



EARLEY TOWN PLAN 2026




Maiden Erlegh Lake

Copyright Bob Collis

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Introduction

This is the Earley Town Council Plan that describes some of the Earley Town Council facilities and how we wish to see our area develop over the next few years.

We hope this document gives our residents an insight to what Earley Town Council does and what it is planning to do.

By develop, we don't mean new buildings everywhere, rather, how we see improvements to our town going forward. This is within the context of what the Town Council can continue with, the good things already underway, the new areas of improvement we'd like to see and how benefits accrue to our residents.

There are three main themes to the Town Plan - enhancing our services to benefit residents, extending our youth services and dealing with the Climate Emergency. Other important themes include open and transparent governance facilitating and encouraging both inclusivity and diversity as well as encouraging civic engagement.

This should be seen as a live Town Plan, that can be enhanced, modified and extended as time goes by, with a formal review on a regular basis, preferably annually. In the passage of time, some items will either mature or may become redundant or may require continuous effort, whilst new ideas and concepts will be incorporated.

The Town Plan should not be seen as a fixed project with complex and detailed milestones as we are dealing in real time. Demands on Council's resources, both financial and staffing are limited within the national council tax regimes. Then there are unexpected incidents and events that happen that may need to take precedence over long term items.

Background

The parish of Earley is mentioned in the Domesday Book when it had a population of 21. The Town Council was formed in 1974. This was just before significant growth in housing collectively known as the Lower Earley development which officially began in 1975. By 1980, it was the largest housing development in the United Kingdom comprising approximately 6,000 dwellings. More detail can be found on the Earley Town Council website - www.earley-tc.gov.uk/history-of-earley/



Earley St Peters Lychgate near The Three Tuns crossroads

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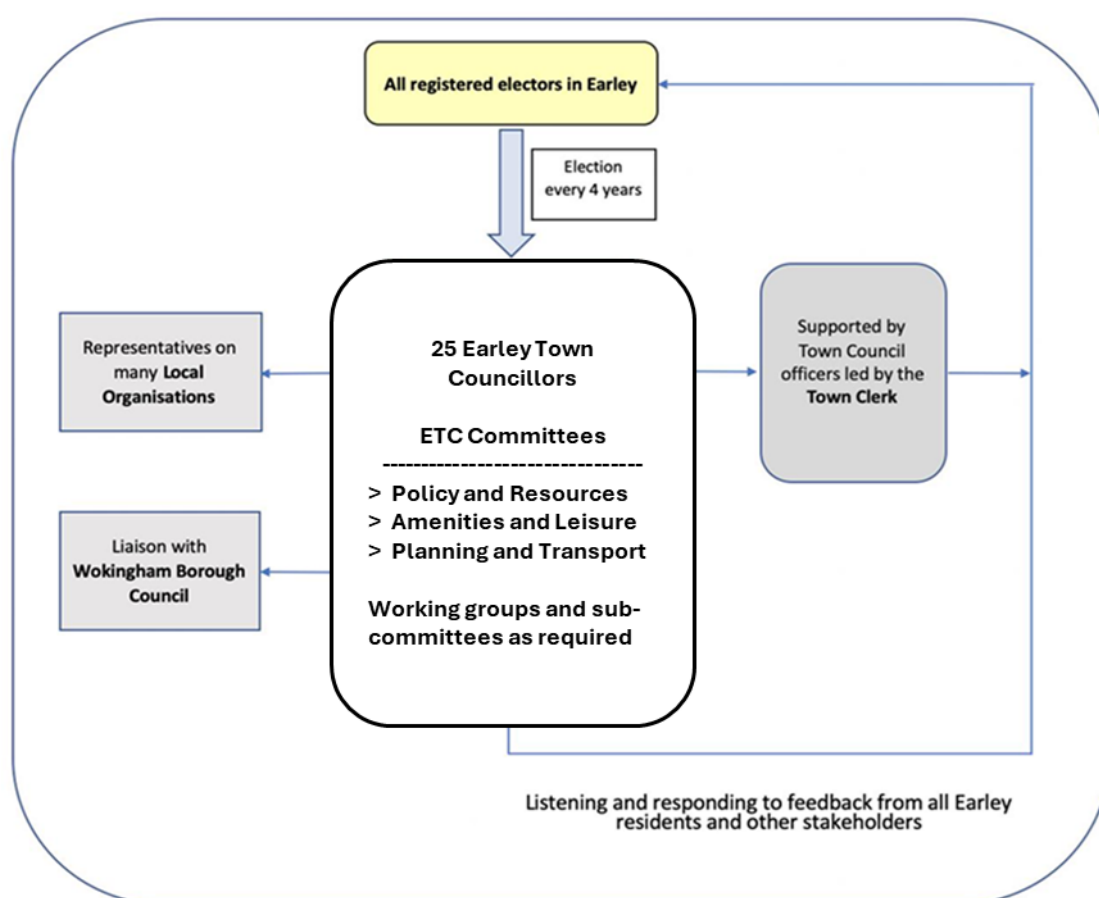
The Lychgate, is a fine example of Arts and Crafts-influenced carving and was designed by S.S. Smallwood and dedicated as a memorial to Charles Stephens in 1902 for his 24 years of continuous service as a churchwarden from 1874 to 1898.

In broad terms, Earley Town runs from the Thames in the North to the M4 motorway in the South and from the Three Tuns plus half the University of Reading campus in the West; then down the Wokingham Road to the George Pub and Showcase cinema beside the River Loddon in the East.

The town name is most commonly spelled "Earley," but historical spellings include "Erleigh," "Erlegh," and "Herlei".

Earley now has more than 30,000 residents living in over 10,000 houses so a reasonable sized town. It has a very diverse population with approximately 22% born outside the UK and 36% declaring their ethnicity as something other than white – see www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/southeastengland/admin/wokingham/E04001230_earley/

The following diagram indicates how Earley Town Council is structured.



The focal point for the Town Council is the Helpshop and Offices in Radstock Lane. This site includes workshops and storage associated with the work of the Maintenance, Grounds and Ranger staff.



Earley Town Council Offices, Radstock Lane RG6 5UL

Services and Amenities

You can learn more about your Earley Town Council with much detailed information to be found on the website – see www.earley-tc.gov.uk. The following is just a brief description.

Services We Provide

We provide a range of services from our Helpshop in Radstock Lane at the Earley Town Council Offices. The Helpshop, for example, can provide information on allotment and fishing permit bookings; details and advice on our cemetery; purchase of a range of items including garden waste and dog waste bags; details of local bus services and of bookings for our various halls for hire. A long list is provided on our website – see this link www.earley-tc.gov.uk/helpshop


We also provide Youth Services at Centrepont Community Centre, situated in Chalfont Square. This location also hosts a Bike Workshop and the monthly Earley Repair Café which focuses on repairing household items that may otherwise be destined for the bin, with the aim of reducing landfill whilst also passing on valuable practical and repair skills.

Earley Town Council is a statutory consultee for planning matters. The Town Council's Planning and Transport Committee reviews all planning applications within the Town and makes recommendations to the Planning Authority (Wokingham Borough Council). Members of the public are welcome to attend these meetings. The Planning and Transport Committee seeks to support appropriate development and to try and discourage over-development, but it can only make recommendations to the Planning Authority. It also responds to relevant consultations such as the Local Plan.


The website is a source of information on a variety of issues including What's on; consultations that may affect Earley Town, including the Town Council's responses; information on Council meetings including agendas and the minutes from past meetings; details of walks around Earley; and news items that may be of interest to residents.

The Town Council organises a range of events throughout the year including the regular "Wednesday Volunteers" who work alongside the Rangers, mainly in the Nature Reserve, the very popular Annual Green Fair in August, the Huge Earley Litter Pick in March, the Mayor's Reception in the early New Year plus lots of smaller activities such as nature trails, bat walks, Bric a Brac tables and Macmillan Coffee mornings.


Some of Earley Town Council Facilities




Bulmershe Park




Sol Joel Park




**Radstock Lane
Community Centre**



**Maiden Erlegh Lake
and nature reserve**



Meadow Park



**Maiden Place
Community Centre**

Parks and Green Spaces

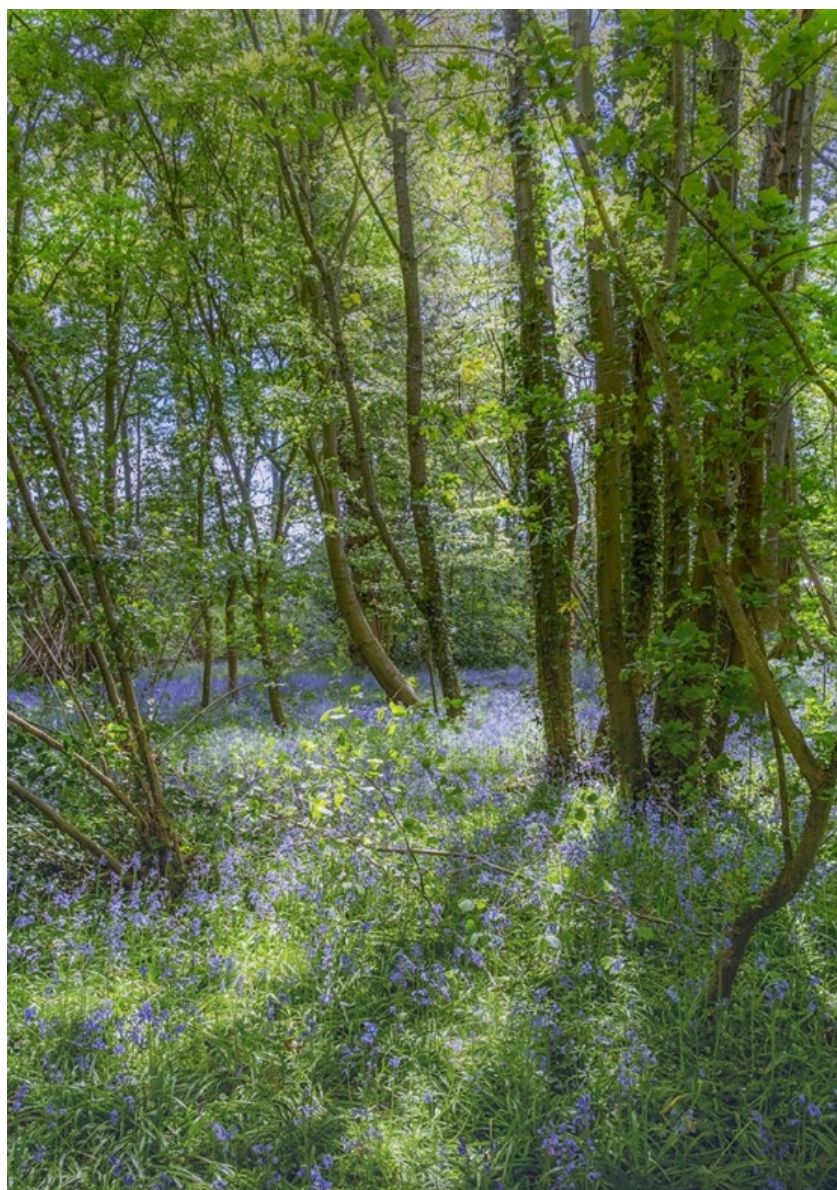
Earley Town Council operates allotments, a cemetery and is responsible for several parks and green spaces. These include the playing fields known as Sol Joel Park with its football, softball and cricket pitches, skate park and parking area, and the popular children's inclusive play area.



Sol Joel Park

Copyright Mike Smith

Meadow Park, a small, quiet park also with a range of children's play equipment, some of it accessible to all and an outdoor gym; Redhatch Copse, an Ancient Woodland with a lovely Bluebell Wood; and, the jewel in the crown, Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve including its large lake and woods, home to much wildlife and fauna.



Redhatch Copse

Copyright Bob Collis

Redhatch Copse is one of several ancient woodlands in Earley, with its shape on the ground remaining similar to its appearance on a map from 1756

The Town Council is also responsible for the open space at Paddick Drive, along with its BMX track, and we share responsibility with Woodley Town Council for Bulmershe Park, a small wooded area off Town Lane with native bluebells.



Bulmershe Park

Copyright Shirley Boyt

Bulmershe Park is in Nature England's provisional inventory of ancient woodland and is an important component of the "bat corridor" running from the River Thames to South Lake in Woodley

Within Earley there are also a range of parks and spaces operated by Wokingham Borough Council which includes Laurel Park and Chalfont Park – both having changing facilities and football pitches, Carnival Field and Riverside Park (along the Loddon River).



Riverside Park

Copyright Bob Collis

One of many ancient Oak trees around Earley

In addition, there is Swallows Meadow, the Harris Gardens and Wilderness – all owned by the University of Reading and open to the public.



Harris Garden

Copyright Mike Smith

There are a range of small open spaces, some with play equipment among the housing estates.



Collins Drive new play area

Copyright Caroline Smith

The play area was completely renewed by Earley Town Council in 2024

Buildings and Street Furniture

The offices are based in Radstock Lane and includes a Council Chamber and the Helpshop. The Town Council operates three community centres: Maiden Place, Radstock Lane and Centrepoint, as well as the Interpretation Centre in the Nature Reserve. They each have various facilities, rooms and halls for hire – see the website for details.

We set up and continue to run the Earley Repair Café at Centrepoint Community Centre. This successful venture saves items from going to landfill, saves residents money and gives talented volunteers an opportunity to use and share their skills.

At Sol Joel Park we are responsible for the sports pavilion, a facility used by numerous sports teams throughout the year, especially cricket and football.

Earley Town Council owns and looks after over 50 bus shelters; and a small number of streetlights, as well as 36 noticeboards (note some are in our community centres). We also maintain the benches, dog waste and litter bins within the parks and assets that Earley Town Council operates.

Vision, Mission and Objectives

Our Vision for Earley

We strive for a local community that is open, cohesive, safe and welcoming for all. We support all residents, of all ages and all abilities and work to enhance our environment. We are focused on achieving and delivering value for money for the council's services.

Mission - what we want to achieve

We will ensure transparent decision-making while preserving our town's identity and strive to facilitate a sustainable, eco-friendly community in partnership with residents, local businesses, charities, and other organisations. We will continue to work to enhance the Town Council's services and facilities to foster a safe and vibrant community for everyone.

Objectives - we will seek to:

- **Enhance Quality of Life:** We will continue to improve our services, recreational facilities, and cultural opportunities to enhance residents' overall quality of life. We will continue to protect and promote the Town's historical and cultural heritage, preserving its identity and character. Where appropriate, we will work with residents and other stakeholders to develop greater community spirit and improved physical health and wellbeing for residents.
- **Promote Youth Development:** We are Investing in youth initiatives to provide additional opportunities for leisure, personal learning and development that lead to better community cohesion, integration and opportunities for our young people.
- **Promote Environmental Sustainability, Biodiversity and Climate Emergency:** We will continue to implement policies and initiatives that prioritise the conservation and safeguarding of green spaces, natural habitats, and the environment to protect and enhance the Town's natural assets.

- **Transparency and Accountability:** We commit to on-going transparent governance, responsible financial management, and open reporting to build and maintain public trust and accountability.
- **Encourage Civic Engagement:** We facilitate open communication with residents, encourage public participation in our Committee and Council Meetings, and seek feedback to ensure the community's voice is heard in decision-making processes. We promote and represent our local community to other stakeholders and interested parties including Wokingham Borough Council, local Town and Parish Councils and education establishments such as Reading University. We also facilitate an Annual Town Electors' Meeting where the Mayor updates residents on achievements for the year.
- **Inclusivity and Diversity:** We will work to ensure all our facilities as far as possible are accessible to all. We support and promote inclusivity and diversity as well as fostering an inclusive community that respects diversity and encourages and ensures equal opportunities for all residents, regardless of their background, identity, and beliefs. We aim to build an open, cohesive, safe, and welcoming community for everyone. We support residents of all ages and abilities and work to improve our environment, ensuring council services provide value for money.

Our Current Priorities

Within the budget, which is reviewed annually and adopted in the February full Council Meeting, there are Ear-Marked Reserves. These are sums of money for specific activities or improvements that we would need to effectively save up for, sometimes over a period of years.

The priorities for the near future are:

- Enhancing the quality of life for residents.
- Development and enhancement of our Youth Services
- Promoting environmental improvements
- Open and transparent governance

Enhancing the quality of life for residents

Replace and enhance play equipment at Meadow Park including some items that are accessible to all.

Continue to maintain and enhance Redhatch Copse.

Various improvements at the Community Centres.

Improve the Earley Town Council website to make it more useful to residents.

Extend the cemetery provisions within the constraints of the useful land available.

Maintain and, where appropriate, enhance all Earley Town Council assets.

Provide a link to represent residents with essential service providers.

Development and enhancement of Youth Services and provision of facilities for sport, leisure and recreation

Continue with and expand where possible our Youth Services provision including the operation of a regular Youth Club at Centrepoint Community Centre.

Open the Bike Workshop at Centrepoint Community Centre – hopefully transferring skills to the wider community, especially young people.

Provide summer holiday activities as resources permit.

Maintain, enhance and improve our play areas and sports facilities within our parks

Maintain, enhance and improve our BMX track at Paddick Drive

Continue to provide volunteering opportunities wherever possible, for example, in environmental work or at the Earley Repair Cafe

Environmental improvements

Enhance and increase biodiversity at all Earley Town Council sites.

Reduce emissions from Earley Town Council buildings, vehicles and equipment, including the upgrading of heating systems and the installation of solar panels and other renewables as appropriate.

Continue to maintain, enhance and improve our community green spaces.

Continue to support the Earley Repair Café.

Green corridors – support the work of the Earley Environmental Group.

Support Sustainable travel – walks and cycle paths maintenance and enhanced.

Open and transparent governance

Improve communications - Website ongoing maintenance and improvement; increased use of both physical (notice boards Earley Town Council) and electronic (social media) means of communicating with residents

Report to residents via publicising meeting agendas for full Council and all committees, inviting public questions and printing and publishing meeting minutes.

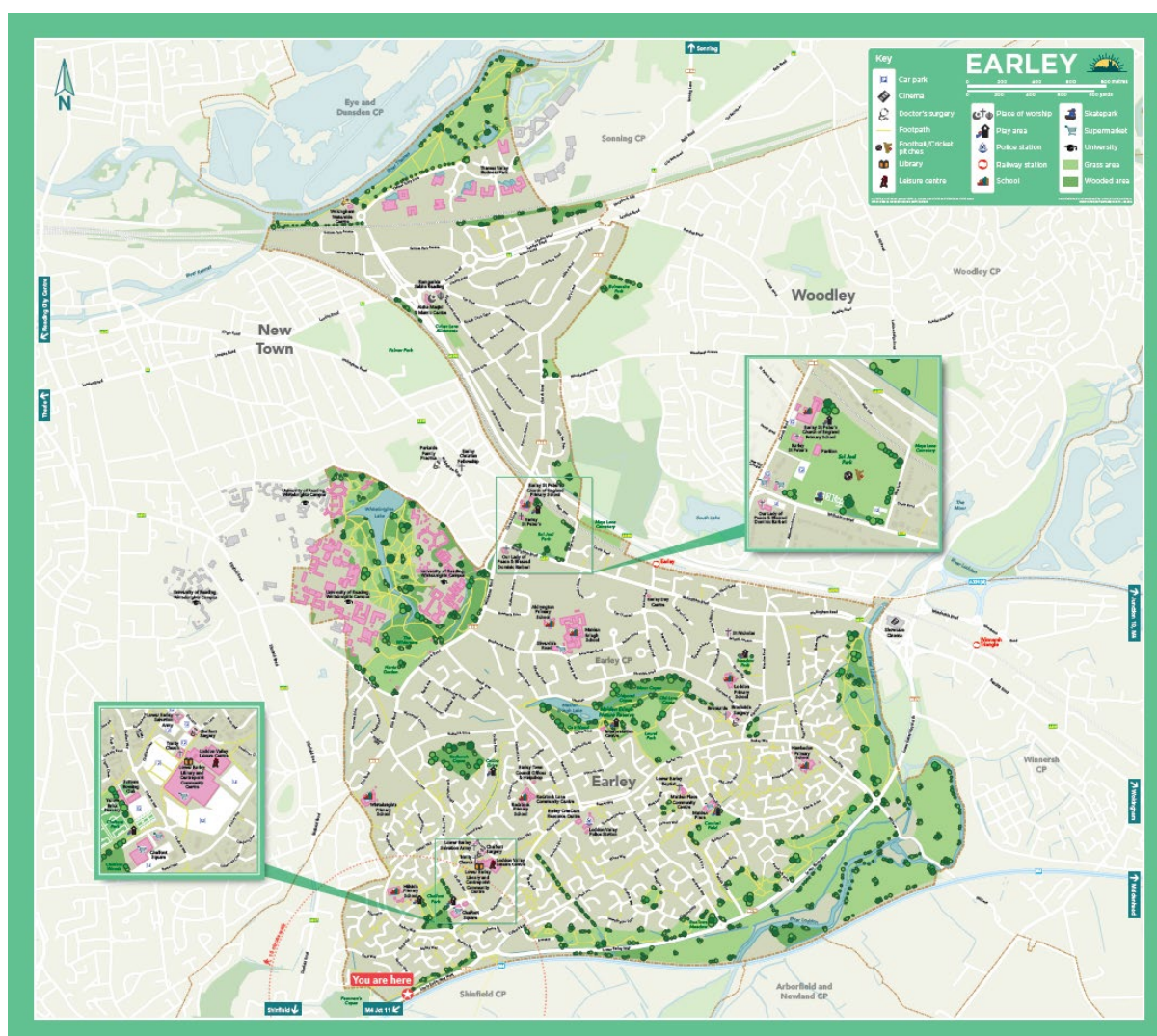
Commit to transparent governance and responsible financial management

Representation

In electoral terms, some 23,600 people resident in Earley Town boundaries were eligible to vote in 2024 according to the Electoral Boundary Commission. Earley Town Council elects Councillors on a four-year cycle with the next “all-Out” election being in May 2027. Wokingham Borough Council elects on a one seat out of the three seats per ward per year cycle, with every fourth year having no elections. The next Borough elections will be in May 2026.

This Earley Town Plan was drafted by a working group of Councillors with input from Officers and was adopted by Earley Town Council on 26th November 2025.

This Plan is a live document and input and suggestions from residents, clubs, associations, congregations or any other groups are welcome – in the first instance, contact the Clerk by e-mail - administration@earley-tc.gov.uk or by phone - 0118 986 8995.



Earley Town Map