

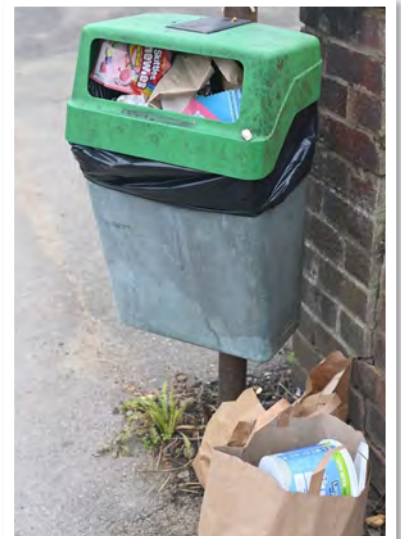
Listening to you

Our plan to make Wokingham Borough somewhere people
want to live – thriving business, excellent services,
value for money

Conservative Manifesto

Wokingham Borough elections, 2 May 2024





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A personal message from the Conservative Group Leader

Dear Resident,

We want Wokingham Borough to be a great place live, and we will achieve this by enabling businesses to thrive, investing in excellent services, and giving tax payers value for money.

We promise to listen to you, and we will ensure consultations are meaningful.

We will maintain weekly waste collections.

We want to support our towns and highstreets by scrapping the Liberal Democrats' punishing parking charge increases, and working with the police to make sure they crack down on anti-social behaviour and shop lifting.

We will continue campaigning to cut the Borough's housing target by working with local MPs to persuade the Government to reduce housing numbers. A Conservative administration would complete the new Local Plan to protect the Borough from planning by appeal.

We will invest more money into road maintenance and support residents choice of travel, including cycling, public transport and car.

You deserve an administration that will invest in services, not cut them. You deserve to have fees and charges kept to a level you can afford. You deserve to have a Council who will listen to you and will deliver on local communities' priorities.

You will get all this if a Conservative administration is elected in May.

Pauline Jorgensen



Cllr Pauline Jorgensen speaking in the Council Chamber



Key Principles

Keeping Promises

It is important that parties keep their promises to residents. The current Liberal Democrat-led administration in Wokingham has repeatedly failed to live up to pledges it previously made. A Conservative administration won't promise something it cannot deliver.

If the Conservatives are elected to run the Council, we will work on the following principles:

- **there will be no cuts to customer-facing services:** we will not reduce services that residents need from their Council - under Liberal Democrats Council tax has gone up and services have reduced
- **fees and charges will be fair:** if we need to increase fees and charges, they will rise by no more than the rate of inflation in our first year
- **the Council will have balanced and sustainable finances:** we will look to be innovative and efficient to ensure that taxpayers' money is used wisely
- **we will listen to you:** unlike the current Liberal Democrat administration, the Conservatives will take on board the views of local people, businesses and organisations, and ensure that consultations are meaningful
- **we will deliver better services**
- **we will make Wokingham Borough somewhere residents are pleased to live**
- **we will make the Borough a better place to do business:** we will listen to businesses' concerns and work with them
- **we will ensure the police crack down on anti-social behaviour and shop lifting**



Housing and Planning

Protecting Our Borough from Unsustainable Development

Conservatives believe that a thriving local community is one where everyone who wants to own their own home can do so. Although it is vital that more appropriate and affordable homes are delivered, ensuring that young people in particular are not forced to move out of Wokingham Borough we have seen excessive levels of development. At the same time, we have campaigned over a number of years to reduce the Government housing target to one that is sustainable. When we previously ran the Council, until May 2022, we got the Government to agree to halve our target, but there is still more to do. A new Local Plan also needs to be produced to protect our communities and countryside from opportunistic developers. The Liberal Democrats promised the earth to get votes and have shamefully dithered since they took power, preferring talk over action. We will produce a new local plan to protect our countryside from unsustainable development.

If elected, we will:

- **complete a Local Plan to protect the Borough from planning by appeal:** we will get on with producing a draft Local Plan for consultation. This will help put an end to the string of lost planning appeals under the Liberal Democrat-led administration
- **continue campaigning to cut the Borough's housing target:** building on

our previous success we will continue working with local Conservative MPs to persuade the Government to reduce housing numbers

- **we will vigorously fight appeals on planning applications that the Council has rejected as being unsuitable**
- **explore new schemes to help local people buy their own homes:** housing in this area is very expensive. We will investigate ways that the Council can support

Our plan for planning

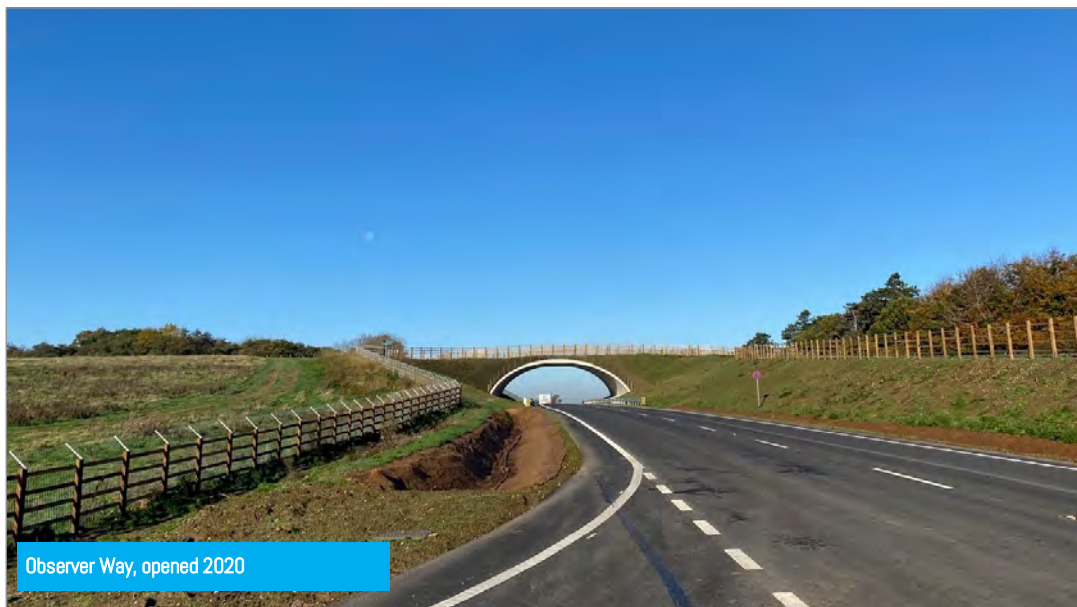
- Get on with the Local Plan
- Work with local MPs and Central Government to cut housing targets
- Protect against unsustainable development

residents with access to affordable homes

- **be honest about planning:** we won't make promises we can't keep
- **ensure housing is supported with the right infrastructure, right schools and local services in the right places:** hold developers to account ensuring necessary infrastructure is provided
- **maintain the Council's housing companies to provide affordable and social homes:** the previous Conservative administration saw great success with its housing companies, including having the first council company to be recognised by the Government as a for-profit provider of social housing



- **continue our regeneration schemes to replace worn-out Council homes:** where the Council's stock of housing has reached the end of its usable life, we will use regeneration schemes to supply new homes
- **oppose Labour's plan for centralised targets:** we believe local areas should decide how much housing is right for them
- **propose a number of houses that reflects local need and residents' wishes**
- **defend appeals with best legal advice available**
- **oppose development on green fields to protect countryside**



Highways and Transport

Getting About: Travel, Transport and Highways

Wokingham Borough Conservatives believe that you should have the choice of how you want to travel in your local area. When we ran the Council, we invested in sustainable transport and roads – creating options for walking, cycling, using public transport or taking your car. We also kept costs as low as possible for motorists, only increasing car parking charges where it was necessary. Sadly the Liberal Democrats, backed up by Labour, have rammed through an agenda of restricting choice and punishing car owners. This includes doubling car parking charges in the face of widespread opposition from local residents and businesses.

If we are elected to form an administration, we will:

- **roll back the Lib Dems' car parking charge increases**
- **ensure that free car parks owned by the Council stay free:** we will not introduce charges in Highways and Leisure car parks that don't currently charge
- **stop second rate resurfacing:** we will deliver better quality road repairs
- **increase spending on road repairs by inflation, and renew the focus on reducing congestion:** We will repair more residential roads that have been neglected in the past. We will get the balance right between sustainable transport, pedestrians and other road users, bidding for more grants with an aim to repair more pavements
- **support residents' choice of transport:** walking, cycling, public transport and driving
- **deliver innovative and creative solutions for public transport:** we'll support the provision of new cycleways, building on the success of the previous



New path funded by Conservative Council

Conservative administration of delivering new cycle routes across the Borough where residents want them, solving more missing links. We will encourage town and parish councils to highlight cycleways their residents want

- **deliver safer routes to school to increase cycling and walking:** this includes safer crossings outside schools
- **invest to reduce congestion:** work which was cut by the Liberal Democrat/ Labour Coalition. Deliver SWDR to relieve Wokingham town centre and reduce congestion
- **improve connectivity around town centres to lessen traffic**
- **provide more Electric Vehicle charging points:** Conservatives in power started a scheme for more public EV points. It is vitally important that we do more to provide the infrastructure for more vehicles that will reduce our climate impact.
- **provide funding to support bus services:** until demand returns to pre-Covid levels
- **no blanket 20mph zones:** we will

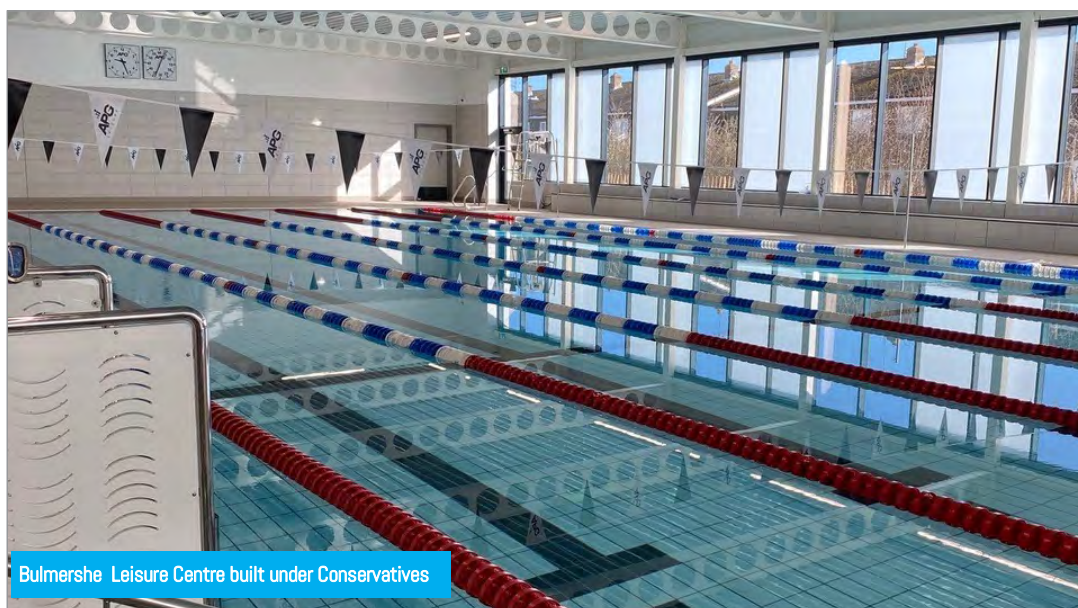


Lib Dem Watch



Since the **Liberal Democrat-led coalition** took charge of Wokingham Borough Council they have:

- **Doubled your parking charges, proposed further increase and on street parking charges**
 - **Introduced charges for evenings and weekends**
 - **Cut spending on road repairs in real terms**
 - **Scrapped anti congestion program**
- ensure we have sensible speed limits suitable for the local area
- **rule out a ULEZ scheme in Wokingham Borough**
 - **purchase speed cameras to crack down on problem speeding**
 - **bring back subsidised school bus transport for low-income families, cut by the Liberal Democrat administration**



Environment and Leisure

Leisure, Environment, Waste and Recycling

Conservatives delivered two country parks, refurbished and provided new leisure centres in Wokingham, Woodley and Arborfield. We provided more green spaces and oversaw library improvements that increased the number of users. We have massively increased the Borough's recycling, introducing food waste collection. We kept weekly bin collections, and we were one of the first local authorities to declare a climate emergency, putting in place a deliverable strategy to reduce our carbon footprint.

If elected, we will:

- **make Wokingham Borough a cleaner, greener place to live:** under the Lib Dems, public litter bins have been overflowing and street cleaning services have been cut
- **ensure there is no reduction in litter bins and grass cutting**
- **maintain weekly waste collection:** we know that many families could not cope with having their bins collected fortnightly. We will scrap the ludicrous Liberal Democrat/Labour policy that would see collection lorries still coming to your house every week, but not collecting your bins
- **improve the commercial and DIY waste service:** we will work to investigate commercial waste disposal outside the working day to reduce fly tipping
- **improve the effectiveness of the anti-social behaviour (ASB) service**
- **support plans for a new Arborfield Hub:**

- providing much-needed facilities
- **maintain the Conservative record of providing excellent leisure facilities and libraries in communities:** we will continue the programme started under the previous Conservative administration of investment in leisure centres, libraries, parks, playgrounds and more
- **improve parking for Laurel Park:** we will work with local residents to reduce the impact of football parking on local residents in surrounding homes
- **review duplication in Council departments:** to make the services more efficient and save tax payers money
- **deliver a cleaner and greener Borough through the Climate Emergency action plan**
- **keep our streets and green spaces clean and tidy**



The **Liberal Democrat** and **Labour** coalition held a consultation on the future of waste services, with no option for weekly bin collection. Councillors voted to overturn the Lib Dem/Labour decision to scrap weekly collection, listening to a petition from residents. But the Lib Dems/Labour continued with their decision.

The Lib Dems simply do not care what residents think.



Children's and Adults' Services

Schools, Children's Services and Adults' Services

Children's Services and Adults' Social Care are two of the most important functions of the Council, and form a large part of the authority's spending. The previous Conservative administration had a strong record in these areas.

If elected, we will:

- work with local businesses to increase apprenticeship places
- improve the provision of SEND Children's Services to Good increase safe route to schools
- deliver Special Educational Needs provision in the Borough: the previous Conservative administration delivered new SEND schools thanks to grants provided by the Conservative Government
- accelerate solar panels on schools, initiative started by the previous Conservative administration: this is projected to save £600,000 per year
- continue to campaign for better Central Government funding for Children's and Adult Social Care in Wokingham Borough
- deliver Bohunt School Sixth Form and ensuring that there are enough school places in the right locations
- build on the Conservative started Borough Education Partnership with all Academies and schools to provide excellent Education across all of Wokingham
- campaign for more GPs and dental practices
- improve provision of dementia care
- create more council-supported care home beds
- make Wokingham a healthy Borough
- encourage local schools to simplify school uniforms making them more affordable



Finance and Business

Finance and a Better Place to Do Business

Since they took office, the Liberal Democrat-led administration has claimed that they had inherited finances in poor health.

But the Council's own Chief Finance Officer said that the Council's finances were in good shape under the previous Conservative administration. In 2020 Wokingham was rated in the top 20 for financial sustainability by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy.

If elected, we will:

- **deliver value for money for tax payers:** eliminate Liberal Democrat waste
- **reduce the use of high-end consultants:** saving hundreds of thousands of pounds each year to reinvest into services
- **maintain strong finances and ensure reserves remain good**
- **stop the Liberal Democrat Coalition's increased spending on unnecessary back-office staff**
- **utilise assets for the benefit of residents**
- **balance budget without slashing front line services**
- **reinstate school bus subsidies for low income families:** we will end the Liberal Democrats' heartless cuts
- **roll back car parking charge increases**
- **work with schools and local businesses to ensure young people are prepared for the world of work**

The choice at this election



Residents have the choice between a Liberal Democrat administration with a record of failure and broken promises — or delivering on the priorities of local people under the Conservatives.

Liberal Democrats have:

Conservatives will:

Doubled car parking charges

Roll back car parking charges

Cut spending on road repairs in real terms

Increase spending on road repairs

Scrapped weekly bin collection

Keep weekly bin collection

Dithered on a Local Plan, exposing the Borough to uncontrolled development

Get on with delivering a Local Plan that listens to residents

Ignored residents' feedback in consultations when it did not fit the Lib Dems' political priorities

Listen to residents when making decisions

Scrapped food caddy liners

Reinstate food caddy liners for collection at Libraries and Council offices

