Submission to the Wokingham Borough Council Community Governance Review

Proposal: Inclusion of the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SDL) within Wokingham Town

Submitted by: [Redacted]
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1. Introduction

This submission sets out the case for the inclusion of the **South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SDL)** within the boundary of **Wokingham Town**.

The argument is based on planning policy evidence, geographic and social integration, and the functional relationship between the SDL and Wokingham Town. It demonstrates that the area forms part of the town's natural and planned expansion rather than a separate settlement.

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2. Strategic and Policy Context

2.1 Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (Policy CP17, Paragraph 2.84)

"The Council recognises that development around Wokingham could help reduce traffic flows through the town and would support the vitality and viability of the centre through increasing its population. However, proposals would need to ensure that they maintain the separation of the town from nearby settlements. Taking these factors into account, the Council considers that properly planned development towards both the north and south are appropriate."
(Wokingham Borough Council, Core Strategy)

This statement confirms that the Borough Council has long envisaged **growth to the south** as part of Wokingham Town's sustainable evolution, designed to strengthen the town centre while maintaining separation from other settlements such as Crowthorne and Finchampstead.

2.2 Local Plan Update (Proposed Submission Plan, 2024)

The Local Plan Update (Appendix B) reaffirms this policy direction:

- **B3.9:** "The South Wokingham SDL amounts to what will essentially be an urban extension to Wokingham."
- **B3.8:** Development around Wokingham will "support the rejuvenation of the town centre" and "increase its catchment population."
- **B3.8(d):** The SDL will "remain physically and visually separate from settlements including Crowthorne/Pinewood and Finchampstead North."

Taken together, these statements clearly establish the Borough's view that the **South Wokingham SDL** is part of **Wokingham Town's expansion** and not a standalone community.

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3. Infrastructure and Connectivity

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- The **South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR)** provides a continuous vehicular route through the development:
    - **B3.8(i):** Describes the SWDR as linking the Tesco supermarket (A321 Finchampstead Road) and the A329 London Road/Coppid Beech roundabout.
    - **B3.8(i)(iii):** Refers to it as "a key public street within Wokingham, with a civic quality."
- Both termini of the SWDR are located within **Wescott Ward**, part of **Wokingham Town**, reinforcing the road's and development's town-based identity.

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4. Town Centre Integration and Economic Linkages

The **Wokingham Town Centre Strategy (2025–2035)** states:

"Wokingham has two planned urban extensions, one situated in north Wokingham and a second in south Wokingham. The north Wokingham development has delivered just under 2,100 new homes and the South Wokingham development to date has delivered 700 of the planned 2,500 new homes. This increase in population represents a significant opportunity for our businesses, and it's important that we ensure our town centres can meet the demands of this growing population."

This confirms the SDL's intended contribution to **the vitality and viability of Wokingham Town Centre**, directly echoing the aims of the Core Strategy.

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5. Geographic and Functional Alignment

- The **South Wokingham SDL** adjoins the existing urban boundary of Wokingham Town and is **immediately adjacent to established residential areas** such as Montague Park.
- It lies **some distance from the principal settlement of Wokingham Without**, which is centred around Nine Mile Ride.
- Access to Crowthorne, the nearest retail area within Wokingham Without, is via **unlit, high-speed roads without pavements**, making it unsuitable for sustainable travel.
- Conversely, the SDL will offer **safe pedestrian and cycle access** to Wokingham Town Centre via **Montague Park**, **Gipsy Lane crossing**, and **Star Lane crossing**.

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6. Community Facilities and Catchments

6.1 Schools

- **Primary Education:**
    - Schools within Wokingham Town (Wescott, Westende, Floreat Montague, Evendons) are accessible and better connected to the SDL.
    - St Sebastian's Primary, located in Wokingham Without, is small, oversubscribed, and reached by roads unsuitable for walking or cycling.

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- As with other new development areas, there is no guarantee the second primary school will be built, and it is unlikely to be built until further along in the development, by which point new families are enrolled in other schools, most likely those in the town area.

- **Secondary Education:**
  - There is **no secondary school provision** in Wokingham Without, nor any plan to provide it as part of the new development. Secondary age pupils from the SDL housing will be closest to **St Crispin's** in Wokingham

6.2 Healthcare and Services

- There is **no confirmed GP or dental provision** within the new development. Residents will therefore rely on **Wokingham-based medical practices**, again strengthening the functional relationship with the town.

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7. Community Identity and Sense of Place

- The SDL is being marketed by developers as part of **Wokingham Town**.
  - Example: *Miller Homes – Holme Meadows* describes the development as "perfectly situated close to Wokingham town centre with its array of shops, eateries and leisure facilities."
- Future residents will naturally identify with Wokingham Town and participate in its civic life, attending events and using amenities maintained by the Town Council.
- This will increase demand for **Town Council–managed facilities** such as **Elms Field**, **parks**, and **community events**.

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8. Financial and Operational Implications

- While **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** allocations are **not a determining factor**, the following points are relevant:
  1. The majority of CIL funds from the SDL will be directed towards infrastructure supporting the development itself.
  2. Wokingham Town Council has already co-funded **Borough-wide projects**, including:
     - The **Town Centre redevelopment**
     - A **pedestrian crossing near Woosehill roundabout** to improve school safety
     - The **refurbishment of a children's play area off Barkham Road**

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- The Town Council is planning for **additional staffing and enhanced health and safety measures** for major community events (e.g., the Children's Fun Day and Party in the Park).
- Facilities such as **Elms Field** will experience increased usage, requiring **higher maintenance budgets** and **larger reserves** to ensure long-term sustainability.

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9. Conclusion

The **South Wokingham SDL** is geographically contiguous, functionally integrated, and socially aligned with **Wokingham Town**.

Wokingham Borough Council's own strategic documents — including the **Core Strategy (paragraph 2.84)** and the **Local Plan Update (2024)** — explicitly recognise the area as part of the town's planned growth. The SDL's physical connection, infrastructure linkages, and community identity all point to its natural inclusion within **Wokingham Town**.

Accordingly, it is both logical and consistent with long-term planning policy that the **South Wokingham SDL** be incorporated into the **Wokingham Town boundary**.

References

1. Wokingham Borough Council, *Core Strategy* (Policy CP17, paragraph 2.84).
2. Wokingham Borough Council, *Local Plan Update – Proposed Submission Plan (2024), Appendix B*.
3. Wokingham Borough Council, *Wokingham Town Centre Strategy 2025–2035*.
4. Miller Homes, *Holme Meadows Development Marketing Material (2024)*.

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