

14th August 2025



Mr. Nick Chancellor
Wokingham Borough Council
Planning Department
Shute End
Wokingham,
Berkshire
RG40 1BN

Molly Huck
E: molly.huck@savills.com
M: + 44 77799 21004

One Forbury Square
The Forbury
Reading
RG1 3BB

Dear Mr Chancellor,

RE: Parcels W, Y and Z, Arborfield (Former Arborfield Studios) – Request for pre-application advice

We write on behalf of Crest Nicholson (Chiltern) in connection with proposals for development on land at the Former Arborfield Studios, Langley Common Road, Barkham, Wokingham ('the Site'). This pre-application request is submitted following conversations between Crest Nicholson and Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and the signing of a Planning Performance Agreement.

Crest Nicholson seeks pre-application advice in relation to an outline planning application for up to approximately 360 dwellings on the Former Arborfield Studios in combination with a Reserved Matters application pursuant to O/2014/2280 for approximately 100 homes.

This pre-application enquiry seeks advice regarding the principle of development and key technical considerations for the emerging development proposals. It is envisaged that this is the first of four pre-application meetings, with the initial meeting focused on the evolving design and masterplanning process. The advice sought as part of these pre-application meetings will inform the subsequent preparation of the outline planning application.

Beyond this covering letter, the request for pre-application advice is accompanied by the following drawings and technical notes for your consideration, which explain masterplanning work undertaken to date and the Site opportunities and constraints informing the emerging development proposals:

- Site Location Plan, prepared by Thrive Architects;
- Topographical Survey, prepared by Survey Solutions;
- Opportunities and Constraints Plan, prepared by Thrive Architects;
- Concept Masterplan, prepared by Thrive Architects;
- Heritage Asset Map, prepared by Icenj; and
- Landscape Technical note, prepared by Aspect Landscape.

Crest Nicholson may look to further supplement this submission with updated technical notes to further inform the submission.

Background

The Site

Offices and associates throughout the Americas, Europe, Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East.

Savills (UK) Limited. Chartered Surveyors. Regulated by RICS. A subsidiary of Savills plc. Registered in England No. 2605138.
Registered office: 33 Margaret Street, London, W1G 0JD



The Site is brownfield comprising of multiple large industrial type buildings and hardstanding which extends circa 15.07ha. The Site is bordered by the existing Arborfield Green development on its southern and eastern boundaries. Langley Common Road borders the Site to the west and open space to the north which is currently designated as 'Countryside', albeit, this land benefits from an emerging residential allocation in Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040, known as 'Barkham Square' which Crest Nicholson also have a land interest in.

The Site falls within the wider Arborfield Garrison SDL (Policy CP18) which sought to deliver 3,500 dwellings including affordable homes in accordance with Policy CP5. Planning permission was first granted at Arborfield Garrison on 2nd April 2015 for up to 2,000 homes, SANG, a district centre plus other associated works (reference: O/2014/2280) with Reserved Matters submissions coming forward in due course. The emerging Local Plan states approximately 2,137 dwellings have already been delivered through completions, extant planning permissions and resolutions to grant planning permission.

The Site is within fluvial flood zone 1, and is subject to localised areas of surface water flooding.

The Site is within the 5-7km Special Protection Area (SPA), as a result, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) will be required to mitigate any impact of development on the nearby Thames Basin Heath.

There are a number of TPOs present on Site covering Oak, Lime, Alder and Ash trees. There is also an area of Ancient Woodland which sits adjacent to the site boundary (NE reference: 52839).

There are no listed buildings within the Site or public right of ways (PROW).

Planning Policy Context

The adopted statutory Development Plan for Wokingham Borough Council comprises the following:

- Adopted Core Strategy (January 2010);
- Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (February 2014);
- The South East Plan (2009) – Saved Policy NRM6 only; and
- Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals & Waste Plan (2019).

Core Strategy

The following policies from the Core Strategy (January 2010) are considered to be of most relevance to the Proposed Development.

Policy	Title
CP1	Sustainable development
CP2	Inclusive communities
CP3	General Principles for development
CP4	infrastructure requirements
CP5	Housing mix, density and affordability
CP6	Managing Travel Demand
CP7	Biodiversity
CP8	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
CP9	Scale and location of development proposals
CP10	Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network
CP11	Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)

CP17	Housing delivery
CP18	Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location

Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (MDD)

The Wokingham Borough MDD (February 2014) took forward and developed the objectives laid down in the Core Strategy. This includes providing additional detailed policies to use when considering development proposals. The following policies are considered to be of most relevance to this application:

Policy	Title
CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC02	Development Limits
CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
CC04	Sustainable Design and Construction
CC05	Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks
CC06	Noise
CC07	Parking
CC08	Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure
CC09	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
CC10	Sustainable Drainage
TB05	Housing Mix
TB07	Internal Space Standards
TB08	Open Space, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development
TB09	Residential accommodation for vulnerable groups
TB12	Employment Skills Plan
TB21	Landscape Character;
TB23	Biodiversity and Development
TB24	Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas)
TB25	Archaeology

Emerging Local Plan

Wokingham Borough Council has been working to replace the extant Development Plan with what it refers to as the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update ('LPU'). The Local Development Scheme (LDS) timescales are set out below:

Stage	Date complete/ Anticipated
Revised Growth Strategy consultation	November 2021
Proposed Submission Plan Publication	September 2024
Submission	December 2024 – January 2025
Examination hearings (stage 1)	April 2025
Examination hearings (stage 2)	September 2025
Adoption	May 2026

The Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040: Proposed Submission Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Planning Inspector on 28 February 2025 with Hearings anticipated to commence in Autumn 2025.

The following policies from the LPU are considered to be of most relevance for this application:

Theme	Policy and Title
Delivering the Spatial Strategy	SS1: Sustainable development principles SS2: Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS10: Meeting our housing needs SS14: Sites allocated for residential, including residential as part of mixed-use development SS11: Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location SS17: Transport improvement
Climate Change and Energy	CE1: Design principles for efficient buildings CE3: Environmental standards for residential development CE4: Supporting a circular economy CE5: Embodied carbon CE7: Low carbon and renewable energy generation
Connections	C1: Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2: Mitigation of transport impacts and highways safety and design C3: Active travel C4: Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5: Parking and electric vehicle charging C6: Technology and innovation in transport C7: Digital infrastructure and communications technology C8: Utilities
Housing	H1: Housing mix, density and standards H3: Affordable housing H6: Self-build and custom housebuilding
Flooding and Drainage	FD1: Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2: Sustainable drainage FD3: River corridors and watercourses
Natural Environment	NE1: Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2: Biodiversity net gain NE3: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area NE4: Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5: Landscape and design NE6: Valued landscapes
Design, Heritage and the Built Environment	DH1: Place making and quality design DH2: Safeguarding amenity DH5: The historic environment DH6: Archaeology
Healthy and Safe Communities	HC1: Promoting healthy communities HC2: Community infrastructure HC4: Open space, sports, recreation and play facilities: HC5: Environmental protection HC6: Air pollution and air quality HC7: Light pollution HC8: Noise pollution HC9: Contaminated land and water HC10: Odour, fumes, and dust

Development Proposals

As illustrated in the accompanying Pre-Application Design Pack, the current emerging development proposals comprise the erection of up to approximately 360 dwellings (including 40% affordable housing as per policy H3). The proposals seek to deliver a high-quality sustainable development which helps to support local housing needs.

The design proposals are in an early stage, however, initial proposals include:

- Redevelopment of a brownfield site in a residential setting
- Delivery of approximately 360 high quality new homes, including 40% affordable homes;
- Integration within the Arborfield Green development, extending strategic green infrastructure network;
- Vehicular access from Baston Road to Princess Marina Drive within the Garrison SDL; and
- A 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in line with legislative requirements.

Planning Considerations

On the basis of the above, the Council's advice is requested on the following matters which are considered to be most relevant to the current emerging development proposals.

Principle of Development

As outlined above, the Site benefits from an existing allocation (Policy CP18) within Wokingham's Local Plan and an extant outline planning permission. The principle of development in this location has therefore been established through the allocation of this land in both the adopted and emerging Local Plan.

As briefly outlined above, a standalone outline planning application is proposed to be submitted as the dwellings proposed on land at the Former Arborfield Studios would exceed that of the existing outline permission (reference: O/2014/2280). Provision of these additional dwellings is included in the emerging Local Plan Policy SS11 which states:

Around 3,047 dwellings comprising:

- i. 2,137 dwellings through completions, extant planning permissions, resolutions to grant planning permission;*
- ii. 300 dwellings by optimising development density at land currently occupied by Arborfield Studios;***
- iii. 600 dwellings on land to the north of Arborfield Studios, known as Barkham Square; and*
- iv. 10 dwellings at Westwood Yard, Sheerlands Road [our emphasis]*

The NPPF also emphasises the importance of making efficient use of brownfield land.

In combination, a separate Reserved Matters application for approximately 100 dwellings is then to be submitted pursuant to planning permission ref: O/2014/2280. This parcel is known as Parcel Y.

EIA Scoping

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ("the 2017 Regulations"), require that before consent is granted for certain types of development, an EIA must be undertaken. The 2017 Regulations set out the types of development which must always be subject to an EIA (Schedule 1 development) and other developments which will only require assessment if they are likely to give

rise to significant environmental effects (Schedule 2 developments). Guidance and thresholds are available to help to decide whether EIA is required for a Schedule 2 development. This decision process is known as 'screening'.

The selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development are provided in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations. Schedule 2 projects require EIA if they are likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of their nature, size or location. The potential for likely significant effects on 'sensitive areas', as defined in Regulation 2(1) of the 2017 Regulations, is a particularly important consideration.

The Proposed Development falls within Schedule 2 Section 10(b) of the EIA Regulations as an "Urban development project" in which "the development includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwellinghouse development", "the development includes more than 150 dwellings", and "the overall area of the development exceeds 5 hectares".

Owing to the nature and scale of the Proposed Development, as well as the potential impacts from other cumulative schemes in the area, alongside the foregoing EIA that was undertaken on the site as part of a wider urban development project, the Applicant considers that it is likely to give rise to significant environmental effects and that an EIA will be required. An EIA Screening Opinion was not therefore sought from WBC, instead the Applicant has decided to undertake a voluntary EIA.

Equally, a formal Scoping Opinion is not currently being requested for the Site. Crest Nicholson previously received consent for the Arborfield Garrison scheme, and its associated EIA, which provides a basis for the suggested scope. The forthcoming Barkham Square scheme has also recently been scoped by the Council. Together, both Sites provide a basis for the scope of the Arborfield Studios Environmental Statement. A comparison table of the agreed ES Scope between Arborfield Garrison, Barkham Square and Arborfield Studios is set out in the table below.

Comparison of Environmental Statement Scopes

Topic	Barkham Square (Ref. 243114)	Arborfield Garrison (Ref. O/2014/2280)	Arborfield Studios (The Site)	Justification
Air Quality	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Assessment of effects likely required due to scale of development.
Climate Change	Chapter scoped in as a whole with the exception of non-significant elements scoped out.	Scoped out (Given the age since the assessment was undertaken, current best practice is to scope in climate change and greenhouse gases).	Scoped in	We propose to follow a similar approach to the Barkham Square application where non-significant elements are scoped out.
Ecology inc. Trees	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Although a brownfield site with low ecological value, due to the potential wider effects from cumulative schemes in the area, we propose to scope this in.

Ground Conditions and Contamination	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped in	Due to the presence of potential contaminated land, we suggest this is scoped in.
Historic Environment (built heritage and archaeology)	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped out	As there are no designated heritage assets on Site or within close proximity to the Site boundary. There is also likely to be limited archaeological deposits on site due to the existing condition of the Site.
Human Health	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Due to the nature and scale of the development, the scheme is not considered to give rise to significant effects on human health to require a separate ES chapter on human health effects.
LVIA	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped out	Due to the enclosed nature of the Site by trees to the east and the context of existing development to the west, significant effects are not considered likely.
Major Accidents and natural disasters	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	The Site is not at significant risk of major accidents or disasters.
Noise & Vibration	Noise scoped in; vibration scoped out	Noise scoped in; vibration scoped out	Noise scoped in; Vibration scoped out	Vibration is suggested to be scoped out however, it is proposed to scope noise in as the effects from existing residents and road traffic.
Socio-economics	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped out	As with Barkham Square, the effects can be mitigated through a S106. Due to the proposals consisting of c.360 units, the quantum of development is not considered significant in EIA terms.

Transport	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Assessment of effects likely required due to scale of development.
Water, Drainage and flood risk	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Assessment of effects likely required due to scale of development.

For those chapters which have been scoped out (LVIA, Historic Environment, and socio-economics), supporting technical reports and information will be submitted with the planning application however, significant effects are unlikely and therefore, a standalone Environmental Statement chapter will not be required for these topics.

The Applicant would welcome feedback on the above suggested approach to the EIA.

Proposed Planning Application Approach

It is anticipated that, subject to and following receipt of pre-application feedback and community engagement, an outline planning application (with all matters reserved) will be prepared and submitted in March 2026.

The Council's advice is sought regarding the validation requirements for the proposed outline planning applications based on the current development proposals.

The Council's advice is also sought on any other technical matters in addition to those raised above which would need to be addressed.

CiL and Vacant Building Credit

As a new standalone submission is proposed, CiL would be payable on this phase of the Arborfield SDL. CiL within the Arborfield SDL is chargeable at £551.02 per sqm based on the 2025 rate and subject to further indexation.

Separately, Vacant Building Credit (VBC) came into force through the publication of planning guidance on 28 November 2014. National policy provides an incentive for brownfield development on sites containing vacant buildings. Where a vacant building is brought back into any lawful use, or is demolished to be replaced by a new building, the developer should be offered a financial credit equivalent to the existing gross floorspace of relevant vacant buildings when the local planning authority calculates any affordable housing contribution which will be sought.

The Applicant would welcome discussions as to whether VBC and/or CiL relief could be claimed as part of this development.

Areas upon which specific pre-application advice is sought

1. Guidance from the Council is sought on any key development parameters to guide evolution of the scheme proposals, extent and nature of development, green corridors etc;
2. Confirmation as to whether WBC would seek a design framework similar to Barkham Square or whether the Northern Perimeter design code is acceptable as approved;
3. Guidance from the Council as to whether they consider the proposals to be EIA development;

4. Guidance from Council on access and movement priorities and latest view on Langley Common Road access;
5. Clarification from Council as to whether the calculation of open space and play requirements are agreed;
6. Confirmation of the scope of validation requirements for an outline application (all matters to be reserved) on the basis of the scheme being EIA development and whether the above adjustments are supported;
7. Guidance from the Council is sought as to whether VBC and/or CiL relief could be claimed as part of this development; and
8. Any other matters which the Council believe are relevant

Conclusions

This request for pre-application advice is made on behalf of Crest Nicholson Operations Ltd (Chiltern), who in turn are acting on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence in advance of the submission of an outline planning application for proposed residential development on Parcels W, Y and Z, Arborfield (Former Arborfield Studios), Langley Common Road, Barkham, Wokingham.

The Council's advice is sought regarding the principle of development and key technical considerations as detailed above for the emerging development proposals.

Crest Nicholson would welcome an in-person meeting with the Local Planning Authority to discuss the proposals in further detail.

We would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this submission and we would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss the current emerging development proposals further. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or would like to discuss this enquiry further.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Huck", written in a cursive style.

Molly Huck MRTPI

Senior Planner