

NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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NEW COMMUNITY CENTRE OPENS FOR REMEMBRANCE DAY

A new community centre has officially opened at Shinfield in time to host the village's annual Remembrance Sunday parade.

Wokingham Borough Council and Shinfield Parish Council have been working together on this project to bring a new social hub to the heart of the community.

The building is called the School Green Centre, after its location, following a recent poll by the parish council to involve residents in naming it.

It was designed by AOC Architects and incorporates a redevelopment of the existing parish hall while a new extension has been built on the site of the former Shinfield Royal British Legion headquarters, which closed in 2012.

The centre has three large halls for hire including sprung wooden floors and special acoustic features to reduce noise.

It also has smaller meeting rooms, a courtyard garden, a children's area, a library run by the borough council and a kitchen. It houses the parish council offices and has a café run by Robyn's Nest, of Berkshire.

Contractors from LIFE Build are still applying the finishing touches but it will be open to the wider public soon and the parish council is already taking booking enquiries.

The ribbon was officially cut by Professor Robert Van de Noort, vice-chancellor of the University of Reading, which provided the land.

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He gave a speech to guests, as did Councillor Andrew Grimes, of Shinfield Parish Council.

Also present were borough Councillors Parry Batth, Barrie Patman and Jackie Rance, who represent the authority's Shinfield North and South wards while Councillor Batth is also executive member for environment and leisure.

Neighbours and representatives of the Royal County of Berkshire Army Cadet Forces, which helps the parish council to organise the parade, attended alongside the LIFE Build team, which started work in August last year.

The centre will host a family fun day from 12pm until 3pm on 20 November, which will be the first opportunity for families to visit. There will be stalls run by local businesses and community groups and refreshments and children's activities will also be on offer.

Councillor Batth said: "It's been wonderful to work closely with Shinfield Parish Council in uniting residents around this exciting project and I can't wait to see it in use.

"The building will create a focal point for community activity by hosting a wide range of activities and events. It will truly offer something for everybody, whatever their background or interests."

Councillor Grimes, the parish council chair, said: "Because of the coronavirus pandemic, it's been a really tough year for construction projects like this so we're proud to have opened by our Remembrance Sunday deadline. That was incredibly important to us and to our community.

"We couldn't have reached this point without our partnerships with the borough council and the university and we're so pleased."

Professor Van de Noort said: "I've been looking forward to seeing this. We've all been through the coronavirus pandemic, so there's more value than ever in creating opportunities for people of all ages to come together and enjoy activities again.

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“We want to work closely with our local communities to help meet their needs and will always look for ways to do this as it leads to the best possible outcomes.”

The School Green Centre was part-funded by contributions from housing developers and is part of the borough council's Shinfield Parish major development.

This also includes 3,000 high-quality new homes, many of which are now built, plus the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road and the Thames Valley Science and Innovation Park.

Other benefits will include a district centre in Shinfield village with a supermarket and other shops, a neighbourhood centre at Spencers Wood and a film studios with 18 stages which we awarded permission in September. This will create 1,500 jobs directly and almost as many indirectly.

Councillor Wayne Smith, executive member for planning and enforcement, added: “We're delighted to see so many new amenities being built across the borough as a result of our strategic approach to building new housing.

“Our four major new developments at Shinfield Parish, Arborfield and North and South Wokingham have brought with them a wealth of benefits and this is just the latest.

“We've recently seen the opening of the new Farley Hill Primary School at Arborfield, new play areas in several locations, the new activity centre at Dinton Pastures and too many others to name individually, including generous amounts of public green space.”

The borough council proposes continuing this approach in its Local Plan Update: Revised Growth Strategy, which it is set to ask residents' views on from 22 November to 24 January.

To find out more, visit engage.wokingham.gov.uk.

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Further information:

1. More from Councillor Parry Batth, executive member for environment and leisure, at parry.batth@wokingham.gov.uk or Councillor Wayne Smith, executive member for planning and enforcement, at wayne.smith@wokingham.gov.uk