect those facing the Royal Borough?

4   Vision and Objectives

4 Vision and Objectives

4.1   The vision for the LDF will form part of the Core Strategy DPD. It will set out how the Royal Borough will develop in the long-term. A set of strategic objectives will be defined which focus on the key issues, showing how the vision will be achieved through the planning process. The vision for the LDF has taken account of the previous work on the LDF as well as the *Community Strategy for the Royal Borough Partnership*.

4.2   The *'Community Strategy for the Royal Borough Partnership'* was prepared by the Local Strategic Partnership, a body made up of public sector organisations, community and voluntary organisations, local people, business and parish council representatives. It is a practical tool for joining up services to address local issues and priorities, and as such will contribute to the efficient use of resources. The LDF gives spatial expression to those elements of the Community Strategy which have implications for the development and use of land. A number of key objectives and actions from the Community Strategy have been adopted as the basis for the Core Strategy's Spatial Vision. These include:

- *Promoting awareness of the environment and adoption of sustainable ways of living and working;*
- *Promoting sustainable construction techniques;*
- *Improving domestic energy efficiency;*
- *Developing and promoting a sense of identity and the distinctive character of the Borough;*
- *Creating safe environments and reducing the fear of crime;*
- *Protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment;*
- *Preserving and enhancing parks, open spaces and green corridors;*
- *Delivering quality and choice in market housing;*
- *Developing options for affordable and key worker housing;*
- *Providing care close to home;*
- *Helping people to remain independent;*
- *Promoting the Borough as a prime location for business;*
- *Improving the trading environment for all sectors of the local economy;*
- *Promoting the Borough as a destination and managing visitors effectively;*
- *Reducing the need to travel and widening travel choice;*
- *Developing new and enhancing existing facilities to meet leisure and cultural needs;*
- *Promoting the benefits of a healthy lifestyle;*
- *Making health services convenient and accessible;*
- *Enhancing community learning opportunities by opening up a greater range of facilities, including schools, libraries and other venues;*
- *Extending and enhancing high quality, affordable childcare provision;*
- *Developing and maintaining a high quality infrastructure.*

4.3   The Community Strategy is currently being reviewed by the Local Strategic Partnership and will become the Royal Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). [13] As it is being prepared in tandem with the LDF, this enables the submitted version of the Core Strategy DPD to incorporate comments from this consultation but also to be aligned with with the key spatial objectives identified through the SCS.[14]

Vision

4.4   The vision for the LDF is proposed to be as follows:

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13   The SCS sets out the strategic vision for a place and is linked into regional overarching strategies. Local authorities are required to produce a SCS following consultation with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the wider community.

14   The government intends that spatial planning objectives for local areas, as set out in the LDF, should be aligned not only with national and regional plans, but also with the shared local priorities set out in the SCS where these are consistent with national and regional policy.

Vision and Objectives

> **The Royal Borough in 2026 - An Overarching Vision for the LDF**
>
> By 2026 the Royal Borough will be a place guided by the principles of sustainable communities where everyone can thrive in a safe and healthy environment, take active part in decisions and continue to learn throughout their lives.
>
> It will be a place where the unique character, history and setting is respected in providing a strong economy and meeting the needs and expectations of residents, visitors and those who work in the borough. Development will be carefully planned, maximising the re-use of suitable land within towns and villages.

4.5   The Royal Borough will manage development pressures to mitigate the effects of climate change to protect and enhance biodiversity and the distinctive character and heritage of settlements and the sounding countryside, and will promote a deeper understanding of their contribution to ensuring a better quality of life. Looking to the future, measures will be taken to assess the causes and consequences of climate change including greater energy efficiency, the production of renewable energy and adopting a risk-based approach to development and flood risk.

4.6   The need for new homes will be met through maximising the re-use of previously developed land before other options such as greenfield land are brought forward. Development will be encouraged to make more efficient use of land by providing smaller units and building at increased density where this can be achieved without harm to the distinctive character of an area or environmental sustainability. The council and its partners will seek to maximise the amount of affordable housing delivered through the LDF.

4.7   The Royal Borough's buoyant economy will be maintained and promoted. To ensure the retention of its status as a prime location for business, economic development will be focused primarily in the main commercial and employment areas of Maidenhead and Windsor, making better use of land and existing infrastructure. Growth will be controlled to ensure a sustainable balance between the supply of jobs and local labour supply so that the economy does not overheat or result in excessive commuting into or out of the local area.

4.8   Travel in the Royal Borough will be planned to be more sustainable through reducing the need to travel and widening travel choices which will stem from development being directed to locations where there are opportunities to access services and employment by walking, cycling and public transport. Transport links with the main settlements outside the borough will be maintained and improved.

4.9   In terms of healthcare, the council will continue to work in partnership with the Hospitals Trust and the PCT to ensure that the improvement of existing facilities and the location of any new facilities, particularly primary healthcare (i.e. health centres and GP surgeries), respond to the changing needs of the community, particularly in light of demographic changes.

Maidenhead

4.10   Maidenhead will be a vibrant business and commerce centre, building on its excellent accessibility to London and other business locations across the Thames Valley.

4.11   Development in Maidenhead will be planned to ensure the rejuvenation of the town centre and improve accessibility by carefully managing the location and form of activities across the town and within the central area. Accessibility to the town centre will be improved by better integration of the train station and bus services, the aim being to develop the potential of the town through its status as a sub-regional hub for transport. Thus the creation of an essential transport interchange at Maidenhead Railway Station will provide a further key stimulus to town centre revitalisation. Transport improvements will also play a key role in developing links within the town centre and outside the town in order to provide improved access to services and facilities for residents and workers.

4.12   Maidenhead town centre will become the distinctive heart of the community, a place that celebrates its green Thames Valley setting, which is welcoming, attractive and accessible to all, and provides a strong economic focus for the wider community. The vision for Maidenhead town centre has been suggested by the Partnership for the Rejuvenation of Maidenhead, a cross-party group created by the council with an independent chairman charged with finding agreed solutions for town centre regeneration, including the creation of a masterplan and a strategy for achieving it.

4

Vision and Objectives

4.13   Opportunities for developing key sites in the town centre will be pursued creating a more attractive and stimulating environment providing a distinctive heart with a healthy and engaging mix of retail, civic administration, business, commerce, leisure and residential uses. Improvements to the town's shopping centre will provide a key role in the regeneration of the town and, linked with improvements to town centre housing, leisure facilities and open spaces, will provide the opportunity for economic growth and enhancement.

4.14   Being a family-friendly town. Maidenhead will continue to be very popular as a residential location. Maidenhead's historic connection with the River Thames and its amenity and biodiversity of its connecting waterways will be enhanced, and flood risk will be reduced. New homes will be directed to sustainable locations which have good access to local services, employment and schools. The protection of local character will be reinforced through the delivery of high quality design in buildings and spaces, improving and greening linkages to the River Thames and wider waterways.

Cookham Rise

4.15   Cookham Rise will maintain its importance as a local shopping centre and centre for local community facilities and services. Any future residential development in the village will be limited and any impact of visitor related activities   on the local economy will be minimised. The two historic gateways to Cookham Rise (the eastern approach from Cookham Moor and and the western approach at the Maidenhead Road junction) and important views, particularly those related to Stanley Spencer's work, will be enhanced.

Cookham

4.16   Cookham will continue to be a traditional village with strong links to its distinctive heritage and setting. The special qualities and character of the village will be conserved, including its historic gateways and key views to and from the River, Cliveden and the Moor. The village High Street will remain the focus for shopping and leisure activities. The village may experience residential growth associated with infilling, but this will be limited mainly due to its position in the floodplain.

Windsor

4.17   Windsor will maintain a position of national importance and civic pride, and its historic and royal connections will continue to provide a unique opportunity to build upon its environmental qualities and distinctive settings for the benefit of residents, workers and visitors to the borough.

4.18   Windsor and its surroundings will continue to be one of the most popular visitor centres outside London and its role as a major shopping and leisure destination will be strengthened. Windsor town centre, in particular, will continue to provide an attractive and vibrant centre serving both the needs of residents and visitors.   New development will aim to improve and enhance the buoyancy of the local economy. Opportunities for the improvement of the retail offer of the town will help to ensure the economic and social well being of the area. This will be aided by encouraging diversity and further improvements to the cultural centre.

4.19   Environmental quality will be enhanced through measures to reduce the impact of both intra-urban and inter-urban travel, especially within the historic core. The protection of local historic character will also be reinforced through the delivery of high quality design in buildings and spaces. Windsor's historic connections with the River Thames will be enhanced and its amenity and biodiversity improved, and flood risk will be reduced.

4.20   The town will remain a significant centre for a balanced diversity of employment and housing within the Royal Borough. New development will respect existing and distinctive architectural, environmental and heritage qualities and be directed to locations which have good access to local services, employment and schools.

Eton

4.21   Growth in Eton will continue to be constrained by the floodplain, common land and Lammas land. The historic character of Eton, its Thameside setting, historic gateways and views to and from Windsor Castle and to South Meadow and the Brocas will continue to be protected and enhanced. The retail function of the High Street will continue to be protected and a more attractive, safe and convenient shopping environment for local residents and visitors will be created. New development associated with the College will enhance the existing character of the College and its environs.

Vision and Objectives 4

Eton Wick

4.22   Growth in Eton Wick will continue to be constrained by the floodplain, common land and Lammas land. The settlement may experience limited organic residential growth associated with infilling.

Datchet

4.23   Datchet's role as a local centre will continue to be protected. The physical and visual impact of vehicles within the village will be improved in order to create a more pleasant village environment. Its Conservation Area, historic gateways into the village and important views to the riverside and Windsor Home Park will be preserved and enhanced. The village may experience residential growth associated with infilling, but this will be limited mainly due to its position in the floodplain.

Old Windsor

4.24   Old Windsor's role as a local centre will continue to be protected. Its Conservation Area and historic gateway (marked by Runnymeade Gatehouses) into the centre and important views to the Royal Gardens Lodge, the riverside, south westerly views to Beaumont College and elevated views over Home Park to Windsor Castle will be enhanced. The village may experience limited residential growth associated with infilling, mainly due to its position in the floodplain.

Wraysbury

4.25   Growth in Wraysbury will continue to be constrained by the floodplain. However minerals and waste development will continue to have a focus on the edge of the settlement. The historic gateways of the village and key views within and from the village will be enhanced. The village may experience limited residential growth associated with infilling, mainly due to its position in the floodplain. Its role as a local village centre will also continue to be protected and enhanced.

Ascot

4.26   Ascot will continue to be focus for the horse racing industry. Its shopping centre will continue to serve surrounding residential areas and its range of shops and services will be enhanced to create a more attractive, safe and convenient shopping environment. New development associated with the Ascot Authority will enhance the existing character of the High Street and its environs. The historic gateway (junction of Kennel Avenue and Windsor Road) and key views to Royal Ascot Grandstand and across the racecourse will be enhanced.

Sunninghill

4.27   Sunninghill will continue to be primarily a residential settlement and its village centre with its range of retail and community facilities will continue to be protected and enhanced. Its historic gateway (London Road/Church Lane Junction), and key views (including to the Church of St Michael and All Angels; and westerly views to Ascot) will be enhanced.

Sunningdale

4.28   Sunningdale's village centre with its range of retail and community facilities will continue to be protected and enhanced. Not dissimilar to Sunninghill, it will be self-sufficient and will continue to be a popular place to live and work, particularly given its surrounding woodland setting.

Question 2

Do you agree with the overarching vision outlined above and the statements relating to the different parts of the Royal Borough?

4

Vision and Objectives

Objectives

4.29   Building on previous consultation exercises and taking account of the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy and the overall draft vision for the borough and its settlements, we believe that the following draft aims and objectives are appropriate for the Core Strategy. We would like to hear your views on whether the aims and objectives are appropriate and whether they will deliver sustainable development.[15]

4.30   These aims have been developed with reference to the Sustainability Appraisal objectives[16] and are therefore likely to have a positive effect on these objectives.

Aim 1: To promote sustainable design and construction by

- *Ensuring that all proposed developments are considered in the light of their climate change implications (including the need for adaptations and the consequences and impacts of climate change), giving priority to those which reduce the net output of carbon dioxide and those which are carbon neutral.*
- *Promoting energy and water conservation including the appropriate production and use of renewable energy.*
- *Locating the majority of development in existing settlements, maximising the use of previously developed land.*
- *Promoting the sustainable use and disposal of resources*

Aim 2: To deliver an appropriate level of housing to meet housing needs by

- *Ensuring that the strategic housing requirement of the Royal Borough as identified within the Regional Spatial Strategy is met.*
- *Ensuring that the provision of housing types, sizes and tenures, including affordable housing, key worker housing, housing for the elderly and gypsies, travellers and showpeople, meets the identified needs of the community.*

Aim 3: To regenerate the local economy by

- *Promoting the holistic and sustainable rejuvenation of Maidenhead Town Centre.*
- *Promoting the town centres of Windsor and Maidenhead as the principal locations for office, retail, tourism and leisure development, enhancing their attractiveness, whilst protecting and promoting village and local centres consistent with their scale and function.*
- *Maintaining a buoyant and broad-based economy through a number of measures (including protecting suitable industrial and warehouse floorspace across the borough) whilst carefully controlling the growth in employment-generating development in order to maintain a sustainable balance between jobs and local labour.*
- *Promoting the Royal Borough as a distinct destination for heritage, tourism and sport, making the most of its assets and major visitor attractions, for example, the River Thames, the racecourses and Legoland Windsor and building upon existing success as diverse as the food and drink industry to horsiculture.*
- *Ensuring that local agriculture and horticulture continues to play a pivotal role in the rural economy of the Royal Borough through increased diversification through alternative growing practices, farm sales and farm-based leisure services.*

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15   For clarification the draft aims and objectives are not ranked or prioritised in any way as circumstances change and in many instances, objectives can apply equally.
16   See Revised Scoping Report: Core Strategy DPD and Delivery and Development Principles DPD (June 2008).

Vision and Objectives

Aim 4: To develop socially cohesive, diverse and healthy and safe communities by

- *Responding positively to changing demographics and the impacts on healthcare, housing requirements, and education needs.*
- *Providing the best educational opportunities for all individuals and to develop their aptitude and abilities to help upskill the local workforce.*
- *Avoid development which would put people or property at risk from crime and anti-social behaviour and encourage forms of development which would enhance community health and safety.*
- *Reducing flood risk and the prevention of development which would put people or property at unacceptable risk from flooding.*
- *Preventing development which would put people, property or the environment at risk from pollution or nuisance.*
- *Meeting the recreation, cultural and community needs of the Royal Borough, promoting participation in sport and active recreation, including the quiet and informal enjoyment of the countryside and open spaces.*
- *Ensuring the timely provision of appropriate infrastructure, services, facilities and amenities to meet the needs of new development, including the dual use of facilities.*

Aim 5: To care for the natural and built environment by

- *Maintaining the purpose of the Green Belt, protecting it from inappropriate forms of development.*
- *Protecting and enhancing the natural environment and landscapes, promoting biodiversity and protecting sites and species of recognised conservation importance.*
- *Protecting and enhancing the historic environment and heritage of the Royal Borough, ensuring the integrity of buildings and place is respected.*
- *Protecting the character and enhancing the enjoyment of the River Thames and its tributaries, its valued landscape, heritage and biodiversity.*
- *Ensuring new development is of high quality that protects and enhances the character of the Royal Borough and local distinctiveness.*

Aim 6: To improve transport and connectivity by

- *Reducing the need to travel by ensuring new development takes place in locations with good accessibility to jobs, shops and local services and facilities by walking, cycling and public transport and ensuring that adequate provision is made for all modes of travel.*

Question 3

Do you agree with the aims and objectives outlined above? Would they address the stated issues and challenges, and deliver the vision?