

Frequently Asked Questions V2 Windsor Neighbourhood Plan

1. What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by Government through the Localism Act (2011) specifically to give communities a greater and direct opportunity to be involved in shaping their local areas. The Windsor Neighbourhood Plan was started as a result of Windsor people wanting to take advantage of this opportunity and coming together as a group of volunteers to apply to RBWM for designation as a Neighbourhood Planning Forum in 2014. The group agreed at the start to keep party politics out of the plan and members of the Forum have been from all parties and none.

2. Why have a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan helps communities protect what is special about their area, and make provision for what the community considers important. It cannot stop development, but can add local detail to higher level plans at regional and national level, thereby influencing what is developed within the area.

3. What area does the WNP cover?

The WNP covers the unparished area of Windsor excluding the town centre and riverside and Home Park. (see Maps next page)\.

4. Why does the WNP Area not cover the Town Centre and Riverside?

In August 2014 there were two groups wanting to produce NPs in Windsor. A Forum led by business for the Town Centre and Riverside (calling themselves W2030), and a Forum for the residential areas led by residents (Windsor Neighbourhood Forum). RBWM designated both to make neighbourhood plans and made the final decision on the area boundaries between them.

5. Why doesn't the WNP cover the very west of Windsor?

The Willows Path (behind Ruddlesway) is the official Bray Parish boundary, and everything to the west of that is in Bray parish (even though the Windsor electoral wards spread into Bray). This is a rare Parish/electoral ward boundary anomaly. Bray Parish Council has the right to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for their own area and their area was designated before the WNP, so the WNP was unable to cover it. The RBWM proposed development sites to the west of Windsor (AL21) and the former Willows Garden Centre, are both outside of the WNP area.

Map of the WNP Area



Map showing the Windsor and other NP areas



6. How much has this cost and where has the money come from?

The WNP Has cost £41,242, to follow the legal process necessary to make the plan i.e. to prepare, to pay for consultations, communications, printing, website, consultancy advice, meeting expenses, room hire etc. It has all been funded by

grants from the Department of Communities and Local Government (via Locality) and from RBWM. RBWM in turn was also funded by DCLG grants directly to enable them to support Neighbourhood Plans and their associated referendums, so there will be no net cost to RBWM tax payers.

7. How does this cost compare to other Neighbourhood Plans?

Costs of NPs vary according to the size of the population covered, as the consultation expenses tend to be greater for larger towns than smaller towns or villages. Windsor has over 30,000 population.

It has all been prepared by unpaid volunteers from within the WNP area, supported by consultants, RBWM, map specialists, local organisations such as the Windsor & Eton Society, churches, and others. The cost of the WNP has been less than half of that of NPs from other towns nearby, with smaller populations, such as Henley or Thame (13,000 pop), so compares very favourably with most measures.

8. What happens after the referendum?

If a simple majority of residents vote in favour of the plan, it becomes part of the Statutory Development Plan for the WNP Area until 2034. The Borough remains as the Local Planning Authority and still makes all the planning decisions.

Planning decision makers will have to consider the WNP alongside the higher level plans (the Borough Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework) when making their decisions. So the Neighbourhood Plan Becomes one of the many factors that have to be taken into account.

9. Will there be a Neighbourhood Plan Group after the Referendum?

Volunteers will form an NP Delivery Group to monitor how the plan is being used.

The WNP Delivery Group also becomes a Statutory Consultee for planning in the area with the right to comment on planning applications.

The WNP Group Committee already meets two-weekly to monitor all planning applications in the WNP area and comment on them if an application runs counter to any WNP policies. This will continue as long as there are volunteers.

10. If Windsor gets a Town Council, what difference will that make to the WNP?

If the WNP passes the referendum in May 2021 it will be part of the Statutory Development Plan for the area until 2034, no matter whether there is a Town Council formed or not.

If a Town Council is formed for Windsor (soonest date is 2023), it will become responsible for any future amendments to any Neighbourhood Plan within its boundaries. It will also be responsible for the allocation of any CIL funds to projects in the WNP.

Town Councils typically form planning committees. Members of the existing WNP group could advise the TC on any planning issues if required.

11. If central government pass a planning policy and we don't want it to apply to Windsor, what can we do?

A Neighbourhood Plan can't contradict higher level national or borough level plans, it has to be in "basic conformity" with them. However, it can help to moderate what is planned to be more in line with local wishes, for example in terms of design, or need for community facilities.

12. What can be done with the CIL monies which will have to be used in Windsor?

Areas with a "made" Neighbourhood Plan are entitled to 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy generated within the NP Area. This can be spent on local priorities as identified in the NP as projects.....such as playgrounds, open spaces, Rights of Way, underpasses, or anything else agreed as a priority. Since 2016 £1.7 m CIL has been generated in Windsor. 25% of that is £425k. (The past however is no guide to the future and more or less may be generated than this).

The WNP Delivery Group will direct the use of any funds that become available according to the priorities laid down in the WNP projects list, and in discussion with other stakeholders at the time.

13. What does "significant weight" mean in practice?

Planning decision makers have to balance all the factors relevant to a planning decision, and these factors are weighted in importance, using terms such as little weight, significant weight, or substantial weight. NP policies won't be the only factor that is relevant, but it can now be given significant weight in a planning decision. In practice this means that the WNP can potentially change a planning decision outcome.

14. Why didn't you address the issues of too much traffic and pollution?

Neighbourhood Plans are about what is given planning permission and involve planning policy. Traffic and highways matters and pollution are out of their scope.

15. Can residents approach you if they want to develop something or they don't like an application?

Yes. Residents can ask our advice and opinion and our volunteers will give an independent and unbiased view as far as we are able. However, we will not act directly for a particular applicant or directly for those opposed to a particular proposal. The WNP will act as an independent body according to its planning policies.

16. Does WNP actually refuse permission or just offer guidance and alternatives?

The Neighbourhood Group does not make planning decisions, that is the role of the Local Planning Authority. The LPA planning officers must take the WNP into account when making the decision. The WNP Group might specifically comment on an application if there is something of significance to WNP policies, either to object, suggest improvements or to support an application.

17. With regards to personal houses, new builds, extensions etc, Please could you explain the extent of impact the design guidelines might have on personal design choice? Will it be stricter than existing planning rules?

The WNP Design guidelines (In Appendix 2) aim to educate as much as anything, encouraging good practice and explaining what is typical in the area, so that applicants understand what are good design features in Windsor and, in some cases, in their area of Windsor (see Area Character Assessments), so that applicants can consider them in their design choices. They are not compulsory and applicants are free to design their proposal as they please and apply for planning permission in the normal way. In practice, we would expect that showing consideration of the design guide will be a factor in determining planning permission.

18. Will planning permission take longer as a result?

No, it shouldn't, it may even be quicker as applicants (and architects/developers) will have a source of information in the WNP that tells them what is typical, what is good practice, and what people value in their area, so when they design their project and put in their application they will have more information, and it might well have a better chance of being accepted first time and not facing a large number of objections. The Planning officers or Councillors who make the planning decisions will take the WNP policies into account alongside the higher level policies and take into account all of the factors in the particular case and balance those factors when making their decision. The WNP will be only one factor in the decision.

19. Do residents have to apply separately to WNP for approval or is it all handled via planning process?

No separate approval, it is all handled via the normal planning process.

20. How do the decision makers weight up the significant need for buildings to be in keeping with their surroundings with the reality of residents personal needs and practical building requests together with the guidance already in place through planning. How will WNP affect people wishing to develop their own properties in reality? Will residents find WNP supportive or restrictive and to what extent?

This is a very good question. The WNP cannot stop development. Applicants still have the rights to develop their properties within the law. Permitted Development rules (which allow development without planning permission) will also still be the same.

The WNP Group won't try to influence or comment on every planning application. and if there is nothing in the application of any concern it wouldn't comment in any way. The vast majority of applications for extensions won't get a comment from the WNP. The only ones that will are those which go against something in the WNP. Our aim is to improve not stop development.

21. Existing planning permission. If there are existing plans already permitted but not built can they be brought to WNP for review if for example neighbours were concerned that they didn't meet WNP guidelines?

A planning permission once given is valid for the life of the permission, so the WNP will not be able to alter an existing permission. If it hasn't been built in the 3 year

permission life, the permission will need to be renewed with the Local Planning Authority. It is our understanding that the LPA decision maker will refer to any policies in force at the time, so if a NP has come into force in the meantime, then on renewal the WNP might have some influence.

22. The Boroughs own plan has not yet been finalised. Will this make any difference?

The WNP has been designed to be in basic conformity with the BLP and to add detail to it, so hopefully it will not conflict, but we can't be certain until the BLP is finalised. The RBWM Borough Local Plan (which covers the whole Borough) is in the final stages of examination, and if all goes well might be adopted next year (2022). Until the BLP is made, the WNP offers a greater degree of protection to the WNP Area than would otherwise be the case owing to the absence of an up to date BLP.