

# Agenda Item 14.

| Application Number | Expiry Date        | Parish                 | Ward                  |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 250735             | 18 July 2025 (EoT) | Arborfield and Newland | Barkham & Arborfield; |

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| <b>Applicant</b>                             | Croudace Homes, Vortal Homes Limited and Falcon Developments (SE) Limited                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Site Address</b>                          | Land to the north of School Road Arborfield Cross                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Proposal</b>                              | Outline application for the proposed residential development of up to 70 dwellings together with associated access, landscaping, open space and associated works. (All matters reserved except for means of access.) |
| <b>Type</b>                                  | Outline                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Officer</b>                               | Joanna Carter                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Reason for determination by committee</b> | Listed by Councillor                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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| <b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b> | Planning Committee on Wednesday, 9 July 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>REPORT PREPARED BY</b>   | Assistant Director – Place and Growth                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>RECOMMENDATION</b>       | <p>(i) <b>APPROVAL</b> subject to conditions and informatives as set out in Appendix 1 and the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement to secure the following planning obligations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affordable Housing – 40% secured on site</li> <li>2. Healthcare – contribution towards improvements of healthcare facilities at Swallowfield Medical Practice</li> <li>3. Employment and Skills – Employment and Skills Plan or financial contribution in lieu</li> <li>4. Thames Basing Heaths SPA – off-site mitigation secured via the Ridge SANG</li> <li>5. Travel Plan – submission of a travel plan</li> <li>6. Travel Plan – where required, fees for monitoring of a travel plan</li> <li>7. My Journey – contribution towards My Journey (to be agreed)</li> <li>8. Roads – management and maintenance responsibilities</li> <li>9. Management Company – details of establishment</li> <li>10. Public Open Space – policy compliant on-site provision</li> <li>11. Public Open Space – management and maintenance responsibilities</li> <li>12. Off-site Sports Facilities – financial contribution</li> <li>13. Public Transport Service Improvements – bus service contribution (Bus Route 3)</li> </ol> |

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|  | <p><b>14. Public Transport Infrastructure Improvements – contribution towards improvements of 2 no. bus stops (The Swan)</b></p> <p><b>15. Public Rights of Way – contribution towards upgrading of a section of a surface of Cole Lane</b></p> <p><b>16. Biodiversity Net Gain – submission of Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan</b></p> <p><b>17. Biodiversity Net Gain – fees towards monitoring</b></p> <p><b>18. Traffic Regulation Order – payment of fees</b></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p><b>(ii) That the committee authorise the Head of Development Management to REFUSE full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed within six months of the date of this resolution (unless officers on behalf of the Head of Development Management agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).</b></p> |
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## SUMMARY

This is an outline application for the proposed residential development of up to 70 dwellings, with all matters reserved except for the means of access. The application follows the refusal of a previous scheme for 95 dwellings (application number 242421) on a larger site area.

The site is located in the countryside, adjacent to the settlement boundary of Arborfield Cross, which is defined as a Limited Development Location. The proposal is therefore in conflict with the development plan's spatial strategy, which seeks to limit development in the countryside.

However, the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, with the latest position showing a 1.7-year supply. Consequently, the policies most important for determining the application are considered out-of-date, and the "tilted balance" as set out in paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged. This means that permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme.

The development would result in environmental harm, most notably to the countryside and the Bearwood and Barkham Valued Landscape. It would also harm the character of School Road, which is a designated Green Route, and the setting of Arborfield Cross village. These harms are afforded significant weight against the proposal.

Conversely, the scheme would provide substantial social and economic benefits. The delivery of up to 70 new homes, including a policy-compliant 40% provision of affordable housing (up to 28 units), is also afforded significant weight in the context of the housing land supply shortfall. Further moderate weight is given to a package of highways and sustainable transport improvements, including a new toucan crossing, contributions to the local bus service, and enhancements to pedestrian and cycle routes.

The current application has addressed previous reasons for refusal by refocusing the development away from, reducing the quantum of development, removing the eastern field to lessen landscape and heritage impacts, and providing comprehensive ecological surveys and a viable strategy for avoiding and mitigating impacts on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. It has also now been adequately demonstrated that a policy-compliant design can be achieved on site within the proposed parameters.

In applying the “tilted balance”, it is concluded that while there would be clear environmental harm, this is not considered to meet the required test of significantly and demonstrably outweighing the substantial benefits of delivering much-needed market and affordable housing. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions and the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement to secure the necessary planning obligations.

| <b>RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                            |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <b>Application No.</b>           | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Decision</b>                            |
| 180567                           | Application for a Screening Opinion for an Environmental Impact Assessment for the development of 120 dwellings, which would be up to 2.5 storeys in height, with access from School lane, a new car park to serve the Coombes CE Primary School and all necessary infrastructure                                                                                                | EIA not required<br>15/03/2018             |
| 180596                           | Outline Planning Application for the proposed erection of up to 120 dwellings and all associated parking, landscaping, internal road network and public open space. Access to be considered.                                                                                                                                                                                     | Refused<br>22/06/2018                      |
| 242421                           | Outline application for the proposed redevelopment of the site and erection of up to 95 no. dwellings with associated access, infrastructure, open space, landscaping and associated works. (All matters reserved except for means of access).                                                                                                                                   | Refused<br>20/12/2024,<br>appeal submitted |
| <b>DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION</b>   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                            |
| Site area                        | 5.52 hectares                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                            |
| Proposed units                   | (up to) 70                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                            |
| Affordable units proposed        | (up to) 28 (40% of all units)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                            |
| Proposed density                 | 25 dwellings per hectare                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                            |
| Previous land use                | agricultural                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                            |
| <b>CONSTRAINTS</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ancient Woodland (110m south-west from Hazeltons Copse and 560m south-west from the Coombes)</li> <li>• Bat Roost Habitat Suitability</li> <li>• Countryside</li> <li>• Flood Zone 1</li> <li>• Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone (Green zone)</li> <li>• Green Routes and Riverside Paths (School Road is a Green Route)</li> </ul> |                                            |

- Greenway Route (Route B – proposed, not yet consented)
- Landscape Character Assessment Area (Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay)
- Listed Building (Grade II Listed Building Langleypond Farmhouse is located 190m to the east, a cluster of Grade II Listed Buildings at Newland Farm located 170m to the west)
- Conservation Area (Arborfield Cross Conservation Area is located 160m to the west)
- Local Plan Update Submitted Sites (forms part of 5AR007 and 5AR009)
- Local Wildlife Site (110m south-west from Hazeltons Copse and 560m south-west from the Coombes)
- Nuclear Consultation Zone (AWE Burghfield – 12km zone)
- Ordinary Watercourse (tertiary river along western boundary)
- Public Right of Way (ARBO9 along western boundary and ARBO10 160m to the east; both are Byways Open to All Traffic (BOAT))
- SSSI Impact Risk Zones (1.9km from Longmoor Bog and 4km from Bramshill)
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones (5km zone)
- Tree Preservation Order (TPO-1926-2023 includes trees T5 and T6 within an area of farmstead to the south-east corner of the site)
- 2 no. veteran trees and 1 no notable tree along Cole Lane (outside application boundary)
- Valued Landscape (Bearwood and Barkham Valued Landscape)

## CONSULTATION RESPONSES

### Internal

|                                                      |                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| WBC Built Heritage Officer                           | No objection                                                |
| WBC CIL                                              | CIL-liable development                                      |
| WBC Community Safety                                 | No comments received                                        |
| WBC Community Sustainability                         | No comments received                                        |
| WBC Flood Risk & Drainage                            | No objection subject to conditions                          |
| WBC Ecology                                          | No objection subject to conditions and planning obligations |
| WBC Ecology Newts                                    | No objection                                                |
| WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Affordable Housing) | No objection subject to planning obligations                |
| WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Employment Skills)  | No objection subject to planning obligations                |
| WBC Education (School Place Planning)                | No comments received                                        |
| WBC Environmental Health                             | No comments received                                        |
| WBC Green Infrastructure                             | No comments received                                        |
| WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy)              | Objection                                                   |

|                                                    |                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| WBC Health and Wellbeing                           | No comments received                         |
| WBC Highways                                       | Objection                                    |
| WBC Landscape and Trees                            | Objection                                    |
| WBC Libraries                                      | No comments received                         |
| WBC Property Services                              | No comments received                         |
| WBC Public Rights Of Way                           | No objection subject to planning obligations |
| WBC Sports Development (Places and Neighbourhoods) | No comments received                         |
| WBC Sustainability                                 | No objection subject to conditions           |
| <b>External</b>                                    |                                              |
| Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust                 | No comments received                         |
| Berkshire Archaeology                              | No objection subject to conditions           |
| Crime Prevention Design Advisor                    | No objection                                 |
| Natural England                                    | No objection subject to planning obligations |
| NHS Wokingham CCG                                  | No objection subject to planning obligations |
| Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue                      | No objection                                 |
| Southern Gas Networks                              | No objection                                 |
| SSE Power Distribution                             | No objection                                 |
| Thames Water Utilities Ltd                         | No objection subject to conditions           |

## REPRESENTATIONS

### Arborfield & Newland Parish Council:

Objection. Please see comments in Appendix 2.

The Parish Council made observations which can be summarised as follows:

- The site is the same as the refused application and changes are minor; reduction in the number of dwellings does not address outstanding issues  
(*Officer comment: this a new application and as such, it needs to be assessed on its own merits*)
- Speculative proposal on greenfield site outside settlement boundary  
(*Officer comment: the loss of an open green field would result in unacceptable impact on the character area, including Valued Landscape. The application conflicts with the Council's spatial strategy by proposing development outside development limits. However, this needs to be considered in the context of the Council's housing land supply position and the tilted balance being engaged. This requires the presumption in favour of sustainable development to be applied, which means that planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. This is outlined in the Planning Balance section of this report.*)
- Reduction in land area is disproportionate to the reduction in housing numbers, resulting in a higher density out of keeping with local area,  
(*Officer comment: the proposed density is recognised as being greater than the immediate area, however, this is not the sole indicator of appropriateness.*)
- Criticism expressed about Framework Travel Plan, specifically no new infrastructure being offered, Cole Lane is unsuitable as the main access to village facilities, there

will be dependence on use of private car, there is lack of tangible measures to promote sustainable travel modes,

*(Officer comment: the applicant committed to the submission of a detailed Travel Plan, and, if required, a payment of My Journey contribution. Whilst details of measures to be included in the Travel Plan would be ascertained at the time of the submission of the Travel Plan, these may include a contribution towards a car club and e-bike vouchers. The submission of a Travel Plan would be secured under S106 legal agreement. Other infrastructure improvements committed to by the Applicant include a contribution to re-surfacing of a section of Cole Lane (between proposed site access and the village), contribution towards improvements of 2 no. bus stops and contribution towards Arborfield SDL Bus Strategy. The Applicant also agreed to the delivery of a toucan crossing at Coombes Lane/Sandy Lane junction with Bearwood Road, as well as refuge and splitter islands on Eversley Road. Together, these elements are considered to provide adequate measures to encourage more sustainable travel modes.)*

- Increase in the size of village by 25% without any additional facilities and infrastructure to benefit local community,

*(Officer comment: the Applicant committed to a range of infrastructure improvements, including contribution towards improvements of a section of Cole Lane, bus stop enhancements, contribution towards Bus Service, toucan crossing at Coombes Lane/Sandy Lane junction with Bearwood Road, as well as the replacement of traffic calming measures on School Road and new crossing facilities, including a refuge and splitter island, on Eversley Road.)*

- Increased traffic congestion, in particular on School Road,  
*(Officer comment: any impact on the wider highway network was assessed by the Council's Highways Officer and is not considered to be adverse).*
- The Neighbourhood Plan is not out of date as it is within the 5-year review period, and the proposal conflicts with its Policies IRS01, IRS02, IRS03 and IRS04, TC2, AD1, GA1, GA3

*(Officer comment: paragraph 14 of the NPPF sets out circumstances in which a conflict with a Neighbourhood Plan ("NP") would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the scheme's benefits, when the tilted balance is engaged. As the NP does not propose include site allocations, it is not considered that paragraph 14 is triggered.)*

- Contrary to CS Policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6, CP9 and CP11,  
*(Officer comment: it is recognised that the proposal conflicts with these policies, however, there is a requirement that any such conflict is considered in the context of the tilted balance. Please see a section on planning balance at paragraph 212.)*
- Inaccurate information submitted: site use is not a permanent pasture (it is an arable field)

*(Officer comment: the LPA consider the current use is as an arable field. The principle of the loss of Best and Most Versatile Land is considered in paragraph 37.)*

- LVIA shows that the proposal is out of place,  
*(Officer comment: visual impacts are considered in paragraphs 56 to 84 below, where it is concluded that the proposal would have detrimental impacts in landscape terms. This is further considered in the planning balance section of the report.)*

- Permission sought before LPU is adopted,  
*(Officer comment: arguments that an application is premature are unlikely to justify a refusal of planning permission other than in the limited circumstances. In this case, such circumstances as outlined in paragraph 50 of the NPPF. Where the tilted balance is engaged, the planning application can be refused only where adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the scheme's benefits.)*

- Attention is drawn to planning history.  
*(Officer comment: the planning history is a material planning consideration and considered in the assessment of the scheme.)*

## **Barkham Parish Council:**

Objection. Please see comments in Appendix 3.

The Parish Council made observations which can be summarised as follows:

- No fundamental change since the previous application (242421), despite a reduction in housing numbers,  
*(Officer comment: this a new application and as such, it needs to be assessed on its own merits. This application differs from the previous one in terms of application site area, proposed quantum, access points, indicative layout. It is also noted that further information has been submitted where previous application was considered to be supported by insufficient details.)*
- Significant and unnecessary harm to the countryside, specifically: the site lies outside the designated settlement area, it will encroach on the green wedge between Barkham Hill and Arborfield Cross and will lead to the urbanisation of a countryside area,  
*(Officer comment: officers recognise that the proposal would result in harmful landscape impact. It is also recognised that the application site sits outside development limits and as such, the proposal would conflict with the spatial strategy for the Borough in principle. It is not considered that the amended scheme would result in coalescence between Arborfield Cross and Langley Common or between Arborfield Cross and Barkham Hill, although it would result in harm in terms of the impact on the countryside and character of the area.)*
- Conflict with CS Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11, MDD LP Policies CC01, CC02, and TB21,  
*(Officer comment: these policies are considered throughout the report in the context of tilted balance triggered by the Council's inability to demonstrate five year housing land supply.)*
- Unsustainable location with regard to access to facilities (existing and planned), contrary to BDG SPD,  
*(Officer comment: the site is not considered to be located in a sustainable location, , which weighs against the proposal in the overall planning balance, in the context of the five year housing land supply shortfall This is considered in more detail in paragraphs 98 to 125 of this report and in planning balance.)*
- Wokingham Borough Council has declared a climate emergency, which highlights the increased need to reduce private car travel,  
*(Officer comment: the application proposes some limited opportunities to support sustainable travel options, although it is acknowledged that, due to its location, the proposal would result in a similar degree of reliance on private cars as other occupants of the village would in order to access facilities and services.)*
- Site not allocated in the LPU due to failure to provide a satisfactory relationship with the existing settlement pattern,  
*(Officer comment: the HELAA exercise, which formed part of the LPU site allocation, was carried out at high level and is not comparable to assessment of a planning application. Notwithstanding, it is not considered that the proposal would achieve a satisfactory relationship with the existing settlement pattern of Arborfield Cross.)*

- Previous reasons for refusal are still relevant,  
*(Officer comment: this is a new application, for a different quantum of development over a smaller area and needs to be considered on its own merits and in light of additional information having been submitted.)*
- Close proximity to Arborfield Cross Conservation Area and The Coombes Woodlands (Local Wildlife Site, an area of geological interest, and ancient woodlands).  
*(Officer comment: the proposal of this scale and location is not considered to result in unacceptable impacts (direct or indirect) that would be significantly harmful to these areas.)*

**Councillor Joseph Barley:**

Objection. Please see comments in Appendix 4.

Councillor Barley made observations which can be summarised as follows:

- Officers previously concluded, when refusing both applications, that the proposal would have unacceptable impact on the character and setting of the countryside and no design, layout and scale can overcome this,  
*(Officer comment: officers consider the current proposal to have unacceptable impact in landscape terms and this weighs against the scheme in planning balance.)*
- The proposal would represent an urbanising encroachment into countryside and erode the distinct identity of settlements,  
*(Officer comment: a degree of harm is caused in landscape terms and this weighs against the proposal in planning balance. It is not, however, considered that the proposal would result in coalescence between Arborfield Cross and Langley Common or between Arborfield Cross and Barkham Hill.)*
- The approved application 232490 for 50 units will exacerbate the settlement erosion,  
*(Officer comment: Application 232490, whilst subject to Committee resolution to approve, has not yet been granted planning permission. In the event, the current application is not considered to result in coalescence of settlements of Arborfield Cross and Arborfield given that the current scheme does not seek to introduce development to the south of the School Road or beyond the eastern boundary of the Coombes CoE Primary School.)*
- Not allocated in LPU or Neighbourhood Plan,  
*(Officer comment: the prematurity of the application does not on its own constitute a reason for refusal where the proposal is unlikely to prejudice the delivery of the LPU. Where tilted balance is engaged, the planning application can be refused only where adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the scheme's benefits. Given the stage of the LPU and the number of unresolved objections received, the conflict with LPU attracts only limited weight overall.)*
- Limited and vague attempts to address previous reasons for refusal (242421),  
*(Officer comment: this application differs from the previous (refused) scheme in several respects, which are outlined within the body of the report. As the application is not identical to the refused scheme, it needs to be assessed on its own merits.)*
- Over exaggeration of limited active and public transport options,  
*(Officer comment: the site is not considered to be in a sustainable location, however, the officers acknowledge the support proposed to sustainable travel choices, including Travel Plan commitments, contribution towards Arborfield Bus Strategy and improvements of two bus stops, delivery of refuge and splitter islands along Eversley Road, as well the delivery of toucan crossing at Coombes Lane/Sandy Lane junction*

with Bearwood Road. Some of these elements have been committed to by the Applicant during the course of the application and as such, were not available in application documentation from the outset.)

- Excessive walking distance to Arborfield District Centre will result in car dependency, *(Officer comment: the proximity to facilities and services is considered to be such as to result in reliance on private car for access to these. This matter weighs against the proposal in planning balance.)*
- Additional volume of traffic will contradict the reasons for TRO on School Road, *(Officer comment: the TRICS data, as well as sensitivity test using the WBC's approved trip rates, demonstrate that the proposal would not have unacceptable impact on the wider highway network.)*
- Loss of agricultural fields and degradation to the quality of landscape will impact on the Valued Landscape, *(Officer comment: the proposal would result in loss of 1.1 hectare of agricultural land of 3a classification. Whilst this would result in a loss of Best and Most Versatile Land, it is considered that only a relatively small amount of land classified as BMVL would be lost. As such, the resultant harm would be minor, but is considered within the overall planning balance.)*
- Light and air pollution would impact on surrounding areas (including the Coombes Woodland and its wildlife), *(Officer comment: the current application is supported with additional information that was absent in the previously refused scheme. The additional information has been considered in terms of impact on wildlife and Local Wildlife Site and officers conclude that, subject to conditions securing avoidance and mitigation measures, the scheme would not have unacceptable impacts on protected species and species of principal importance. The scheme would not result in unacceptable (direct or indirect) impacts on ecological sites nearby.)*
- Reliance on car travel due to lack of suitable public and active transport contradicts WBC Climate Emergency commitments, *(Officer comment: the application proposes some limited opportunities to support sustainable travel options, although it is acknowledged that, due to unsustainable location, the proposal would result in a reliance on private cars to access facilities and services. This is further considered in paragraphs 98 to 125 of this report and in the planning balance section.)*
- Contrary to CS Policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP4, CP6, CP9, CP11 and CP17 and related MDD LP Policies, and to LPU Policies SS1, SS2, SS4, SS5, SS15, C1, C2, and C3. *(Officer comment: these policies are considered throughout the report in the context of tilted balance triggered by the Council's inability to demonstrate five year housing land supply and the stage of the LPU.)*

## Neighbours:

- Development would reverse the benefits of closing School Road to through-traffic, a measure specifically implemented to improve safety of schoolchildren; the increased traffic volumes would pose a risk to pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians, particularly children attending the nearby school, *(Officer comment: the proposal has been assessed in terms of highways impacts and is considered not to result in unacceptable impacts on highway network or safety of non-motorised highway users.)*
- The only access point onto School Road would create considerable congestion during peak school drop-off and pick-up times,

- (Officer comment: the proposals will introduce some additional traffic on School Road but this is still significantly less than historical conditions)*
- Increased traffic would need to exit via Link Way or the Arborfield Cross roundabouts, roads which are not designed for such a volume of traffic, traffic calming measures on Mole Road are unable to handle additional vehicles,  
*(Officer comment: the proposal has been considered by the WBC Highways Officer and it is not considered that it would result in unacceptable highway impacts)*
  - The development would put additional pressure on local services, including doctor's surgery and dentists and that there are no additional doctor or dentist facilities to support the new housing,  
*(Officer comment: the proposal would secure various contributions, including towards bus service and towards creation of additional clinical space. It is considered that the proposed infrastructure contributions would adequately mitigate the scheme's own impacts.)*
  - The Coombes School is noted as being oversubscribed,  
*(Officer comment: the School Place Planning Manager has confirmed that the Coombes CoE Primary School is undersubscribed)*
  - There has been no input from Thames Water regarding water pressure or sewage capacity, nor from Southern Electricity, more sewage would be pumped into local waterways,  
*(Officer comment: both SSEN and Thames Water provided comments on this application. No objection was raised, however, Thames Water confirmed that sewage water capacity upgrades would be required. This is further explained in paragraphs 169 to 170 and 199 of this report.)*
  - Existing bus services are very limited and unable to support the development. There is no direct bus service to Winnersh for access to the train station, schools, and shops. Journeys to Wokingham and Reading can take a considerable amount of time due to traffic. Sustainable travel from the site is considered not possible, as it is too far to walk from Arborfield Green,  
*(Officer comment: the current bus service provides a good level of service to Reading and Wokingham, which provide access to the onward train travel. Whilst the walking distance to secondary schools and Arborfield Green future District Centre exceeds the recommended walking distance, public transport options are available towards Shinfield and Arborfield secondary schools. The sustainable travel options are further considered at paragraphs 98 to 125 of this report)*
  - Loss of the Borough's green space, loss of community green space, detrimental impact on the rural character of the area, out of keeping with the village, degradation of the quality of environment,  
*(Officer comment: the proposal would result in detrimental impact on the character of the area, including landscape and village of Arborfield Cross; this is further considered in paragraphs 56 to 84 of this report, and in the planning balance section in the context of the current shortfall in the five year housing land supply.)*
  - Erosion of a green gap between Barkham and Arborfield, contribution to urban sprawl,  
*(Officer comment: the proposal no longer seeks to develop the eastern parcel of land, therefore, it is not considered that it would lead to coalescence with Arborfield. Considering the extent of the proposed development and the distance between the north-east boundary of the application site and the edge of Barkham Hill settlement (approximately 1.5km), it is not considered that the proposal would now result in any harmful physical or visual coalescence.)*
  - Diminished ability of school to educate children within the local ecosystem,  
*(Officer comment: this is not a material planning consideration.)*

- Increase in traffic would contribute to pollution and reduced air quality,  
*(Officer comment: the application site does not lie in air quality management area and would not result in unacceptable impacts in terms of pollution and air quality.)*
- Impacts of noise and dust during construction,  
*(Officer comment: these would be capable of being adequately mitigation through the Construction Environment Management Plan proposed to be secured by condition.)*
- Impacts on wildlife,  
*(Officer comment: the application is accompanied by Ecological Assessment which demonstrates there would not be unacceptable impacts on protected species and species of principal importance, subject to enhancements and mitigation measures being secured by condition.)*
- Previous reasons for refusal (242421) remain valid,  
*(Officer comment: several of reasons for refusal no longer apply as outlined in the body of this report. Nonetheless, each application needs to be considered on its own merits. The Council is required to grant permission unless the harms resulting from the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits. This is further explained in the planning balance section of this report at paragraphs 212 to 227.)*
- Not allocated in the LPU,  
*Officer comment: the prematurity of the application does not on its own constitute a reason for refusal where the proposal is unlikely to prejudice the delivery of the LPU. Where tilted balance is engaged, the planning application can be refused only where adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the scheme's benefits. Given the stage of the LPU and the number of unresolved objections received, the conflict with LPU attracts only limited weight overall.)*
- Arborfield has already had its share of development, with 3,500 houses being built as part of the Strategic Development Location (SDL). The area is still dealing with the unfinished Arborfield Green development, and this proposal adds to the pressure,  
*(Officer comment: each application needs to be considered on its own merits and in the context of the "tilted balance" the Council is required to apply to proposals where the Council is no longer able to demonstrate the required housing land supply.)*
- No benefit to the village or local area,  
*(Officer comment: the proposal is required to mitigate its own impacts and, in certain aspects, seek to enhance facilities, as outlined within the report. Moreover, as the area is included in the Neighbourhood Plan, a proportion of CIL funds to be provided by the development is received by the Town and Parish Councils.)*
- Precedent for future expansion,  
*(Officer comment: this is not a relevant planning consideration as each application needs to be assessed on its own merits.)*
- Unaffordability of affordable housing.  
*(Officer comment: the affordable housing provision is required to meet the Council's policies and guidance, as well as the definition of "Affordable Housing" within the NPPF. The proposal has been reviewed and, subject to a legal agreement, is compliant with these policies and guidance.)*

|                        |
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| <b>PLANNING POLICY</b> |
|------------------------|

**National Planning Policy Framework**  
**National Design Guide**  
**National Planning Practice Guidance**

## **Core Strategy (CS)**

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  
CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits  
CP17 – Housing Delivery

## **MDD Local Plan (MDD)**

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  
CC09 – Development and Flood Risk  
CC10 – Sustainable Drainage  
TB05 – Housing Mix  
TB07 – Internal Space Standards  
TB08 – Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards  
TB12 – Employment Skills Plan  
TB21 – Landscape Character  
TB23 – Biodiversity and Development  
TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets  
TB25 – Archaeology

## **Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (“ABNP”)**

IRS1 – Preservation of Separation of Settlements  
IRS2 – Recognise, Respect and Preserve Identity and Rural Setting of Settlements  
IRS3 – Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment and Green Spaces  
IRS4 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Character of the Area  
TC2 – Properly Planned and Designed New Facilities  
AD1 – New Development Within Development Limits  
AD3 – High Quality Development with Generous Open Space, Properly Landscaped  
GA1 – Minimise Additional Traffic on Unsuitable Roads  
GA2 – Implement Local Network of Green Routes for Non-Motorised Users  
GA3 – Public Transport Improvements with Long Term Viability

## **Local Plan Update**

SS1 – Sustainable development principles  
SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy  
SS4 – Development within and adjacent to minor settlements

SS5 – Development in the countryside  
 NE5 – Landscape and design  
 NE6 – Valued landscapes  
 DH1 – Place making and quality design  
 NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity  
 NE2 – Biodiversity net gain  
 NE3 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area  
 NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows  
 H1 – Housing mix, density and standards  
 H3 – Affordable housing  
 DH2 – Safeguarding amenity  
 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  
 SS15 – Securing infrastructure  
 ER4 – Employment and skills plans  
 HC4 – Open space, sports, recreation and play facilities

## Other

Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (“BDG SPD”)  
 CIL Guidance  
 Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document  
 Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document  
 Arborfield Garrison SDL SPD (“AG SDL SPD”)  
 Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement  
 Green Infrastructure Framework  
 Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement

## PLANNING ISSUES

### Site Description:

1. The site lies to the north-east of the village of Arborfield Cross and to the north-west of the village of Langley Common, within an open countryside. The site is surrounded by arable farmland to the north-east, north and south-east. To the south-west the site abuts the Coombes Church of England Primary School which forms the boundary of the Limited Development Location of Arborfield Cross. The site access is proposed off School Road through a newly constructed access. Immediately to the west and further to the east of the application site run two Public Rights of Way (Byways Open to All Traffic): Cole Lane and Wood Lane. Both Lanes form part of a network of footways providing connectivity between Arborfield Cross and the Coombes woodland. There are two ordinary watercourses running parallel to both Cole Lane and Wood Lane which connect to the main river to the north of the application site; both are connected by a ditch running along the northern boundary of the site. To the east the application site adjoins agricultural structures associated with farmland use. Beyond these, approximately 240m to the east of the site boundary, is located Grade II Listed Building Langleypond Farmhouse. There is a cluster of Grade II Listed Buildings at Newland Farm located 170m to the west of the application site. To the east of Wood Lane lies a cluster of buildings in commercial use. The application site is

currently in use as arable field and is surrounded by belts of trees and hedgerows, which also dissect the site into eastern and western parcels. The site comprises undulated ground with levels dropping from the south-west corner to the north-east.

### **Principle of Development:**

2. The starting point for decision making is the development plan. Section 70(2) of the TCPA 1990 & 38(6) of the PCPA 2004 states that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan includes the Core Strategy (2010), the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) (MDD), and the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (2020). The plan-led approach established in law is reinforced through the NPPF including paragraph 48:

*“Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”*

3. Paragraph 17 and 20 of the NPPF state the development plan must include strategic policies to address each local planning authority’s priorities and an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development.
4. The Development Plan includes the Core Strategy (adopted in January 2010), the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (adopted in February 2014) (MDD Local Plan) and the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (2020). The Core Strategy and MDD Local Plan sets out the vision for the borough and the policies to achieve those objectives. The core spatial strategy established by the Core Strategy was informed by engagement with the community.
5. The NPPF has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the Development Plan. Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

6. The NPPF is a material consideration in the decision-making process. The NPPF outlines the Government’s planning policy on a national level and highlights sustainable development as the centre of the decision-making process incorporating economic, social and environmental objectives. These three objectives seek to balance growth and local community needs against the protection of the natural, built and historic environment. It does not however change the status of the development plan as the starting point in the decision-making.

### ***Core Strategy and MDD Local Plan***

7. A priority of the Development Plan is to steer new housing to the most sustainable locations within settlement boundaries and limit development within the countryside. This is, among other things, in order to promote sustainability,

maintain the quality of the environment, protect the separate identity of settlements and provide certainty regarding how the borough will be developed. It is also well-explained in the Borough Design Guide at pages 6 -7.

8. The spatial vision explains that in order to deliver the necessary development within the Borough, the Council has identified a number of high-quality Strategic Development Locations (SDLs) where the majority of the minimum 13,230 new houses to be delivered in the Core Strategy local plan period will be located. This approach seeks to locate schemes where they can provide easy access to existing facilities and services or where infrastructure improvements can be delivered. In addition, the spatial vision seeks to concentrate development in those towns and villages that either have a significant range of infrastructure including facilities and services now – or will have them as a result of the development proposed through the CS. Development is stated to be less likely in locations where these facilities and services will not be available.
9. Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy *Scale and Location of Development Proposals* and CC02 of the MDD Local Plan *Development Limits* state that proposals will be permitted within development limits where the scale of the application reflects the facilities and services within the settlement. The settlements are split into three categories depending on the sustainability of those locations; Major, Modest and Limited development locations. Policy broadly steers Major developments to sustainable major settlements with the best services, facilities and infrastructure. The definition of development limits recognises the consistent approach in planning to identify appropriate and sustainable areas for development.
10. The site is adjacent to the settlement edge of Arborfield Cross (formed by the Coombes Primary School) and lies wholly within countryside. Arborfield Cross is defined in Policy CP9 as a Limited Development Location. Para 2.87 of the Core Strategy states:

“These settlements have a limited range of facilities, and do not have access to good quality public transport services [...] due to the limited range of facilities, it is not considered that significant development is appropriate **in these locations**, although smaller proposals which help support the communities and provide for an identifiable local need may be acceptable.”
11. Policy CP17 *Housing Delivery* then states that development **within such locations** should not generally exceed 25 dwellings, within an allowance of 100 dwellings over all sites within all limited development locations taken together during the plan period. That small proportion reflected the overall spatial strategy within the Core Strategy which, as Policy CP17 makes clear, was to be delivered within the identified locations. Accordingly, there is no support for the site’s location in the spatial strategy of the development plan, and to that extent the proposals do not accord with Policy CP17.
12. The proposed development of up to 70 dwellings, even if located within the settlement boundary of limited development location of Arborfield Cross, would be appreciably in excess of the scale of development identified as being suitable within the village. Notwithstanding, as the site sits away from the village, outside the limited development location, Policy CP9 would not provide support for the proposal and the proposal would conflict with it.

13. Given that the site lies within the countryside, an assessment against policy CP11 of the Core Strategy *Proposals Outside Development Limits* is required. This refers to development within the countryside and states “*in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted*”, other than the exceptions listed below:
- A. It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and
  - B. It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and
  - C. It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement.
14. The proposed development would not fall within any of the exceptions set out in Policy CP11. As none of the exceptions given in Core Strategy Policy CP11 apply to this proposal, they would not form a basis to support this scheme.
15. Therefore, the location of this development is not in accordance with the Development Plan, taken as a whole. This is because by seeking to develop this countryside location, outside defined development limits, it would conflict with the spatial vision for the Borough, set out at Section 3 of the Core Strategy, and would conflict with a number of adopted policies such as CS Policies CP9, CP11 and CP17, as well as MDD Local Plan Policy CC02.
16. Policy AD1 of the ABNP supports the principle of new housing within the current Development Limits. As the application site lies wholly outside of these limits, the proposal is in conflict with this policy

#### *Settlement Separation*

17. The application site is an undeveloped open space between the defined settlements of Arborfield Cross, Barkham and Arborfield Garrison. As set out in the previous section, CP11 of the Core Strategy states that “*in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted*”.
18. Neighbourhood Plan Policy IRS1 states in order to protect the separation of settlements, development proposals outside of development limits should not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements.

19. The importance of the separation between Arborfield Cross, Arborfield Garrison and Barkham is specifically emphasised by Core Strategy policy CP18 *Arborfield Garrison SDL*, which states that the development of Arborfield Garrison should include measures to maintain separation of Arborfield Garrison from Arborfield Cross and Barkham Hill. Figure 2.2 of the Arborfield Garrison SDL SPD (Figure 1 below) identifies the areas where the separation of settlements is required to be maintained:



*Figure 1: Arborfield Garrison SDL SPD constraints plan*

20. When compared with the previous proposal (242421), the current application no longer seeks to develop the eastern field. Therefore, whilst there would be a degree of urbanisation of land closest to Arborfield Cross (in a form of an access road and associated infrastructure), the built form would no longer extend to the east beyond the built form (and settlement boundary) established by the Coombes CoE Primary School. For the same reason, it is not considered that the proposal would lead to physical and visual coalescence with linear ribbon development of Langley Common to the east.
21. Turning to the relationship with Barkham Hill settlement, the proposal would undoubtedly encroach into open land to the north of School Road and as such, erode some of the open space separating settlements of Arborfield Cross and Barkham Hill. However, considering the extent of the proposed development and the distance between the north-east boundary of the application site and the edge of Barkham Hill settlement (approximately 1.5km), it is not considered that the proposal would now result in any harmful physical or visual coalescence between these two settlements.

### *Quality of Environment*

22. The other purpose of CS Policy CP11 is to maintain the quality of the environment. As outlined in the remaining sections of this report, it is considered that the proposal would fail to maintain the quality of the environment and as such, it conflicts with Policy CP11.

### *Emerging Local Plan Update*

23. The Local Plan Update (LPU), the plan which will supersede the Core Strategy and MDD Local Plan, was published in October 2024 (Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Plan). The LPU sets out the development strategy and proposed site

allocations to meet housing needs to 2040. The LPU was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in February 2025.

24. The site has been promoted for residential development (reference 5AR007). The site was assessed as part of the Housing and Economic Land Availability (HELAA) together with two other sites (5AR009 and 5AR021). In summary the HELAA stated that the context of the sites (Group SAR007Group) was unsuitable, being inappropriate in terms of established settlement form, landscape character and accessibility. The extent of this group is highlighted in purple below with the application site outlined in red.

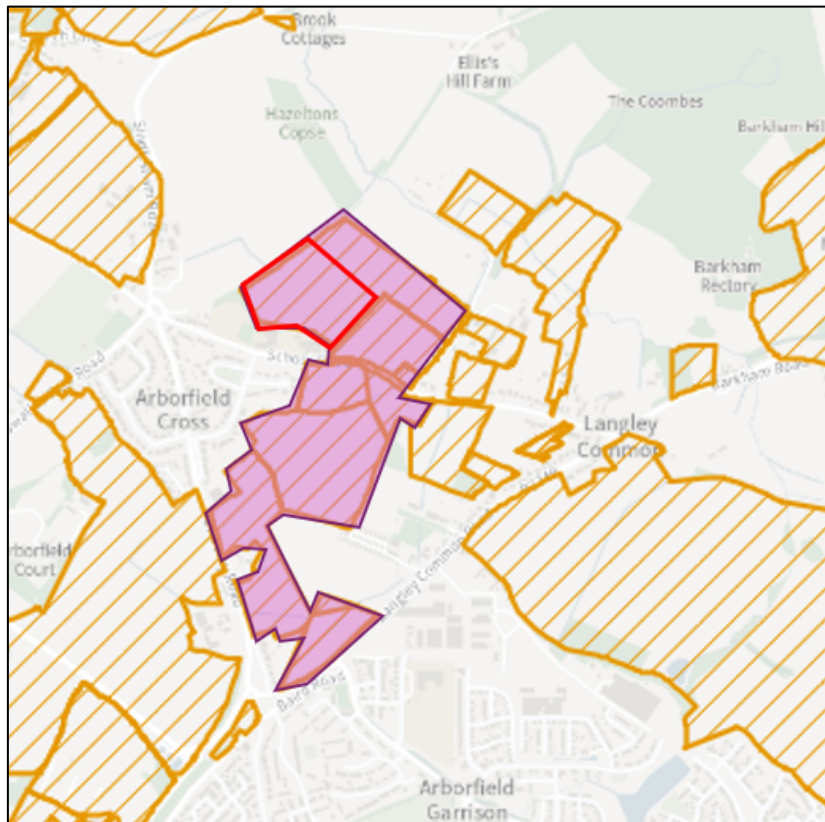


Figure 2: SAR007Group group of sites assessed under HELAA

25. As mentioned above, in combination with other sites, the application site was considered unsuitable for residential development. However, it is recognised that the HELAA exercise was carried out at high level and is not comparable to assessment of a planning application.
26. The LPU Proposed Submission Plan includes Policy SS2: *Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy*, which includes the designation of major, modest and minor settlements within the borough with settlement boundaries shown on the policies map. LPU Policy SS2 states that:

“The countryside is defined as the area beyond the settlements defined in the settlement hierarchy. Except for specific allocations identified in this plan, the countryside is not a location where additional development is planned, although limited types of development to support local needs and the rural economy will be supported in accordance with Policy H4 and Policy H5.”

27. The scheme would not be located within boundaries of any of the proposed settlement areas and as such, it would lie in the countryside. As the site is not allocated for residential development and does not meet any of the exceptions listed within LPU Policy SS2 (to support local needs and the rural economy), the proposal is contrary to this policy.
28. Of relevance to the principle of development is also LPU Policy SS5: *Development in the countryside* seeks to restrict development in areas outside settlements defined in LPU Policy SS2 with the exception of types of developments listed. The scheme would not meet any of these exceptions and as such, would conflict with LPU Policy SS5.
29. The LPU Policy SS4 states that residential development proposals on unallocated sites adjacent to minor settlements will be refused. The proposal is therefore also contrary to the emerging spatial strategy
30. Weight to be attributed to the emerging policy is informed by paragraph 49 of the NPPF 2024. This advises that weight can be applied according to the plan's stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections, and the degree of consistency with the NPPF.
31. The Council acknowledges that a number of substantive comments were received in relation to LPU Policies SS2 and SS5 and as such, there are unresolved objections. Therefore, the Council considers that only limited weight should be applied at this stage to the conflict with the LPU.

### *Housing Land Supply*

32. The NPPF (Dec 2024) at paragraph 78 requires LPAs to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than 5 years old. The latest Five-Year Housing Land Supply ("5YHLS") Statement was published on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2029; it incorporates the housing requirement updated to the local housing need figure which is calculated using the Standard Method (December 2024). The standard method requirement for Wokingham is 1,336 dwellings per annum and it applies for the calculation of the 5YHLS from the publication of the NPPF (2024) on 12th December 2024.
33. There total deliverable housing supply demonstrated in the January 2025 5YHLS position is 1.7 years for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2029. The Council acknowledges that it cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Therefore, in accordance with paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the NPPF, the "tilted balance" is engaged. This means that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.
34. As a result of the Council's 5YHLS position, those policies relating specifically to housing delivery in the Core Strategy and MDD LP are currently considered to be

out of date. This does not mean they have no weight, but an assessment of consistency will take place throughout this application.

35. The ABNP was “made” in April 2020; it forms part of the Council’s Development Plan. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF sets out circumstances in which a conflict with a Neighbourhood Plan would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the scheme’s benefits, when the tilted balance is engaged. One of these requirements is that the NP has become part of the development plan five years or less before the decision being made. The ABNP was “made” more than five years ago, therefore, its policies relevant to the delivery of housing are considered “out of date”. This does not mean they attract no weight, however, the weight attributed to the conflict with these policies will normally be lower than it would otherwise be
36. Having established the tilted balance is engaged, Paragraph 11d(ii) requires the proposal to be considered against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole.

### *Agricultural Land*

37. CS Policy CP1 states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that avoid areas of best and most versatile agricultural land (“BMVL”). Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by

“...recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land”.
38. The site is currently in agricultural use. Paragraph (y) in the Table of Schedule 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (“DMPO”) requires planning authorities to consult Natural England on applications that would (i) result in the loss of more than 20 ha of BMVAL or (ii) result in the loss of less than 20 hectares of BMVAL which is currently in agricultural use provided that the development is likely to lead to a further loss of agricultural land amounting cumulatively to 20 ha or more. BMVAL is graded as land falling within categories 1, 2 or 3a of the Agricultural Land.
39. Natural England have been consulted on this application but provided no comments on the loss of BMVAL. Supplementary comments were not sought as it is not considered that the development would meet the requirements of either (y)(i) or (y)(ii) of Schedule 4 outlined above due to the site size falling below the threshold of 20 ha in (i) and the proposal not being considered likely to lead to a further loss of agricultural land that would meet the 20 ha threshold in (ii).
40. The previous application (242421) was not supported by an Agricultural Land Classification survey data to demonstrate whether the proposal would result in a loss of BMVL.
41. The current application is accompanied by Agricultural Land Classification and Soil Resources dated March 2025, which demonstrates that the proposal would result in a loss of 1.1 hectare of agricultural land of 3a classification. Whilst this would result in a loss of BMVL, it is considered that only a relatively small amount

of land classified as BMVL would be lost. As such, the resultant economic harm would be minor, and will be considered within the overall planning balance.

### Parameters:

42. The application is for outline planning permission with all matters (i.e. appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) reserved apart from means of access. As such, the location of buildings, internal roads or proposed planting are all matters for later consideration. The purpose an outline application is to demonstrate that the proposed quantum of development can be adequately accommodated within the constraints of the site. The application is accompanied by a Parameters Plan 2522477.4 Rev F (which is not in an indicative form), which seeks to establish clearly identified maxima for the future Reserved Matters Application, such as access route, quantum of built area and open space, location of drainage features, play areas and maximum heights of buildings. The application is also accompanied by an Illustrative Masterplan 2522477.4 Rev G showing one potential layout for the site in order to satisfy the basic test as to whether the proposed quantum of development (i.e. up to 70 units) can be accommodated within the site.

43. Paragraph 010 of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) “Design: Process and Tools” sets out how design should be considered for an outline application:

“Applications for outline planning permission seek to establish whether the scale and nature of a proposed development would be acceptable before fully detailed proposals are put forward. However, design is often considered at this stage in order to assist community engagement, inform an environmental impact assessment or design and access statement (where required) and provide a framework for the preparation and submission of reserved matters proposals.”

[...]

“Design quality cannot be achieved through an outline planning application alone. Outline planning applications allow fewer details about the proposal to be submitted than a full planning application, but can include design principles where these are fundamental to decision making.”

44. Paragraph 129 of the NPPF states that:

“planning decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:

(...)

d) the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (...); and

e) the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.”

## Density

45. The location of the application site is along the boundary of Arborfield Cross settlement. MDD LP Policy CC02 states that for proposals at the edge of settlement (but located within the defined settlement) will only be allowed where they can demonstrate that the development respects the transition between the built-up area and the open countryside by taking into account the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape.
46. Whilst Policy CC02 does not provide support for development proposals outside settlement boundary, it nevertheless highlights an important design principle that requires regard to be had to proposals achieving appropriate transition between built up areas and countryside. This is echoed in Policy IRS2 of the ABNP which requires that proposals “recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements with regard to (a) scale and form of development and (b) density of development”. Policy AD3 of the ABNP further states that proposals should “*Consider the density of any new development which must be in character with the surrounding area, respect the rural nature of the area and be designed to give an impression of spaciousness*”. Policy H1 of the ABNP also requires density to respond to the character of the area.
47. The application site lies on the boundary of the Arborfield Cross settlement. The submitted Parameters Plan establishes that a maximum of 70 units would be located within a developable area of 3.21 hectares. This results in a density of approximately **22 dwellings per hectare (dph)**.
48. For comparison, the existing density of the Arborfield Cross village is approximately **18 dph** (excluding non-residential uses and large public open spaces). The proposed density is therefore higher than that of the existing village.
49. Furthermore, the introduction of up to 70 new households would increase the number of households in Arborfield Cross by approximately **25%**. While there is no mathematical formula to determine what constitutes a disproportionate addition, an increase of this magnitude, combined with a more suburban density, would to some extent alter the character of the settlement, albeit not profoundly.
50. The scale of development proposed, as defined by the maximum quantum of 70 units on the Parameters Plan, would result in a density that is slightly greater than the existing village and would introduce a suburban form of development into a rural setting. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal would neither respect the prevailing character of the area nor provide a distinct transitional ‘grading down’ between the settlement and the adjacent countryside.

## Design Principles

51. Paragraph 137 of the NPPF requires that “applications provide sufficient information to demonstrate how their proposals will meet the design expectations set out in local and national policy.” It is recognised that the layout, scale, appearance and landscaping are all reserved matters not for determination at the outline stage. The submitted Illustrative Masterplan seeks to demonstrate how the proposed 70 dwellings could be accommodated on site within the proposed parameters. As such, the indicative layout has been examined to assess whether the proposed quantum of development is feasible.

52. Whilst an assessment of density in the preceding paragraphs can be a useful indicator as to how a site performs in meeting identified housing needs, it is generally not considered a good indicator in isolation as to the likely form, quality or appropriateness of any scheme. Therefore, while the Local Plan does not set specific density targets/requirements, and an efficient use of land is encouraged in national policy, this needs to be balanced against ensuring that such an approach is sympathetic to the context, the quality of life for the inhabitants, and the effect the density has on the overall design concept as advocated by the Local Plan.
53. The Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates that the proposal would be capable of achieving minimum garden depths and separation distances in line with standards set out in the BDG SPD. It also demonstrates that the proposed quantum of development, based on the indicative housing mix, would incorporate adequate parking provision. This is a different position to the previous application, which failed to demonstrate that adequate garden size and separation distance could be achieved, and which also failed to incorporate unallocated/visitor in the indicative masterplan.
54. The Parameters Plan indicates a maximum scale of buildings to be 9.5m, which would allow for some of the dwellings to be delivered as apartments. The Illustrative Masterplan shows that these would be located at the site entrance and/or opposite the centrally located focal area of open space, which is considered to reflect good spatial design principles seeking to emphasise the function of the central area as a communal space and provide a sense of arrival into the development. The Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates that sufficient space would be available to incorporate structural tree planting to help define the hierarchy of streets. Majority of dwellings would be set back from the streets, reflective of the plot arrangement at Anderson Crescent and Emblen Crescent south of School Road, with set-backs reducing around the edges of the development. The design principles which seek to provide larger setbacks along the main route and central open space, while reducing them in peripheral cul-de-sacs, is a positive design feature which moves away from the previously-proposed uniform layout, and which would help create a place with distinct character, a clear hierarchy and a sense of community. The main route, with larger setbacks and structural landscaping, would help establish a formal character whilst cul-de-sac arrangement with buildings closer to streets designed as shared spaces, would help create a more intimate/informal character.
55. The submitted Landscape Strategy Plan CSA\_6541\_114 Rev A indicates that proposal would also incorporate swales and rain gardens along the streets, which would serve to convey surface water run-off before discharging it to the SuDS basin in the north-west corner on the site. Whilst rain gardens and swales have not been incorporated into the Drainage Strategy, officers recognise this application is in an outline with detailed landscape and drainage proposal to provided at Reserved Matters stage, and which would be secured by condition (Conditions 8 and 19 refer)

#### **Character of the Area:**

56. The CS Policy CP3 *General Principles for Development* states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of

high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers. This requirement is amplified by MDD LP Policy CC03 which requires that proposals protect or enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks and promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors, as well as the integration with adjoining countryside. Additionally, it seeks to resist proposals that would result in the loss of areas of green infrastructure. The supporting text to the policy at paragraph 2.12 clarifies that green infrastructure networks include countryside, natural green areas in rural settings, green routes and public rights of way. MDD LP Policy TB21 requires development proposals to demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), including the landscape quality, landscape strategy, landscape sensitivity and key issues. It goes on to state that proposals must retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

57. Paragraph 129(d) of the NPPF states that planning decisions should take into account the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting. Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should ensure that "*developments*:"
- (a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;
  - (...)
  - (c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding build environment and landscape setting (...);
  - (d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place (...);
  - (e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space);"
58. These character and design objectives outlined in the framework and deemed consistent with both the development plan, the adopted ABNP or emerging LPU.
59. The proposal's layout, scale, appearance and landscaping are all reserved matters and would therefore be assessed at the reserved matters stage. That being said, the submitted Illustrative Masterplan provides an illustration of the potential layout and how the site might accommodate the amount of development proposed.

### *Arborfield Cross Village*

60. Whilst scale is a reserved matter, the maximum heights for the buildings are proposed as fixed development parameters. The maximum height proposed is 9.5m which translates into buildings up to three storeys in scale. Therefore, it needs to be assumed that the outline planning consent, if granted, would permit the maximum height parameter to be exercised. As such, one of the key considerations is whether the resulting built form can provide appropriate transition between the Arborfield Cross village and countryside.
61. Arborfield Cross village has a form of a nucleated settlement that is very well contained with strongly vegetated boundaries. The northern boundary of the

settlement is formed by a cluster of dwellings infilling the gap between playing fields and Arborfield Cross roundabout, and the Coombes Primary School with associated playing fields. The school and playing fields sit to the north of School Road along the stretch of the road measuring in excess of 300m. Beyond the school there are no residential dwellings along the School Road before the road enters the parish of Barkham at the junction with Wood Lane, approximately 250m beyond the edge of the school site. Unlike in the previously-refused scheme, the proposal no longer seeks to introduce residential development beyond the eastern boundary of the school.

62. The residential buildings within the village are predominantly up to two storeys in height. The village is set on a higher ground, however, due to strongly vegetated boundaries along the boundaries, views into the village are very limited both from School Road and Public Rights of Way ("PRoW"). The northern settlement boundary of the village is clearly established by school buildings and, as assessed by the WBC's Landscape & Trees Officer, the proposal would weaken the settlement setting of Arborfield Cross village.
63. The Parameter Plans indicates that, in order to accommodate the proposed quantum of development and centrally-located area of public open space, the built area would extend closer to Cole Lane than the previously-refused scheme, which would reduce the landscape buffers along this PRoW. This would result in views of the development being more prominent along this short stretch of Cole Lane, which would in turn negatively impact the sense of quickly leaving the village when travelling north along Cole Lane; in absence of development related to the village, the proposal would extend the settlement edge much further into the countryside.
64. Despite the improvements made to the scheme in terms of the indicative layout, it is recognised that the scheme would not relate to the grain of development of Arborfield Cross village and would appear as a separate and isolated estate-type development, extending beyond the current settlement edge. This would result in harm to the character of the area and setting of Arborfield Cross village, which is further considered in the planning balance section of this report.

### *School Road*

65. School Road is a designated Green Route. The MDD LP defines Green Routes as "roads into settlements that are lined with trees and other vegetation, which make a significant contribution to the character and environment of the area and contribute to the Borough's network of wildlife corridor". Policy IRS2 of the ABNP seeks to "*recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements*". LPU Policy C4 seeks to protect and enhance green and blue infrastructure, including Green Routes.
66. School Road has a strongly verdant and quiet character, with trees and mature hedgerows enclosing it on both sides, creating a green tunnel effect. The verdant character of School Road is an essential component to the setting of the village discussed in the preceding paragraphs. The submitted Arboricultural Implications Report identifies that four ash trees (trees number 72, 74 and 75) and parts of a group of trees (G23) would need to be removed to facilitate the construction of the proposed access road; this is the same position as proposed in the previously-refused application. Whilst this would indicate a relatively low-level of vegetation

removal, the construction of new vehicular access into the site would require the removal of approximately 55m of the existing vegetation and the embankment on which it is growing. The approximate extent of the required vegetation removal is shown in Figures 3 and 4 below.



*Figure 3: Approximate extent of vegetation removal along School Road, looking to the east (Google Maps)*



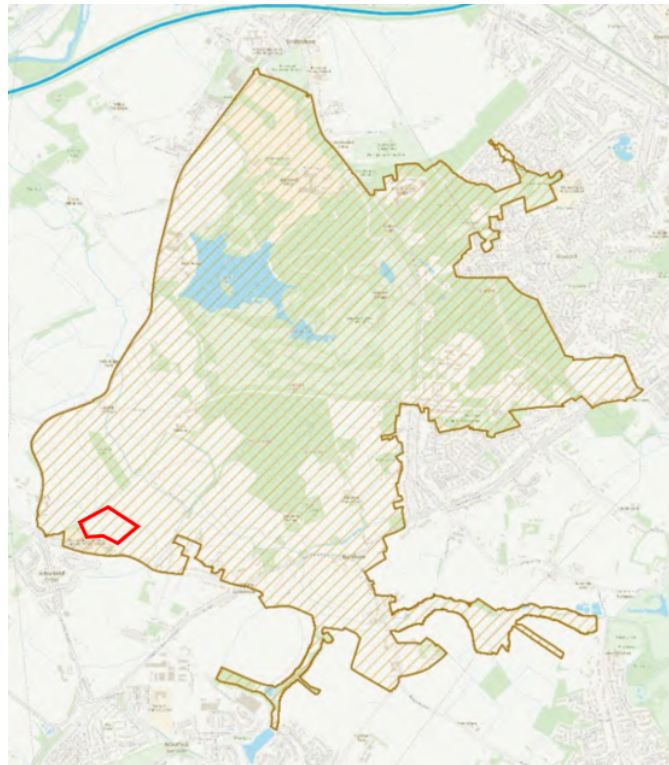
*Figure 4: Approximate extent of vegetation removal along School Road, looking west (Google Maps)*

67. Whilst the trees to be removed to facilitate the construction of access have been assessed as Category C trees, the WBC Landscape & Trees Officer highlights that the value of this group or line of trees is greater than the assessment of individual trees within it. The resultant vegetation removal, engineering works and formalised road layout would have substantial detrimental effect on the rural

character of the road significantly urbanising this Green Route. This would have significantly adverse effects both on the Green Route of School Road, and the verdant character of Arborfield Cross village setting, to which the Green Route contributes. Whilst there is scope to include new planting within the areas identified in the Parameter Plans as Green Infrastructure, the resulting impacts is not considered capable to be fully mitigated by new planting. These harmful impacts are further considered in the planning balance section of this report.

### *Countryside*

68. The application site is located outside development limits, within the countryside. The Council's Landscape Character Assessment ("WBLCA") identifies the Landscape Character Area ("LCA") within which the site is located as J2: Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay. The WBLCA considers the overall landscape condition of LCA J2 to be moderate due to the pattern of arable and pastoral fields, and remnant wetland influences associated with Barkham Brook.
69. Just to the north of the site the landscape gradually changes and is identified within the WBLCA as being in LCA L1 – Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills. This landscape is heavily wooded around the Bearwood Estate but to the south the area is more intricate, with coombe woodland valleys and contrasting grazed pasture. It has a strong character which is in good condition because of the absence of roads and settlement in combination with having a distinctive mix of interconnected woodland and pastoral and arable fields bounded by hedgerows.
70. One of the key characteristics associated with LCA L1 and where there is an interrelationship with LCA J2 is the "smaller scale rural patchwork of deciduous woodland and sheep pasture associated with the hills and incised coombe valleys in the south". LCA L1 is sparsely populated creating an intimate and secret landscape and a strong sense of place.
71. Although the wider landscape character of J2 is assessed as being of moderate condition, the landscape between Arborfield Cross and the adjacent landscape character area L1 – Bearwood Sands and Gravel Hills, is greatly influenced by the high-quality landscape of this landscape character area to the north, and the site clearly forms part of the shallow valley sides of Barkham Brook which make up this landscape.
72. The importance of this area in landscape terms was recognised in the Wokingham Borough Council's "Valued Landscapes Assessment" (September 2024) ("VLA") prepared in response to paragraph 187(a) of the NPPF which requires that decisions contribute to and enhance natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. The VLA places the application site within the Bearwood and Barkham Valued Landscape ("BBVL") as shown in Figure 5 below:



*Figure 5: Extract from “Valued Landscape Assessment”: Barkham and Bearwood Valued Landscape*

73. As outlined in paragraph 72 above, the NPPF requires that decisions contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. This is not reliant on valued landscapes only where identified in development plans. It should be noted that the LPU Policy NE6 formalises the protection of these landscapes, requiring development to protect and enhance their special features.
74. The valuable landscape attributes identified within the WBLCA for LCA J2 include:
- Barkham Brook and associated wetland,
  - Pattern of arable and pastoral fields, which provides a rural character away from settlement,
  - Mature hedgerow trees and in-field trees, which provide a wooded character and visual interest,
  - Rural settlement pattern of farms, hamlets and small nucleated villages,
  - Recreational value of the network of rights of way between settlements,
  - Views across the landscape to surrounding character areas.
75. The valuable landscape attributes identified within the WBLCA for LCA L1 which relate to the site include:
- Elevated wooded hills forming a backdrop to the wider landscape,
  - Varied topography which forms an intricate range of landscape spaces and backdrops emphasised by the largely enclosed and wooded nature of the core of the area, with views out over farmland to the wider countryside,
  - Large expanses of mature mixed woodland,

- The distinctive mosaic of interconnecting mixed woodland interspersed with small scale pastoral fields in the south,
- Medieval landscape features,
- Recreational value particularly in the Coombes through the presence of byways footpaths and bridleways,
- Peaceful secluded character with naturalistic qualities and experience of dark skies,
- Contrast of enclosed views within woodland and long views south towards Barkham and beyond.

76. The WBC Landscape & Trees officer has reviewed the proposal and considers that the site significantly contributes to and is an integral part of the BBVL. The landscape attributes that relate to the site and the surrounding landscape and those that contribute to the inclusion of this parcel of land in the BBVL are:

- The medieval trackway from Swallowfield to Wokingham shown on the Norden map of Windsor Forest (1607).
- The current BOAT, and other PROWs.
- The valley of the Barkham Brook creating an undulating topography/rolling topography and fieldscape.
- Wholly rural site – no sense of any urban area nearby / absence of built development.
- Strong scenic value to the landscape.
- Sense of relative tranquillity with very limited traffic noise especially as School Road is now a no-through road.
- Peaceful walking along the BOATs.
- Perception of the land as quintessential English Countryside.
- Significant views into and across the surrounding countryside and of the wooded hills at Bearwood and the Coombes from PROW and BOATs.
- Significant areas of ancient woodland (including Hazeltons Copse close to site - mapped since at least Norden 1607 (Map of the Forest of Windsor)).
- Number of veteran trees on BOAT's adjacent to the site or close to site.
- Significant areas of lowland mixed deciduous woodland (a habitat of principal importance), tree and hedgerow cover.
- Grade II Listed Langleypound Farmhouse (part of which is late 16th Century, so Elizabeth I).

77. Having assessed the site within its wider landscape context, the site is considered to form part of the BBVL and, consequently, to have a high landscape value. The application site is not considered to be influenced by its proximity the Coombes CoE Primary School nor any other residential development in Arborfield Cross village, which is built on a higher ground and well contained, with strongly vegetated boundaries to north and east. Instead, it is considered that the site strongly relates to the landscape beyond the settlement boundary which forms part of the BBVL. As such, the site has high sensitivity to residential development, and the application site would be subject to a high magnitude of change. On this basis, it is considered that the proposal would have a substantial adverse effect on the landscape.

78. In terms of visual effects, the main change in views would be from School Road. As outlined in paragraphs 65 to 67 above, the impacts associated with removal of

vegetation along School Road and formalisation and urbanisation of this section of School Road are that they would open up views into the site and alter the character of the School Road as a Green Route; this would have significantly adverse in landscape terms.

79. There are PRoWs in close proximity to the site (ARBO9 along western boundary and ARBO10 160m to the east; both of which are byways open to all traffic).
80. ARBO9 runs along Cole Lane and is separated from the application site by a belt of trees, with filtered views currently of a continuation of the agricultural landscape on both sides of Cole Lane. These views contribute to the sense of leaving the village and entering the rural countryside; the current proposal would lead to a detrimental change in perception of users of the ARBO9 of the settlement extent.
81. ARBO10 runs along Wood Lane to the east of the application site. Whilst views from southern section of Wood Lane would be limited due to intervening vegetation, the site would be partially visible from the high points in the northern section of ARBO10, near Ellis Hill Farm, when looking across the Barkham Brook valley. Presently these views are devoid of Arborfield Cross settlement due to its wooded edge (which contributes to the wooded skyline). The proposed development would form a small part of these views and as such, it is considered to result in moderate/slight adverse effects on them. The change in these views would, however, have a detrimental effect on the BBVL.
82. Overall, it is considered that the site forms part of and contributes to the BBVL, which means that the paragraph 187(a) of the NPPF is engaged, which requires that development contributes to and enhances the natural and local environment and protects and enhances valued landscape. Officers consider the proposal would conflict with these requirements. The weight attached to this conflict is discussed in the planning balance section of this report.

### **Trees**

83. MDDL policy CC03: *Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping*, supported by Borough Design Guide Design Principle R14, requires new development to retain and protect existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and to incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping.
84. Existing vegetation is confined to the periphery of the site. There are no Tree Preservation Orders within the site or in close proximity to it. The application is accompanied by Arboricultural Implications Report 25033-01 Rev A which identified that 4 category C ash trees (21, 72, 74 and 75) would be removed. It also identifies that three groups of trees (G1, G3 and G23) would be partially removed as part of the proposals. Whilst the number of trees to be removed is relatively low, it results in detrimental impact on the character of the School Road as a Green Route and on the setting of Arborfield Cross village, as outlined in the preceding paragraphs.

### **Neighbouring Amenity:**

85. The application is for an outline planning permission with matters relating to layout and scale reserved. The submitted Parameters Plan identifies an area intended to accommodate future dwellings. The nearest residential building (Langleypond

Farmhouse) is located in excess of 200m from the area indicated for residential development in the Parameters Plan. As such, no concerns arise in terms of impact on neighbouring amenity of existing residential uses.

86. The application site is immediately adjacent to the Coombes School and associated playing fields. Due to the distance between the developable area and school site, as well as intervening vegetation, no concerns are raised on grounds of proximity to the school site, subject to appropriate boundary treatment/landscaping details (Conditions 19 and 28 refer).

### Public Open Space:

87. Core Strategy Policy CP3 *General Principles for Development* establishes an overall requirement for 4.65 ha/1,000 population of open space (POS) within new development. This is amplified by MDD LP Policy TB08 *Open Space*, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development which sets out the requirements for different types of open space.
88. The requirements for the proposed quantum of development of 70 residential units is shown in Table 1 below:

| Open Space typologies     | Requirement (ha) |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Parks and public gardens  | 0.19             |
| amenity greenspace        | 0.17             |
| play areas                | 0.04*            |
| civic space               | 0.00             |
| outdoor sports facilities | 0.28             |
| allotments                | 0.09             |

*\*the minimum size of a Local Equipped Area of Play is 0.06ha*

*Table 1: Public Open Space requirements*

89. The submitted Parameters Plan shows that 2.31 ha of the site would be occupied by green infrastructure. The Illustrative Masterplan demonstrate how various typologies of public open space could be accommodated on site, including amenity space, parks and gardens, play area and an orchard. It is considered that the submitted information adequately demonstrates how the proposal would deliver policy-compliant quantum of public open space on-site, along with contribution towards off-site sports facilities at Gray's Farm. This would be secured through conditions (Condition 2 refers) and Section 106 legal agreement, which would also secure the future management and maintenance of public open space on-site.

### Heritage and Archaeology

#### Archaeology

90. Core Strategy Policy CP3 *General Principles for Development* and MDD LP Policy TB25 *Archaeology* require the archaeological impact of development to be taken into consideration.

91. The application site falls within an area of archaeological significance, it cannot be ruled out that archaeological remains may be present on site. The application is accompanied by a Heritage Impact Assessment 2522477.2, which identified that there is a good potential for undisturbed archaeological remains to exist below the depths of historical plough soils, across the majority of the site. The Berkshire Archaeology has reviewed the proposal raised no objection subject to a condition requiring a programme of archaeological works to be submitted (Conditions 29 and 30 refer).

### *Heritage*

92. Under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990, in determining an application which affects a listed building or its setting, the Local Planning Authority “*shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses*”. The duty in Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990 must also be considered as a material consideration in the planning balance.
93. Paragraph 212 of the NPPF states that “*when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset (which includes both listed buildings and conservation areas), great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation...irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*”
94. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states “*Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*”
95. Paragraph 219 of the NPPF requires that Local Planning Authorities “*should Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance*”.
96. Consistent with this, Policy CP3 *General Principles for Development* of the Core Strategy and Policy TB24 *Designated Heritage Assets* of the MDD LP establish that development should not have a detrimental impact on important heritage features or their setting and should conserve and, where possible, enhance their important character and special architectural or historic interest.
97. The application site lies approximately 200m to the west of Langleypond Farmhouse, which is a Grade II Listed Building, and approximately 170m to the east of a cluster of Grade II Listed Buildings at Newland Farm. Arborfield Cross Conservation Area is located nearby to the south of the application site. The application no longer comprises the eastern field, which was located approximately 30m to the west of Langleypond Farmhouse. The WBC Heritage Officer has reviewed the submission and raised no concerns on the grounds of impacts on designated heritage assets. As such, the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts in this regard.

### **Sustainability of Location**

98. Core Strategy Policies CP1 *Sustainable Development* and CP6 *Managing Travel Demand* require consideration of the travel impacts of development, emphasising the importance of reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car, and require development to make provision for a choice of sustainable forms of transport including improvements to existing transport infrastructure including roads, public transport and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including those with reduced mobility.
99. Core Strategy Policy CP6 b) directs development to locations which minimise the distance people need to travel and where there are choices of mode of transport available (or will be by the time of development). Core Strategy policy CP9 *Scale and Location of Development Proposals* identifies the application site as Countryside. The Borough Design Guide SPD states “*if places are to be sustainable then the aim should be to create: Walkable neighbourhoods, with a range of facilities within 10 minutes walking distance of residential areas, which encourage people to travel on foot or by bicycle.*” Policy GA3 of the ABNP states that “*improvements to public transport will be supported*”.
100. Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states:
- Transport issues should be considered (...) using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places. This should involve:
- a) making transport considerations an important part of early engagement with local communities;
  - b) ensuring patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places;
  - c) understanding and addressing the potential impacts of development on transport networks;
  - d) realising opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;
  - e) identifying and pursuing opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use; and
  - f) identifying, assessing and taking into account the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains
101. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF requires that “sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location” and that “safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users”, Paragraph 117 of the NPPF goes on to say that applications “should give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for

bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use” and “address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport”.

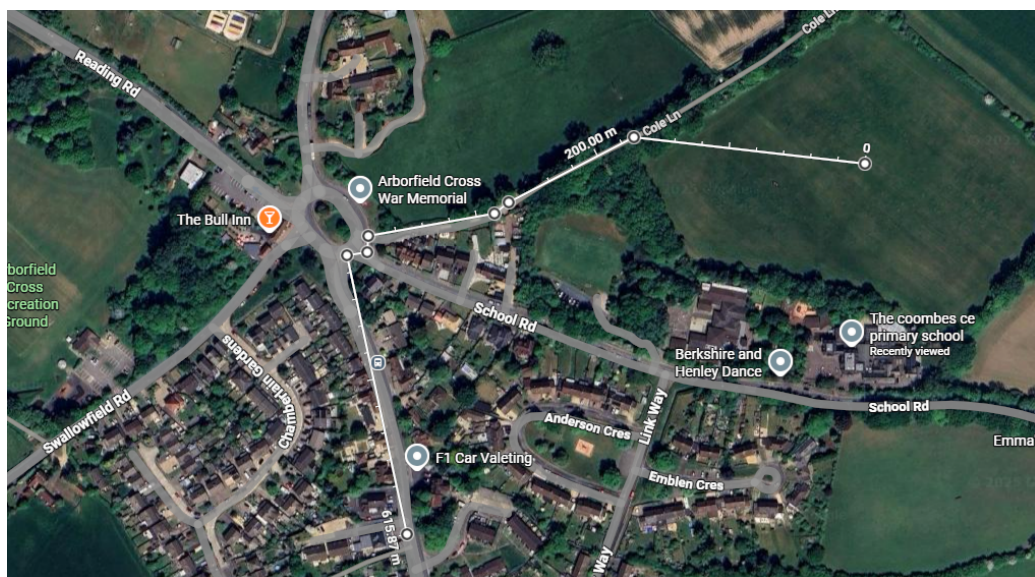
102. The revised NPPF (2024) requires decision makers to have particular regard to directing development to sustainable locations (Para 11(d)(ii)) in addition to making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes.
103. The site lies outside the defined boundary of Arborfield Cross limited development location and approximately 600m north-west of the Arborfield Strategic Development Location boundary. The application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment 2305-083\_TA\_02 Rev B (“TA”) and a Framework Travel Plan 2305-083\_TP\_02 Rev A (“FTP”).
104. Active Travel England (“ATE”) has not been consulted on the proposal as the current scheme does not meet ATE’s consultation threshold (it is neither for a scheme for 150+ units nor the site area exceeds 5 ha).
105. The application is supported by a pedestrian audit contained within the TA which is said to broadly align with the Active Travel Zone Assessment methodology.

### *Walking*

106. The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (“CIHT”) document ‘providing for journeys on foot’ (“PJOF”) advises that 400 metres is a desirable walking distance outside of city centres; 800 metres is stated as acceptable, and 1,200 metres is the preferred maximum. The PJOF clarifies that the suggested walking distances are for pedestrians without mobility impairment. The National Design Guide defines “walkable” as local facilities being no more than 10 minute walk (800m radius) for most of dwellings. Paragraph 6.3.1 of the Manual for Streets (“MfS”) explains that propensity to walk is influenced not only by distance, but also the quality of the walking experience. The MfS advocates for “walkable neighbourhoods”, which are typically characterised by having a range of facilities within 10 minutes’ (up to about 800m) walking distance of residential areas. This 800-metre or 10-minute walk is widely adopted as the distance a majority of people are willing to walk to meet their daily needs. These distances are also cited in the Wokingham Highway guidance Living Streets. The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges defines severance as “*The extent to which members of communities are able (or not able) to move around their community and access services/facilities*” and explains both how traffic flows can affect the willingness to walk or cycle and the extent to which crossings can mitigate these effects. Together these documents help inform planning judgements on accessibility as to both distance and quality.
107. The recommended walking distances for people with mobility impairments are up to 150m (without a rest), as outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the Inclusive Mobility Guide (2021) (“IMB”), although these depend on the nature of the impairment and are lower e.g. for users of walking stick or cane (50m). The IMB recognises that these distances are affected by other factors, such as gradients and weather conditions. The IMB further recommends (paragraph 4.3) that generally gradients should not exceed 1 in 60, but it recognised that where not feasible, gradients should not exceed 1 in 12 as an absolute maximum (due to the physical effort

required to get up a steep gradient for wheelchair users and the risk of wheelchair toppling over).

108. The TA states that facilities within Arborfield Cross (consulting room for Swallowfield Medical Practice, primary school, pub, convenience store and village hall) are all within walking distance. The walking isochrones diagram provided in Figure 2.4 of the TA identifies that the proposal would be located within 800m walking distance to these facilities, when measured from the centre of the site
109. The National travel survey reveals that the majority of trips on foot are shops and schools. The site is immediately adjacent the primary school and Figure 6 below shows the approximate walking distance from the centre of the site to the local convenience store as being in excess of 600m, i.e. exceeding the “desirable” but within the “acceptable” walking distance as per PJOF.



*Figure 6: Walking distance to convenience store*

110. The above distance relies on the new proposed access via Cole Lane. The applicant committed to a financial contribution to improve the surface of a section of Cole Lane between the proposed pedestrian access up to the existing tarmac surface to mitigate the increased usage of this route that would arise as a result of the proposed development. Whilst this would improve the quality of the walking route to the village, Cole Lane will remain unlit and, due to ecological constraints. Any resurfacing works would need to preserve the rural character of the lane, as such the planning obligation would be framed to treat this improvement as a Greenway. This is also further discussed in paragraphs 147 to 150/148. Notwithstanding, the proposal would provide a choice of routes to access the village centre between access via Cole Lane or via School Road. Additionally, the current scheme, by removing the eastern field, eliminated the geographically most remote part of the previously-refused scheme in terms of proximity to services and facilities.
111. Following the feedback provided in the previously-refused application, the current scheme is accompanied by an audit of pedestrian routes contained within the submitted TA. The TA suggests a range of improvements to the route via School Road, including: widening of the footway to a minimum of 2m (to be delivered as part of the access construction works) and maintenance of landscaping along

School Road to restore the footway width. It is also suggested that traffic island on Eversley Road could be converted to a pedestrian refuge, enabling a crossing point between footways. Following negotiations between officers and the applicant, the applicant committed to deliver the following improvements to the walking environment, enhancing access to bus stops and helping influence traffic speeds on Eversley Road:

- Refuge island approximately 80m to the south of Eversley Road/Link Way
- Splitter island adjacent to Eversley Road/Whitewell Close, following the removal of priority working island to the north

112. Whilst these works alter the accessibility of the site location, they would improve the attractiveness of walking routes to access facilities and services available in Arborfield Cross village. A condition is proposed to secure these improvements (Condition 4 refers), along with further improvements to the walking route being secured under a separate condition (Condition 6 refers).
113. Additional services and facilities are or will be available in Arborfield Green, including the new District Centre to be delivered as part of the Strategic Development Location. The District Centre will include a new supermarket, currently under construction, which is due to open in August 2025. The submitted TA indicates that Arborfield Green would be accessible via walking, however, walking distance to the District Centre would be in excess of 2.5km, clearly in excess of the recommended walking distances, via unlit and narrow routes (via Eversley Road or Langley Common Road). If and until cycle connections are made, residents would remain dependent on a private car, which is considered in more detail in Travel Plan section of this report (paragraphs 130 to 133).

### *Cycling*

114. The submitted TA states that the majority of local cycling will occur on-street. There are no dedicated cycle routes to Arborfield Garrison where a wider range of services is or will be available. Figure 2.6 of the TA shows a Cycle Catchment diagram and demonstrates that a range of services would be located within 5km cycling distance, including Arborfield Green, Wokingham Station and Wokingham Town Centre.
115. However, the TA does not provide a qualitative assessment of the existing cycle routes. Officers note there are no cycle routes connecting the site with the cycle route network, except for a cycle route along Cole Lane which links Arborfield Cross with Wokingham via Coombes Lane and Sandy Lane (BOATs). The proposed access onto Cole Lane would be designed to accommodate both pedestrian and cyclists. The applicant proposes to deliver a Toucan crossing to the north of Coombes Lane/Sandy Lane junction with Bearwood Road. This crossing would be suitable for use by pedestrians and cyclists, as well as by dismounted horse riders (as the proposals would incorporate mounting blocks either side of the crossing). The proposed (Bearwood Road) crossing will provide an important connection towards Wokingham, with the aim that improvements delivered as part of the Blagrove Lane development, will help deliver a safe cycle route to access employment areas.
116. Neither School Road, Eversley Road nor Reading Road offer segregated cycle routes, although School Road is relatively quiet no-through road. The Traffic

Regulation Order making the temporary road closure on School Road was made permanent (16 June 2025), thereby securing the environment as a quiet street. As part of the access proposals the existing safety arrangements outside school are proposed to be revised and refreshed, to ensure the streets is suitable for on-road cycling.

117. School Road joins with Langley Common Road which, similar to both Reading Road and Eversley Road, is a 40mph road. At such speeds, the LTN 1/20 outlines that the roads provide suitable cycling infrastructure for only few people and would exclude most potential users and have safety concerns. Moreover, Eversley Road offers a less-direct route due to give-way single lane narrowings of the road which would require cyclists to stop and start. It is not considered that the existing road infrastructure would encourage cycling among future residents other than a small portion of the more confident and experienced cyclists. Notwithstanding, the proposal would seek to improve the cycling environment to some extent by delivering a Toucan crossing as outlined in the preceding paragraph. This would be secured by condition (Condition 5 refers).

#### *Public transport*

118. The Local Transport Note LTN 1/24 “Bus User Priority” (“LTN 1/24”) recommends that bus stops should be spaced approximately 400m apart in urban areas creating a walking time of about 5 minutes between stops; it also recognises that spacing may be much greater in rural areas. More frequent stops should be avoided as this leads to increased journey times and can result in poor quality of journey for passengers. The Buses in Urban Developments guide produced by CIHT recommends that where planning new bus routes, bus stops serve catchments of dwellings within 300m walking distance. However, it also recognises that there should be a degree of flexibility with regard to walking distances where it would otherwise lead to a low-frequency or indirect bus service.
119. The supporting text to CS Policy CPS identifies the frequency of “good” bus service:
- a) At least a thirty minute service frequency during peak times (7:00 to 9:00 and 16:00 to 19:00 Monday to Saturday); and
  - b) At least an hourly service frequency during off-peak hours (9:00 to 16:00 and 19:00 to 22:00 Monday to Saturday and between 7:00 and 22:00 on Sundays).
120. The nearest bus stop is located at the Swan stop on Eversley Road, which is served by Leopard 3 service. The frequency of the bus service has recently been enhanced through developer funding and now meets the definition of “good” bus service in respect of travel towards Reading, Arborfield Green and Wokingham. The existing bus service subsidy will support services in the short-term but these are unlikely to ensure these are commercially viable in the medium-term. Therefore, the applicant has committed to contributing to the bus service (Leopard 3) to mitigate the impacts arising from the increased demand on bus service – the financial contribution would be secured in a Section 106 legal agreement.

121. There is no bus stop located (or proposed) within 400m walking distance when measured from the centre of the site – Figure 6 above shows that the approximate walking distance would be approximately 600m for the north-bound service and in excess of 400m for the south-bound service (via Cole Lane).
122. Wokingham railway station is accessible via the Leopard 3 bus service, which, provides public transport connection to Wokingham railway station to St Mary's Butts stop, which is within 10 walking minutes from Reading railway station.
123. Turning to walking routes to and from facilities at the Swan bus stops, the walking routes have been assessed in paragraphs 106 to 113 of this report, where it was concluded that they suboptimal in terms of attractiveness and convenience for people of all abilities (in relation to two routes via School Road and Cole Lane). It is noted, however, that some improvements are proposed that would improve the accessibility of future residents to public transport links.
124. In terms of bus stop facilities, the south-bound bus stop on Eversley Road, unlike the north-bound bus stop, offers no seating or shelter, although there is real-time passenger information system provided at both bus stops. The applicant committed to improvements to both bus stops, which would take a form of a financial contribution to improve the Swan bus stops. The contribution would be secured in a Section 106 legal agreement.

#### *Conclusion on Sustainable Location & Accessibility*

125. In summary, the application represents a sub-optimal location in terms of sustainability of location, with reference to availability of range of services within acceptable walking distances. However, it is considered that the current application identifies sufficient opportunities to enhance otherwise inadequate walking routes to services and the attractiveness of public transport options. This is further considered in the planning balance section of this report.

#### **Traffic Impact on Highway Network**

126. Core Strategy Policy CP6 *Managing Travel Demand* establishes that development should not cause highway or traffic related environmental problems: any adverse effects upon the local transport network arising from development should be mitigated, road safety should be enhanced and development should not lead to highway problems or traffic related environmental problems. Policy GA1 of the ABNP seeks to minimise additional traffic on unsuitable roads.

#### *Trip Rates*

127. There is some dispute over the volume of traffic the development will generate. Officers consider this to be in the order of 40 two-way peak hour vehicle trips during the AM and PM peak hours, resulting in a small adverse effect on School Road. As the application TA contemplates the net residual effect in the village, with the completed Arborfield Relief Road, network conditions will remain positive.
128. The WBC Highways Officer has reviewed the proposal and confirms that the resultant increase in trip rates would not result in capacity issues at the Arborfield Cross Roundabout, on Reading Road or Eversley Road.

129. However, it is recognised that the existing traffic calming measure on Eversley Road is approaching its operational capacity. Following negotiations, the applicant agreed to deliver refuge and splitter islands on Eversley Road, which would also act as traffic calming measures. These improvements would enable the priority working island on Eversley Road to be removed whilst introducing alternative traffic calming measures (Condition 4 refers).

#### *Travel Plan and Car Club*

130. Paragraph 118 of the NPPF states that developments that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan.
131. The application is accompanied by the Framework Travel Plan 2305-083\_TP\_02 Rev A ("FTP"), which outlines options for providing a residential travel plan for future residents of the development to promote alternative forms of travel. The Council operates a borough-wide active and sustainable travel behaviour change campaign "My Journey", which is open to applicants to utilise in lieu of submitting a Travel Plan for an individual site.
132. The applicant confirmed in the submitted FTP that it is assumed the Travel Plan would be produced for development post occupation. Given the site's suboptimal location with regard to accessibility of services and facilities, officers consider that contribution to "My Journey" alone would not provide adequate level of promoting alternative forms of travel. Instead, additional measures would be required and these would need to form part of the Travel Plan. Following negotiations, the applicant has committed to incorporating additional measures in the future Travel Plan, which would be secured in a Section 106 legal agreement. Whilst the detailed requirements of the Travel Plan would be ascertained as part of the Section 106 negotiations, these are likely to include:
- E-bike vouchers for future residents
  - Financial contribution towards a car club
133. The WBC Highways Officer has reviewed the proposals and considers the My Journey Contribution together with additional measures contained within the Travel Plan, would adequately mitigate the development's impacts on highways and go some way to reduce reliance on private car use to access services and facilities. The Section 106 legal agreement would provide for an option to submit a full travel plan, also incorporating the above measures, or a simplified Travel Plan to supplement specific measures, in addition to My Journey contribution.

#### **Construction Management Plan**

134. The application is not accompanied by a framework construction plan to outline inform a future construction management. Notwithstanding, the submission of detailed construction management plan could be secured by condition (Condition 12 refers).

#### **Access**

135. It is proposed that the application site would be accessed through a new proposed access off School Road. Matters relating to means of access are not reserved and need to be considered as part of this application.

136. In order to deliver a new access, School Road would need to be realigned to continue into the site with a priority junction on the minor arm on School Road. The junction would be constructed as a raised junction. The submitted TA outlines the location and design of the new access, which would be approximately 6m wide and incorporate 2m pavement and 2m verge on both sides.
137. The TA includes visibility splays for a 20mph speed limit (measuring 2.4m x 25m) which have been reviewed by the WBC Highways Officer and are acceptable, subject to detailed design of the access. The TA also includes swept paths for a refuse vehicle and fire tender, each of correct dimensions, which demonstrate how these could safely pass other vehicles based on the Illustrative Masterplan.
138. A secondary pedestrian/cycle access is proposed to the west of the site to improve permeability of the site and provide alternative access to that via School Road. No detailed drawings of this access are submitted, however, given that it is not intended for this access to be used by emergency vehicles, details of this could be secured by condition (Condition 19 refers).

### **Parking and Internal Roads**

139. Core Strategy Policy CP6 *Managing Travel Demand* and MDD LP Policy CC07 *Parking* require appropriate vehicle parking, in line with the council's standards (MDD LP Appendix 2). For residential developments, demand for unallocated car parking is calculated, depending on the location, size and tenure of property and the amount of unallocated parking (with garages counting as half a space).
140. Unlike the previously-refused application, the current scheme is accompanied by a parking calculator based on the maximum 70 units proposed. The calculations have been reviewed by the WBC Highways Officer, who confirmed that parking provision would be in line with Borough Standards.
141. The Illustrative Masterplan shows that parking would be provided on-plot, within garages or within limited number of parking courts. Unlike the previously-refused application, the current scheme now shows visitor and unallocated parking within the Illustrative Masterplan, however, a large proportion of it is shown to surround the area of public open space. This design solution would not represent good design principles as it would introduce areas of hard surfacing that would both create a car-dominated environment, detract from the focal character of the central public open space and prevent this key open space from being well integrated with the surrounding area. Notwithstanding, officers consider that this element of the design could be addressed at the Reserved Matters stage in the event of positive resolution of the Planning Committee.
142. The TA indicates that cycle parking would be in line with Borough standards, which is a matter that could be assessed as part of Reserved Matters application.
143. The TA outlines that electric vehicle charging could be conditioned. The electric vehicle charging is a matter dealt with under Building Control Regulations Approved Document S and as such, it is not considered a condition securing this would meet the required tests.
144. The TA does not clarify whether the internal roads would be offered for adoption. In any event, a planning obligation would be required to ensure that roads are

built to adoptable standards. If the roads are not proposed for adoption, planning obligation would also be required to ensure that a management company is set up to secure the future maintenance of internal roads. Both of these elements would be secured in a Section 106 legal agreement. A condition is proposed to secure the detailed design of roads (Condition 7 refers).

145. The Illustrative Plan demonstrates that 2m wide footways would be provided and that, where dwellings face the street, 2m wide service margins could also be incorporated.
146. Having reviewed the submitted information, the WBC Highways Officer raises no concerns in relation to parking and internal roads.

## **Public Right of Way**

147. MDD LP Policy CC03 *Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping* seeks to promote accessibility for pedestrian and cyclists, with a specific focus on permeability between and within green corridors including public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways. Policy GA2 of the ABNP states that “*proposals should not inhibit the delivery of the wider network of Greenways and other PRowS*”. It goes on to state that proposals should where possible support the achievement of a network of all-weather routes, better connectivity and provision of better access to the countryside.
148. The application site lies in close proximity to Cole Lane (ARBO9) and Wood Lane (ARBO10) which both are BOATs and Public Rights of Way (“PRow”). Cole Lane, which provides a PRow link into Wokingham from Arborfield Cross, has been identified as forming part of the route to be upgraded to a Greenway (Greenway Route B) in the Council’s Rights of Way Improvement Plan. This has not yet been consented and as such, currently there are no plans to upgrade the BOAT ARBO9 to a Greenway Route.
149. ABNP Policy GA2 states that development should not inhibit the delivery of the Greenway network and should support better connectivity. The LPU Policy C4 also seeks to protect and enhance PROWs and green infrastructure networks.
150. The application proposes to use ARBO9 to provide pedestrian/cycle access into the site. The WBC Public Rights of Way officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection in terms of capacity of either ARBO09 or ARBO10 being able to accommodate the proposed increase in population, subject to a planning obligation requiring a financial contribution towards upgrading a section of ARBO9 between the proposed access point and the tarmac section near Arborfield Cross roundabout. The proposed upgrade is necessary to mitigate the impacts associated with the development which would lead to increased usage of this route.

## **Affordable Housing**

151. Core Strategy policy CP5 *Housing mix, density and affordability* requires residential development to provide a mix of tenures, including a proportion of affordable housing. The proportion depends on the size of the development, location and whether the land was previously developed: for developments outside development locations the requirement is for 40% of proposed dwellings

to be delivered as affordable homes. The ABNP Policy AD2 supports this and encourages affordable homes to be prioritised for local key workers. The LPU Policy H3 also requires 40% affordable housing on greenfield sites outside defined settlements.

152. Paragraph 66 of the NPPF, specifically referred to in footnote 9 to Paragraph 11(d)(ii), requires that in respect of proposals for major residential development, the mix of affordable housing required meets identified local needs, across Social Rent, other affordable housing for rent and affordable home ownership tenures. Footnote 31 to Paragraph 66 of the NPPF sets out that the requirement to deliver a minimum of 25% of affordable housing as First Homes no longer applies.
153. The proposal is required to provide 40% of affordable homes. The application is accompanied by the Planning Statement 2025.03.21 which confirms that the proposal would deliver 40% of homes as Affordable Housing.
154. The WBC Affordable Housing Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection, subject to the indicative housing mix and tenure being secured in a Section 106 legal agreement. On the basis of 70 dwellings, the proposed required housing mix and tenure are set out in Table 2 and Table 3 below:

| Dwelling Type | No. of Bedrooms | No. of Dwellings |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Flat          | 1               | 6                |
| Flat          | 2               | 4                |
| House         | 2               | 8                |
| House         | 3               | 6                |
| House         | 4               | 4                |

*Table 2: Indicative Affordable Housing dwelling mix (based on 70 units)*

| Tenure           | Proportion | No. of Dwellings |
|------------------|------------|------------------|
| Social Rent      | 70%        | 19               |
| Shared Ownership | 30%        | 9                |

*Table 3: Indicative Affordable Housing tenure mix (based on 70 units)*

155. The current application is for an outline planning permission for up to 70 units. Therefore, the precise number of units would be established at the Reserved Matters stage. The same applies to the precise location of Affordable Housing units, which would also be established under the Reserved Matters application.

## **Flooding and Drainage**

### *Flood Risk*

156. Core Strategy Policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* and MDD LP Policy CC09 *Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)* establish that new development should avoid increasing and where possible reduce flood risk.
157. The application site lies within Flood Zone 1, i.e. outside areas at risk of flooding. Footnote 63 to paragraph 181 of the NPPF requires that a site-specific flood risk assessment is provided for all development, including in Flood Zone 1, where the site is greater than 1 hectare. The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy HD083-R002 Rev B ("FRA").

158. By virtue of being residential development, the development falls within the definition of “More Vulnerable Development” as per Annex 3 to the PPG Flood Risk and Coastal Change classification. Table 2: Flood risk vulnerability and flood zone ‘incompatibility’ confirms that “More Vulnerable Development” is compatible with locations within Flood Zone 1. As such, the exception test is not required.
159. The submitted FRA assessed the risk of flooding from various sources, which was deemed to be low for all potential sources of flooding listed. The WBC Flood Risk & Drainage Officer has reviewed the proposal and has raised no objection on grounds of flood risk.

### *Drainage*

160. MDD LP Policy CC10 *Sustainable Drainage* requires surface water to be managed in a sustainable manner, maintaining greenfield run-off rates and volumes, taking into account climate change.
161. Paragraph 182 of the NPPF requires that proposals “should incorporate sustainable drainage systems to control flow rates and reduce volumes of runoff, and which are proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal. These should provide multifunctional benefits wherever possible, through facilitating improvements in water quality and biodiversity, as well as benefits for amenity.”
162. The Green Infrastructure Framework produced by Natural England sets out a range of design principles to ensure high quality of design of development. Improving water management through green infrastructure, which improves water quality and natural filtration, promotes sustainable drainage, brings amenity, biodiversity and enhanced visual landscape benefits.
163. These principles are also echoed in the CIRIA guidance, as well as WBC SuDS Strategy, which both require that water is kept above ground to help achieve high quality landscaping, creation of habitat and attractive places (including amenity, health, well-being and recreation). These aspects of the scheme are discussed in paragraph 55.
164. The hierarchy of options for the discharge of surface water run-off prioritises infiltration as the preferred option, with discharge to surface water, discharge to a surface water sewer and discharge to a combined sewer (in order of priority).
165. The application is accompanied by the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy HD083-R002 Rev B (“FRA”). The FRA assumes that infiltration would not be a viable method of managing surface water discharge due to geological factors (i.e. the ground comprises London Clay which is not suitable for infiltration). The WBC Flood Risk & Drainage Officer has reviewed the geological data available and confirmed that it suggests that the site comprises London Clay. Notwithstanding, further testing would be required to demonstrate whether infiltration is achievable; this would be secured by condition (Condition 8 refers).
166. It is proposed that the surface water would be attenuated on site in a detention basin before being discharged into the existing watercourse in the north-east section of the site. The discharge from the detention basin into the watercourse would be controlled via hydrobrakes to restrict the discharge rates to the pre-development QBar runoff rates of 1.7l/s per hectare.

167. These calculations were based on the Illustrative Masterplan and assumed 65% of the developable area would be impermeable. The impermeable area of the development was calculated at 2.21 hectares (to include urban creep). The proposed discharge rates have been calculated to take into account all storm events up to and including the 1 in 100 years storm event +40% allowance for climate change. Based on these assumptions, the proposed discharge from the detention basin would be restricted to 3.8l/s for the indicative impermeable area.
168. The application is accompanied by a Drainage Strategy (Appendix 3 to the FRA), which shows a detention basins where surface water would be attenuated. The Drainage Statement outlines that there is scope for the final drainage scheme to incorporate SuDS features (such as permeable paving, swales and rain gardens), which would help the drainage strategy to fulfil its amenity, biodiversity and landscape functions. The detailed drainage strategy, including the provision of SuDS features, would be secured by condition (Condition 8 refers). The Drainage Strategy included in the FRA has been reviewed by the WBC Drainage & Flood Risk Officer who raised no objection to the proposal subject to conditions.

#### *Foul Water*

169. The submitted FRA indicates that the strategy for dealing with foul water drainage would be through a connection to the existing public sewer system. Due to the site's topography, this would require that foul water is pumped to the existing point of connection on School Road. The submitted Parameters Plan and Indicative Masterplan show that the location of pumping station has been incorporated into the illustrative design; the pumping station would be located in the north-east corner of the site.
170. Thames Water has been consulted on the proposal and raised no objection in terms of capacity foul water sewerage network infrastructure capacity. However, Thames Water identified an inability of the existing sewage treatment works infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the scheme. Thames Water recommended that a condition is imposed requiring that either all sewage works upgrades have been completed to accommodate the development or that a development phasing plan has been approved and implemented before the development can be occupied (Condition 10 refers).

#### **Ecology:**

171. Core Strategy Policies CP3 *General Principles for Development* and CP7 *Biodiversity* establish that proposals should not have a detrimental impact on ecological features. Species and habitats of conservation value should be protected and the ability of a site to support fauna and flora, including protected species, should be maintained and enhanced. Where the need for development outweighs the need to safeguard nature conservation importance and there are no less harmful alternatives available harm should be mitigated or compensated for. In addition, MDD LP Policy TB23 *Biodiversity and Development* requires proposals to enhance and incorporate new biodiversity features, provide appropriate buffer zones between development and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation and ensure ecological permeability.

172. The application is accompanied by Ecological Assessment DFA25012 Rev V3 (“EcolA”), which outlines steps taken by the applicant to determine the presence of protected species or species of raised conservation status and which contains an assessment of potential impacts of the proposal on these.

#### *Great Crested Newts*

173. The application site lies largely within a green impacts zone for Great Crested Newts (“GCN”). This means that there is generally low likelihood of GCN being present within the site. The submitted report identifies three ponds within the 500m buffer zone of application boundary, however, these are unsuitable for GCN. The WBC Ecologist agreed with the conclusions of the EcolA and considers that it has been demonstrated the proposal would not have unacceptable impacts on GCN.

#### *Bats*

174. The submitted EcolA provides further information in relation to bats in comparison to EcolA submitted as part of the previously-refused scheme. The EcolA now contains results of additional surveys that were not included in the previous version of the EcolA.
175. The EcolA has been reviewed by the WBC Ecology Officer who concluded that the site does not appear to form a key foraging site for bats and that the key features of the site would be retained on the whole and that the proposal is capable of delivering enhancements through habitat enhancements within areas of green infrastructure. Subject to detailed lighting strategy being approved, no objections are raised with regard to impacts on bats (Condition 24 refers).

#### *Reptiles*

176. The submitted EcolA provides further information in relation to the population of Adder. The EcolA submitted with previously-refused application contained results of a survey carried out at a suboptimal time of year. The current EcolA contains results of a reptile survey carried out between February and March 2025, which is accepted by the WBC Ecology Officer as the correct time to undertake reptile surveys (including Adder) and considers that sufficient survey effort has been made. They also agree with the conclusions of the EcolA that the site is unlikely to support a hibernation site for Adders. Notwithstanding, a mitigation and avoidance measures for protected species and species of principal importance would be required during the construction period (Condition 12 refers).

#### *Ecological Enhancements and Permeability*

177. The submitted EcolA provides a range of species-specific enhancement recommendations or recommendations to maintain ecological permeability, as required by MDD LP Policy TB23. The WBC Ecology Officer is content to secure appropriate enhancement and permeability measures through a condition (Condition 23 refers).

#### **Biodiversity Net Gain (“BNG”):**

178. Section 70A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) (“TCPA”) sets out that where planning permission is granted, it is subject to a pre-

commencement condition to secure that the biodiversity gain objective is met. Such objective can only be met where the biodiversity value attributable to the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat by at least 10%. The biodiversity value of habitats or habitat enhancement is to be calculated in accordance with the biodiversity metric published by the Secretary of State. The current metric is Metric 4.0 and provisions contained in the Section 70A of the TCPA came into effect on 12 February 2024 for any applications submitted on or after that date.

179. The application is accompanied by the Biodiversity Net Gain report (dated March 2025, reference DFA25013 Rev V2) as Appendix 1 in the EcolA. It is also accompanied by several iterations of Statutory Biodiversity Metric ("Metric"), the most recent one dated 23 June 2025, completed using Metric 4.0, which identifies baseline for habitat, hedgerow and watercourse expressed in units.
180. Given that the statutory pre-commencement condition referred to above requires an uplift of 10% on the pre-development biodiversity value, it is necessary to ensure that the SBM accurately represents the baseline conditions on site. The WBC Ecologist has reviewed the accompanying information and concludes that the most recent iteration of the Metric now adequately reflects the baseline for BNG purposes. The submitted information demonstrates that the scheme is capable of achieving greater than required (10%) BNG at present time. Should the applicant commit to a greater BNG to be secured, the position will be reported in the Update Paper. Subject to the habitat management and monitoring plan being secured by condition (Condition 22 refers) and the submission of monitoring reports and payment of monitoring fees being secured in a Section 106 legal agreement, there are no objections to the scheme on BNG grounds.

#### **Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area ("TBH SPA"):**

181. CS Policy CP8 *Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area* states that where development is likely to have an effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA), it is required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered. CS Policy CP7 *Biodiversity* reinforces this requirement.
182. The application site lies within 5km zone of the TBH SPA. The TBH SPA is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (Bramshill SSSI). By virtue of being designated as the SPA, the importance of Bramshill SSSI for biodiversity is elevated to both national and international level as an area selected to protect rare, threatened or vulnerable bird species.
183. Paragraph 195 of the NPPF states that "the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site" unless the Appropriate Assessment concludes otherwise.
184. The proposal would result in a net increase of up to 70 dwellings within 5km of the TBH SPA and as such, there is likely to be a significant impact on the TBH SPA. The application is accompanied by a Habitat Regulations Assessment DFA25013 Rev V2 which sets out that an agreement has been reached with the University of Reading to secure the necessary capacity (1.34ha) at the Ridge SANG in Shinfield. Natural England has reviewed the proposals and raised no objection to

the scheme, subject to SANG and SAMM requirements being secured in a S106 legal agreement.

185. The proposed measures to mitigate recreational pressure from the scheme have been reviewed by the WBC Ecologist against the latest consumption and allocation figures provided by the University of Reading to the WBC. These figures indicate that, based on the SANG capacity already consumed and capacity allocated to schemes currently under consideration, there would be sufficient capacity remaining to allocate to this proposal. As such, it has been demonstrated that a viable SANG mitigation measures could be secured, subject to planning obligations contained within a Section 106 legal agreement, that would require a confirmation that the SANG capacity has been purchased and a payment of SAMM contributions.

## **Environmental Health**

### *Noise, Odour and Air Quality*

186. Core Strategy Policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* seeks to avoid development in areas where noise may impact on the amenity of future occupants and MDD LP Policy CC06 *Noise* reinforces this, requiring proposals to demonstrate how noise impacts on sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed) have been addressed. Core Strategy Policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* establishes that development should minimise the emission of pollutants into the wider environment.
187. The site is not located in close proximity to obvious sources of major noise, although it is that the Parameter Plans identifies built form to be located approximately 30m from the boundary with the Coombes Primary School. Whilst no comments have been received from the WBC Environmental Health Officer on the current proposal, conditions have been recommended in response to the previously-refused scheme. These conditions require noise assessment to be carried out to identify whether any mitigation measures would be required and whether any plant proposed to be installed as part of development would need to be attenuated (Condition 18 refers).
188. The quantum of the proposed development would not be of a size where additional traffic would create adverse air quality, and such issues are generally caused by traffic queuing for long periods or high volume transport routes. Moreover, the site is not located in a designated Air Quality Management Area. The WBC's Environmental Health Officer raised no object on these grounds when commenting on the previously-refused scheme.
189. The application site lies approximately 250m to the south-west of Thames Water Sewage Works. Thames Water have been consulted on the proposal and, when commenting on the sewage treatment works to the north, raised no objection or requests for any further information being submitted in relation to odour impacts. The WBC Environmental Health Officer also raised no concerns on this point in the previous application. Therefore, no objection is raised on this ground.

### *Contamination*

190. Core Strategy policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* requires development to minimise the emission of pollutants, limit any adverse effects on water quality

(including ground water) and avoid areas where pollution may impact upon the amenity and safety/health of future occupiers.

191. The application is accompanied by a Contaminated Land Desk Study Report JT0584 Issue 2, which recommends that non-targeted intrusive soil investigations are carried out prior to any development commencing to determine the nature and extent of contamination (if any) that may be present on site. Whilst no comments have been received from the WBC's Environmental Health Officer on this application, the recommendations reflect those contained in the Desk Study Report submitted with the previous application (and which comprised this parcel of land). The WBC Environmental Health Officer raised no object to the scheme previously, subject to conditions to secure site investigations and an appropriate remediation scheme if required (Conditions 31 to 33 refer).

## **Employment Skills**

192. MDD LP Policy TB12 *Employment Skills Plan* indicates that proposals for major development should be accompanied by an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) to show how the proposal accords opportunities for training, apprenticeship or other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills required by developers, contractors or end users of the proposal.
193. The application is accompanied by the Economic Benefit Statement 522477.3.SM dated March 2025, however, no references are made within to the MDD LP requirements and employment skills targets. It is acknowledged that the proposal is for an outline planning permission, therefore, the proposed floorspace, on which the necessary employment skills targets are based/calculated, is currently unknown.
194. Notwithstanding, the WBC Employment and Skills Officer has reviewed the proposal and is content for ESP (or a financial contribution in lieu) to be secured in the Section 106 legal agreement. Therefore, no objection is raised on the ESP grounds.

## **Sustainable Construction**

### *Low and Zero-Carbon Technology*

195. Core Strategy Policy CP1 *Sustainable Development*, amplified by MDD LP Policy CC05 *Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks*, requires development to contribute towards the goal of zero-carbon development by minimising energy consumption and incorporating on-site renewable energy features: at least a 10% reduction in carbon emissions should be achieved through renewable energy or low carbon technology in addition to levels of reduction required through the Building Regulations in force at the time of the submission of planning application.
196. The application is accompanied by the Energy Strategy CR.AC.RG2 Rev R02, which indicates that through the combination of fabric performance improvements, passive design measures and addition of Air Source Heat Pumps, would reduce carbon emissions by 36% above the levels of Part L of the Building Regulations (2021). The Energy Strategy also confirms that photovoltaic panels are also feasible and could be added at the Reserved Matter stage if required. The WBC Sustainability Officer has reviewed the proposal recognised that the proposal

would exceed the WBC requirements of 10% reduction. Therefore, no objection is raised subject to detailed scheme for the reduction in carbon emissions being secured by condition (Condition 16 refers).

### *Domestic Water Consumption*

197. The Environment Agency has identified the Thames region as an area of Water Stress and Core Strategy Policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* requires development to reduce water consumption. The MDD LP Policy CC04 *Sustainable Design and Construction* requires that all new homes meet the internal potable water consumption targets of 110 litres or less per person per day (including a 5l external water allowance).
198. The Energy Strategy contains water efficiency calculations which demonstrate that 105l/pp/day is feasible. The WBC Sustainability Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objections, subject to condition (Condition 17 refers).

### **Infrastructure**

#### *Water Network*

199. Thames Water was consulted on the proposal and identified an inability of the existing water network infrastructure to accommodate the proposal. Thames Water recommended a condition requiring water network upgrades to be completed or infrastructure phasing plan to be approved and implemented before development can be occupied (Condition 11 refers).

### *Education*

200. Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy requires that:

“new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs (...) [through addressing requirements of]: (...)

b) children, young people and families, including co-ordination of services to meet their needs;”

201. The WBC School Place Planning Manager has reviewed the previously-refused proposal and advised that whilst the precise impact on school capacity would depend on the exact quantum and dwelling types/bedroom sizes that would be approved at Reserved Matters stage, it would be acceptable to seek mitigation through a financial contribution. It was also confirmed that the Coombes CoE Primary School is undersubscribed, therefore, it has not been demonstrated that financial contribution would be necessary to make development acceptable in planning terms as capacity exists to accommodate primary school age children at the Coombes school. A financial contribution was also requested towards secondary school provision on the basis that the Bohunt School is currently over-subscribed. However, no specific project was identified towards which the contribution could be allocated and no costing provided to establish the amount of financial contribution required. Therefore, it is not considered that the requested contribution would be fairly and reasonably related in scale to the proposal.

## Healthcare

202. CS Policy CP2: *Inclusive Communities* requires that:

*“new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs (...) [through addressing requirements of]:*

*a) an ageing population, particularly in terms of housing, health and wellbeing;*

*b) children, young people and families, including co-ordination of services to meet their needs;”*

203. The supporting text to the policy confirms that community facilities include development for health. This is in response to “Aspirations and Spatial Issues for the Borough” outlined in the Core Strategy (paragraph 2.68) in which it is identified that the issues to be addressed in Core Strategy are maintenance and enhancement of all infrastructure, including healthcare.

204. The NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (“ICB”) is a statutory NHS body to commission primary care services and is responsible for primary care estates development. The ICB has been consulted on the proposal and identified that Swallowfield Medical Practice, which is currently operating a branch surgery at Arborfield Hall, as well as branches in Swallowfield and Shinfield, is over capacity. To mitigate the impacts arising from increase in population, the ICB sought a contribution towards increasing clinical space at a local health centre.

205. The ICB confirmed that the funding sought would be towards capital project funding, rather than funding of healthcare services (which is provided by the Central Government), and that it does not receive funding for capital projects to increase capacity at existing GP surgeries to meet growth in population.

206. The ICB identified a specific project of infrastructure improvements: reconfiguration of or extension to the existing premises at Arborfield branch of the Swallowfield Medical Practice, which would provide additional clinical space. The contribution would be based on the anticipated patient yield from the number of dwellings to be ascertained at the Reserved Matters stage.

207. The WBC Infrastructure Delivery Plan (September 2024) produced as part of the Local Plan Update identifies Swallowfield Medical Practice to have capacity deficit and that no funding has been identified at this stage to deliver capacity upgrades.

208. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal would need to mitigate impacts of the associated increase in population on the capacity of the Swallowfield Medical Practice catchment area (which operates Arborfield Cross GP surgery).

209. Whilst it is not ascertained at this stage which of the two options for infrastructure improvements would be selected, the ICB clarified that the contribution would allow for the pre-project work to be undertaken to identify which option should be proceeded with. Officers acknowledge that this approach was accepted by Inspectors in recent appeals: Land to the North of Bath Road

(APP/X0360/W/24/3350170) and Land adjacent to Blagrove Lane (APP/X0360/W/24/3354667). It is considered that the contribution sought would meet the relevant tests for planning obligations and as such, it is proposed to be secured in a Section 106 legal agreement.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

210. The scheme would be liable to pay a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charge of £551.02/m<sup>2</sup> (based on January 2025 figures). CIL contributions are used to cover the cost of infrastructure it will rely upon, such as roads, schools and healthcare, however, funding allocation is based on areas of most significant need which is not a matter for the planning process.
211. Arborfield & Newland Parish Council would also receive a meaningful proportion of the money raised from CIL receipts (25% total given Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan). Each parish and town council produce a Regulation 121B Monitoring Reports, available on their websites, which show the parish's individual annual CIL statement setting out the amount of CIL funds received and expended. As such, through the payment of CIL, the development will notably contribute to local amenities which the Arborfield & Newland Parish Council have control over.

### **Planning Balance**

212. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a significant material consideration.
213. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF requires that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Where the development plan is up-to-date, this means approving development proposals without delay (paragraph 11(c) of the NPPF). Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, the "tilted balance" in paragraph 11(d) is engaged. Footnote 9 to paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF states that for proposals involving the provision of housing, this includes situations where the LPA cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply of homes.
214. The Council acknowledges that it cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Therefore, in accordance with paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, the "tilted balance" is engaged. This means that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.
215. Paragraph 9 of the NPPF outlines that achieving sustainable development means that planning system has three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental. The benefits and disbenefits of the scheme are therefore considered against these three objectives below.

## *Economic*

216. As with all housing development of this scale in this location, the proposal would result in economic benefits. This is broadly set to arise from the short-term economic contribution of the construction of up to 70 homes via construction industry jobs. In the longer term, future residents of the dwellings would contribute to the viability and vitality of businesses in the village and nearby towns. In the case of Arborfield Cross and the size of the development, this is likely to be material.. CIL payments and New Homes Bonus would also be an economic benefit of the proposal. These benefits are afforded **moderate** weight. In terms of economic costs, the development would result in the likely loss of a small proportion of the borough's BMVL; this conflict carries **limited** weight. On the whole, the size of the development means that these benefits are not insignificant and are positively balanced. The development is therefore considered to perform a positive, albeit limited economic role.

## *Social*

217. The primary social benefit of the proposal would be the provision of up to 70 new dwellings, including up to 28 affordable homes on site, which would help to meet an identified local need. Planning Inspectors have given the benefit of affordable housing varying weight. Broadly speaking, the greater number of homes and affordable units provided within a development tends to attract greater weight from government Inspectors. These benefit of provision of housing is afforded **significant** weight; similarly, the on-site provision of affordable housing is afforded **significant** weight.
218. The proposal also includes several contributions to mitigate its own impacts, including towards healthcare infrastructure and the provision of an Employment and Skills Plan. The on-site Public Open Space would meet policy requirements for future residents. The Travel Plan and contribution to My Journey are also considered mitigation. As these elements are required to make the development acceptable in planning terms, they are all afforded **neutral** weight in planning balance.
219. Overall, the development would perform a positive social role, driven by the substantial weight given to the delivery of market and affordable housing.

## *Environmental*

220. The development would result in harm to the Bearwood and Barkham Valued Landscape, which is afforded **significant** weight. Similarly, the harm to the character of School Road (a designated Green Route) and the setting of Arborfield Cross village is also afforded **significant** weight. The proposal would result in a conflict with the Council's spatial strategy by developing in the countryside outside of settlement limits. This conflict is afforded **moderate** weight. The proposal would be in a suboptimal location in sustainability terms, where residents would require a degree of reliance on private cars. This is afforded **moderate** weight.
221. Conversely, the proposal includes a number of environmental benefits and mitigation measures. Contributions towards improving the local bus service and bus stop infrastructure are considered a benefit and are afforded **moderate**

weight. The delivery of accessibility improvements in the form of refuge/splitter islands and a toucan crossing is also afforded **moderate** weight. The commitment to deliver policy requirements for carbon reduction is a benefit afforded **neutral** weight. Should the applicant commit to delivering more than the minimum 10% reduction, this benefit would be afforded **moderate** weight.

222. Should the applicant commit to delivering more than the statutory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, this benefit would be afforded **moderate** weight. Otherwise, it is neutral. The financial contribution to enhance Cole Lane is welcome, but as it is dependent on further feasibility works, it is given **neutral** weight.
223. In environmental terms, there are therefore factors that weigh both in favour of and against the proposal, although overall, it is considered the proposal would perform a moderately negative environmental role.

### *Conclusion on Planning Balance*

224. The council cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply and paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF therefore states that permission should be granted unless:
- (i) The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas of assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
  - (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination
225. Given the Council's housing land supply position, the "tilted balance" is engaged, and the proposal must be considered in this context. The delivery of up to 70 homes, and particularly the 40% affordable housing on-site provision, provides substantial social benefits that carry significant weight in favour of the application. Further moderate weight is added through the tangible improvements to public transport and pedestrian/cycle accessibility and through the economic role the development will undoubtedly perform.
226. These benefits must be weighed against the harms. The most significant harm is the environmental impact on the character of the area (including Green Route and the setting of Arborfield Cross Village) and the Valued Landscape.
227. In this instance, while the environmental harm is clear, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, it is not considered that this harm is to such an extent, that it would **significantly and demonstrably** outweigh the substantial benefits of the scheme. The delivery of market and affordable housing is a key objective for the Council, and this proposal makes a meaningful contribution towards it. Therefore, the application is recommended for approval.

*In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts upon protected groups as a result of the development.*

## **APPENDIX 1 - Conditions / informatives**

*APPROVAL subject to the following conditions and informatives:*

### **Conditions**

#### *Reserved Matters*

1.

- (A) No part of development hereby approved shall commence until details of layout, scale, appearance, and landscaping (hereinafter referred to as Reserved Matters) have first been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- (B) Plans and particulars of the Reserved Matters referred to above, shall be submitted in writing to the Local Planning Authority before the expiration of 2 years from the date of this permission.
- (C) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 2 years from the date of approval the Reserved Matters to be approved.

*Reason: In pursuance of s.92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).*

#### *Approved Plans*

- 2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Proposed Site Access Arrangement 2305-083-PL05 Rev B and Parameters Plan 2522477.4 Rev F.

*Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approve*

#### *Highway Improvement Works (School Road)*

- 3. No part of development hereby approved shall commence until full engineering and construction details in respect of highway improvement works set out below have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The highway improvement works shall include:
  - a. Improvements to traffic calming measures on School Road, which shall ensure that School Road is suitable for on-road cycling; and
  - b. Widening of footway along School Road to a minimum of 2m.

The highway improvement works shall be carried in accordance with the approved details prior to first occupation of development hereby approved.

*Reason: To ensure that the necessary off-site highway works, which are required to mitigate the impact of the development on the highway network and to ensure safe and suitable access for all users, are secured and implemented in a timely manner and to an appropriate standard, in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP3 and CP6*

#### *Highway Improvement Works (Eversley Road)*

4. No part of development hereby approved shall commence until full engineering and construction details in respect of highway improvement works set out below have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The highway improvement works shall include:
  - (a) Refuge island approximately 80m to the south of Eversley Road/Link Way; and
  - (b) Splitter island adjacent to Eversley Road/Whitewell Close, following the removal of priority working island to the north.

The highway improvement works shall be carried in accordance with the approved details prior to first occupation of development hereby approved.

*Reason: To ensure that the necessary off-site highway works, which are required to mitigate the impact of the development on the highway network and to ensure safe and suitable access for all users, are secured and implemented in a timely manner and to an appropriate standard, in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP3 and CP6*

#### *Highway Improvement Works (Toucan Crossing)*

5. No part of development hereby approved shall commence until full engineering and construction details of a crossing suitable for use by pedestrians, cyclists and dismounted horse riders (which shall incorporate mounting blocks either side of the crossing) have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The crossing shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details prior to first occupation of development hereby approved.

*Reason: To ensure that the necessary off-site highway works, which are required to mitigate the impact of the development on the highway network and to ensure safe and suitable access for all users, are secured and implemented in a timely manner and to an appropriate standard, in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP3 and CP6*

#### *Walking and Cycling Strategy*

6. Prior to commencement of development hereby permitted, details of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure and connections from the development to Arborfield Cross shall be submitted for approval by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall demonstrate how these routes will be upgraded. The measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of the first dwelling.

*Reason: In the interests of sustainable travel, convenience and highway safety, in accordance with Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP6.*

#### *Highway Construction Details*

7. No part of development hereby approved shall commence until full details of the construction of roads and footways, including levels, widths, construction materials, depths of construction, surface water drainage and lighting have first

been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The roads and footways shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details to road base level before the development prior to first occupation and the final wearing course shall be provided within 3 months of final occupation.

*Reason: To ensure that roads and footpaths are constructed to a standard that would be suitable for adoption as publicly maintainable highway, in the interests of providing a functional, accessible and safe development. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.*

#### **Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme (SuDS)**

8. The application for approval of Reserved Matters shall be accompanied by a surface water drainage scheme. The drainage scheme shall include:
- (a) Evidence of infiltration testing to BRE 365 standards (or equivalent) to support any proposed infiltration methods;
  - (b) Use of SuDS following the SuDS hierarchy, preferably infiltration;
  - (c) Full drainage calculations to demonstrate the performance of soakaways or capacity of attenuation features to cater for 1 in 100 years flood event with a 40% allowance for climate change allowance and runoff controlled at 1.7l/s/ha or preferably better;
  - (d) Calculations demonstrating that there will be no flooding of pipes for events up to and including the 1 in 100-year flood event with a 40% allowance for climate change and how exceedance flows will be managed.
  - (e) Assessment of SuDS components as listed in the CIRIA SuDS Manual (and justification for exclusion of any if necessary);
  - (f) Separate drainage systems for any proposed adopted highways and residential dwellings;
  - (g) A demonstration of how surface water runoff is going to be catered for, given that parts of the development site already suffer from surface water flooding.
  - (h) Groundwater monitoring confirming seasonal high groundwater levels in the area.
  - (i) A drainage strategy plan indicating the location and sizing of SuDS features, with the base of any SuDS features located at least 1m above the seasonal high water table level.
  - (j) Details demonstrating how any SuDS for this development would be managed throughout the lifespan of the development and who will be responsible for maintenance.

The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development and shall be maintained in the approved form for as long as the development remains on the site.

*Reason: to prevent the increased risk of flooding, and to protect water quality in accordance with NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Technical Guidance on the NPPF*

*(Flood Risk), Core Strategy policy CP1; Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 & CC10; and Wokingham SuDS Strategy (January 2017).*

### *Maintenance of SuDS*

9. No dwelling hereby approved shall be occupied until a plan for management and maintenance of the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems for the lifetime of the development hereby approved (hereinafter referred to as SuDS Maintenance Plan) has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The SuDS Maintenance Plan shall include:
- (a) the arrangements for adoption by a public authority or a statutory undertaker and arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime;
  - (b) full details of the access that is required to reach surface water management component for maintenance purposes; and
  - (c) a plan for safe and sustainable removal and disposal of waste periodically arising from drainage system, detailing the materials to be used and standard of work required, including method statement.

The approved SUDS Maintenance Plan shall be implemented in accordance with approved details prior to first occupation of development hereby approved.

*Reason: to prevent the increased risk of flooding, ensure the continued operation and adequate maintenance of drainage features serving the site and to protect water quality in accordance with NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Technical Guidance on the NPPF (Flood Risk), Core Strategy policy CP1; Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 & CC10; and Wokingham SuDS Strategy (January 2017).*

### *Foul Water*

10. No dwelling hereby approved shall be occupied until either:
- (a) A confirmation has been provided to the Local Planning Authority that foul water capacity exists off site to serve the development; or
  - (b) A development and infrastructure phasing plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Where a development and infrastructure phasing plan is approved, no occupation shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed development and infrastructure phasing plan; or
  - (c) All Foul water network upgrades required to accommodate the additional flows from the development have been completed.

*Reason: Network reinforcement works may be required to accommodate the proposed development. Any reinforcement works identified will be necessary in order to avoid sewage flooding and/or potential pollution incidents.*

## Water Infrastructure

11. No dwelling hereby approved shall be occupied until either:
- (a) A confirmation has been provided to the Local Planning Authority that all water network upgrades required to accommodate the additional demand to serve the development have been completed; or
  - (b) A development and infrastructure phasing plan has been agreed with Thames Water to allow development to be occupied. Where a development and infrastructure phasing plan is approved, no occupation shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed development and infrastructure phasing plan

*Reason: The development may lead to no / low water pressure and network reinforcement works are anticipated to be necessary to ensure that sufficient capacity is made available to accommodate additional demand anticipated from the new development.*

## Construction Environment Management Plan

12. No part of the development hereby approved shall commence, including site clearance and preparation works, until a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved CEMP shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The CEMP shall include the following:
- (a) construction of suitable works access;
  - (b) details of haul routes to be used to access the development;
  - (c) parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors (including times, these should be in line with hours of work permitted under Condition 13);
  - (d) loading and unloading of plant and materials;
  - (e) programme of works, including measures for traffic management and operating hours;
  - (f) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
  - (g) the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate;
  - (h) provision of lighting during construction;
  - (i) protection of trees, hedgerows and other natural features (in accordance with details to be approved under condition 27);
  - (j) control measures to prevent the spread of invasive non-native species
  - (k) wheel washing facilities and an area cleaning regime;

- (l) measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction;
- (m) a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from construction works;
- (n) details of pest control measures, if required
- (o) hours of construction;
- (p) hours of delivery; and
- (q) mitigation and avoidance measures for protected species and species of principal importance.

The development hereby approved shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved CEMP during site preparation, clearance and construction of the development.

*Reason: In the interests of highway safety & convenience, neighbour amenities and ecology. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6 and MDD LP policy TB23.*

#### *Hours of work*

13. No work relating to the development hereby permitted, including works of ground clearance or preparation prior to commencement of construction operations shall take place other than:
  - (a) between the hours of 08:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday; and
  - (b) 08:00-13:00 on Saturday; and
  - (c) at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays except for
  - (d) individual operations which cannot reasonably be undertaken within the construction working hours defined above and have been notified to the Local Planning Authority (including details of the nature extent and timetable for the works) at least two weeks in advance and approved in writing .

Where works are approved by the Local Planning Authority under (d), key stakeholders including residential properties within an identified zone that has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, ward members and town/parish councils shall be given written notice at least one week in advance of the works taking place. The notification shall include details of the nature, extent and timetable for the works and telephone number that the party responsible the works can be contacted on for the duration of the works.

*Reason: to protect the occupiers of neighbouring properties from noise and disturbance outside the permitted hours during the construction period. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06*

#### *Access for All*

14. The application for Reserved Matters shall demonstrate how no less than 10% of market dwellings and 100% of affordable housing dwellings will be accessible

and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations 2010 (as amended) (or any other standard that supersedes it).

*Reason: To provide a variety of dwellings, catering to different needs, to support positive neighbourhood planning in accordance with Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy and TB05 of the MDD.*

#### *Secured by Design*

15. The Reserved Matters application for the development shall demonstrate how the development has taken into account principles of Secured by Design Residential (Homes) Guide 2025 (or any other guide that supersedes it).

*Reason: In order to create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible in accordance with Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP2, & CP3 and National Design Guide.*

#### *On-site renewables*

16. Concurrently with a Reserved Matters application for the development hereby approved, a scheme demonstrating how a 10% reduction in the predicted carbon emissions arising from operation of the development through the use of decentralised renewable and/or low carbon sources (as defined in the glossary of Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change (December 2007) or any subsequent version) would be achieved shall be submitted to for the Local Planning Authority's approval in writing. The minimum 10% reduction shall be achieved in addition to the levels of reduction in carbon emissions required through the Building Regulations in force at the time of the submission of planning application. Development shall not commence until the scheme has been approved. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to first occupation of the development hereby approved and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development.

*Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development in accordance with NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), WBC Climate Emergency Action Plan, Core Strategy policy CP1, MDDL policy CC05 & the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document.*

#### *Domestic Water Consumption:*

17. Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme achieving a maximum domestic water consumption of 110L per capita per day (including 5L allowance for external water) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first occupied and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development

*Reason: To reduce consumption of water in a classified area of serious water stress in accordance with the NPPF, Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP1; Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC04; and the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (2010).*

### *Air Source Heat Pumps*

18. In the event that Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) are proposed as part of a Reserved Matters application for the development hereby approved, the Reserved Matters application shall be accompanied by a detailed Noise Impact Assessment (NIA). The NIA shall:
- (a) Identify the predicted operational noise levels from all proposed ASHPs, including cumulative impacts where multiple units are proposed;
  - (b) Evaluate the potential impact of this noise on the amenity of future occupants of the proposed dwellings and any existing noise-sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the proposed ASHPs; and
  - (c) Detail the specific measures to be incorporated into the design, layout, orientation, and specification of the ASHPs, and/or other mitigation measures (such as enclosures or screening), to ensure that noise from the ASHPs does not give rise to an unacceptable adverse impact on residential amenity.

The design and layout of the development submitted pursuant to the Reserved Matters application shall be informed by, and incorporate the recommendations of, the NIA. Any ASHPs shall subsequently be installed and maintained in accordance with the details as approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

*Reason: In the interest of amenity of future occupants of the development, in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3, MDD LP Policy CC06 and paragraphs 135(f) and 187 of the NPPF (2024).*

### *Detailed Landscaping*

- 19.
- (a) No development shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works have been first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. These details shall include:
    - (i) scheme drawings;
    - (ii) proposed levels and contours;
    - (iii) detailed design of SuDS features in accordance with the SuDS Strategy, demonstrating how they will be integrated into the wider landscape, with attenuation basins having a natural shape and shallow profile (not requiring lifesaving equipment and fence barriers), allowing them to fulfil amenity, ecological and drainage functions;
    - (iv) soft landscaping details including planting plans, schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate;
    - (v) a Landscape Specification document covering soft landscaping (including site preparation, cultivation, plant handling and other operations associated with plant and grass

establishment) and hard landscaping including all construction works such as paths, bridges and retaining walls;

- (vi) details of the street tree planting pits in combination with the roadside swales/rain gardens demonstrating that the trees have sufficient rooting volume to enable their successful retention long term health;
  - (vii) hard landscaping materials including samples;
  - (viii) minor artefacts and structures (such as street furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, external services) including specifications for the product and its installation;
  - (ix) specification for tree rooting systems and use of structural soils under paving or where rooting volumes are limited; and
  - (x) car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas.
- (b) Details of quality control measures, including supervision of landscape contract(s) by a suitably qualified landscape specialist and annual landscape audits for the five-year period from completion of the landscaping. The annual Landscape Audit shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for information prior to the next planting season and replacement planting undertaken in accordance with the landscape audit and iii) below.
- (c) Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

*Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to maintain favourable conservation status of the site for protected species and species of principal importance. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3, CP7 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03, TB21 & TB23*

#### *Landscape Management Plan*

20. Prior to the commencement of the development, a landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, other than privately owned, domestic gardens, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

*Reason: In order to ensure that provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.*

#### *Ground and building levels*

21. Prior to commencement of the development hereby approved, a measured survey of the site and a plan prepared to scale of not less than 1:500, showing details of

existing ground levels for the site and proposed finished ground and floor levels (in relation to a fixed datum point) and finished roof levels shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: In order to ensure a satisfactory form of development relative to surrounding buildings and landscape. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB21.*

#### *Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan*

22. Prior to commencement of the development hereby approved a habitat management and monitoring plan (HMMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The HMMP shall include the following:
- (a) Description and evaluation of features to be managed, covering all landscaped areas other than domestic gardens;
  - (b) Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management;
  - (c) Aims and objectives of management, including detailed Biodiversity Gain Plan;
  - (d) Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives;
  - (e) Prescriptions for management actions;
  - (f) Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period);
  - (g) Details of the body or organization responsible for implementation of the plan; and
  - (h) Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures.

The HMMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body responsible for its delivery. The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the HMMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The approved plan will be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: In order to ensure that provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21*

#### *Ecological permeability*

23. Prior to commencement of development hereby approved, a strategy for ecological permeability and species biodiversity enhancements to the site shall first be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall be prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist and include measures for bats, birds, hedgehogs, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates. Development

shall be carried out in accordance with the approved strategy and shall thereafter be permanently retained as such.

*Reason: To provide biodiversity enhancements, in accordance with Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Core Strategy policies CP3 and CP7; and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy and TB23*

#### *Lighting Strategy (Bats)*

24. Prior to or concurrent with Reserved Matters application a Lighting Design Strategy for Biodiversity for the development hereby approved shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall:
- (a) Identify those areas/features on and around the site that are particularly sensitive for bats and where the development may cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along foraging and/or commuting routes; and
  - (b) Show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent bats using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the approved strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved strategy.

*Reason: To avoid detriment to protected species, in accordance with Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Core Strategy policies CP3 and CP7; and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy and TB23.*

#### *Ecology Management Plan*

25. Prior to the commencement of development, a detailed Ecology Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall include species specific ecological enhancements. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved Ecological Management Plan.

Reason: To secure appropriate wildlife mitigation, compensation and enhancements within the course of the development. In accordance with Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Core Strategy policies CP3 and CP7; and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy and TB23.

#### *Arboricultural Impact Assessment*

26. The Reserved Matters application shall be accompanied by an updated Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) to ensure development proposals, including site layout and buffer zones of veteran tree(s) where retained, have been fully considered in relation to tree constraints.

*Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site which are of amenity*

*value to the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.*

### *Tree Protection*

27.

- (a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until a scheme which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (the Approved Scheme);
- (b) No part of development hereby approved or other operation (including site clearance and preparatory works) shall commence on site until the Approved Scheme has been implemented.
- (c) No development (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence until the Local Planning Authority has been provided no less than 7 working days written notice to inspect the implementation of the measures identified in the Approved Scheme.
- (d) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.
- (e) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site.

*Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the Local Planning Authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21*

### *Boundary Treatment*

28. Prior to commencement of above ground works, details of all boundary treatments and other means of enclosure, which shall include provision of ecological permeability measures appropriate for protected species and species of principal importance (in accordance with details approved under condition 0), shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development. The boundary treatments and other means of enclosure shall be maintained in the approved form thereafter.

*Reason: In the interests of amenity, biodiversity and highway safety, in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB23.*

#### *Archaeology (WSI)*

29. Prior to the submission of an application for the approval of Reserved Matters, a programme of archaeological work, including a Written Scheme of Investigation (hereinafter referred to as the WSI), shall be first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The WSI shall include:
- (a) Assessment of significance and research questions;
  - (b) Programme and methodology of site investigation and recording;
  - (c) Programme for post investigation assessment;
  - (d) Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording;
  - (e) Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation;
  - (f) Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation; and
  - (g) Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the WSI.

The programme of archaeological work shall be carried out in accordance with the approved WSI.

*Reason: The site lies in an area of archaeological potential, particularly for, but not limited to, Prehistoric and Medieval remains. The potential impacts of the development can be mitigated through a programme of archaeological work. This is in accordance with national and local plan policy*

#### *Archaeology (Investigation Results)*

30. No dwelling hereby approved shall be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the WSI approved under Condition 29 and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of the results and archive deposition has been secured and confirmation of this has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

*Reason: The site lies in an area of archaeological potential, particularly for, but not limited to, Prehistoric and Medieval remains. The potential impacts of the development can be mitigated through a programme of archaeological work. This is in accordance with national and local plan policy*

#### *Land Contamination Investigation*

31. An investigation and risk assessment should be completed in accordance with a scheme to assess the nature and extent of any contamination on the site, including radon or landfill gas, (whether it originates on the site or not). The

investigation and risk assessment should be undertaken by competent persons and a written report of the findings produced. The written report would be subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority. The report of the findings should include:

- (i) a survey of the extent, scale, and nature of any contamination.
- (ii) an assessment of the potential risks to:
  - human health,
  - property (existing or proposed) including buildings, crops, livestock, pets, woodland and service lines and pipes,
  - adjoining land,
  - groundwaters and surface waters,
  - ecological systems,
  - archaeological sites and ancient monuments.
- (iii) an appraisal of remedial options, and proposal of the preferred option(s).

This must be conducted in accordance with DEFRA and the Environment Agency's 'Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination, CLR 11'.

*Reason: To ensure that any contamination of the site is identified at the outset to allow remediation to protect existing/proposed occupants of property on the site and/or adjacent land. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) and Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3.*

#### *Submission of Remediation Scheme (where required)*

32. A detailed remediation scheme to bring the site to a condition suitable for the intended use by removing unacceptable risks to human health, buildings and other property and the natural and historical environment should be prepared and would be subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority. The scheme should include all works to be undertaken, proposed remediation objectives and remediation criteria, timetable of works and site management procedures. The scheme should ensure that the site will not qualify as contaminated land under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in relation to the intended use of the land after remediation.

*Reason: To ensure that any contamination of the site is identified at the outset to allow remediation to protect existing/proposed occupants of property on the site and/or adjacent land. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) and Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3.*

#### *Unexpected Land Contamination*

33. If land contamination is found at any time during site clearance, groundwork, and construction the discovery shall be reported as soon as possible to the local planning authority. A full contamination risk assessment shall be carried out and if found to be necessary, a 'remediation method statement' shall be submitted to the local planning authority for written approval.

*Reason: To ensure that any contamination of the site is identified at the outset to allow remediation to protect existing/proposed occupants of property on the site*

*and/or adjacent land. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) and Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3.*

## **Informatives**

- 1) The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the Applicant.
- 2) The applicant is reminded that this approval is granted subject to conditions which must be complied with prior to the development starting on site. Commencement of the development without complying with the pre-commencement requirements may be outside the terms of this permission and liable to enforcement action. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once the details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.
- 3) This permission should be read in conjunction with the legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, the obligations in which relate to this development.
- 4) The developer's attention is drawn to the fact that this permission does not authorise the physical construction of the proposed off-site highway works and site access connections to the public highway. A separate legal agreement made with the Council under s.278 of the Highways Act 1980 is required. No work within or affecting the public highway shall commence until the agreement has been completed and the Council, as local highway authority, has approved all construction and installation details together with a programme of works.
- 5) The development hereby permitted is liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy. The Liability Notice issued by Wokingham Borough Council will state the current chargeable amount. A revised Liability Notice will be issued if this amount changes. Anyone can formally assume liability to pay, but if no one does so then liability will rest with the landowner. There are certain legal requirements that must be complied with. For instance, whoever will pay the levy must submit an Assumption of Liability form and a Commencement Notice to Wokingham Borough Council prior to commencement of development, failure to do this will result in penalty surcharges being added. For more information see the Council's website – Community Infrastructure Levy advice page. Please submit all CIL forms and enquiries to [developer.contributions@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:developer.contributions@wokingham.gov.uk).
- 6) Fire service vehicles currently operated by Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service exceed the requirements stated in the current edition of Approved Document B. The applicant should be made aware of the following amendments:- The minimum carrying capacity for a pumping appliance is 16 tonnes. The minimum carrying capacity for a high reach appliance is 26 tonnes. Structures such as bridges should have the full vehicle carrying capacity. Any structural fire precautions and all means of escape provision will have to satisfy

Building Regulation requirement. These matters are administered by the local authority Building Control or approved inspectors, who you are advised to contact in this regard.

- 7) Thames Water advise There are public sewers crossing or close to your development. If you're planning significant work near our sewers, it's important that you minimize the risk of damage. We'll need to check that your development doesn't limit repair or maintenance activities, or inhibit the services we provide in any other way. The applicant is advised to read our guide working near or diverting our pipes.

<https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thameswater.co.uk%2Fdevelopers%2Flarger-scale-developments%2Fplanning-your-development%2Fworking-near-ourpipes&data=05%7C02%7Cplanning.enquiries%40wokingham.gov.uk%7C0a3aaec060ce47666ee208dd7b47c3a0%7C996ee15c0b3e4a6f8e65120a9a51821a%7C0%7C0%7C638802270348139774%7CUnknown%7CTWFPbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIIYiOilwLjAuMDAwMClslIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbClslldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=J2PTk7iwChK%2FyxM7h3NwYkOz5AxJ%2F5ZPsQYn0NPgOm8%3D&reserved=0>

- 8) Thames Water advise There are water mains crossing or close to your development. Thames Water do NOT permit the building over or construction within 3m of water mains. If you're planning significant works near our mains (within 3m) we'll need to check that your development doesn't reduce capacity, limit repair or maintenance activities during and after construction, or inhibit the services we provide in any other way. The applicant is advised to read our guide working near or diverting our pipes.

<https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thameswater.co.uk%2Fdevelopers%2Flarger-scale-developments%2Fplanning-your-development%2Fworking-near-ourpipes&data=05%7C02%7Cplanning.enquiries%40wokingham.gov.uk%7C0a3aaec060ce47666ee208dd7b47c3a0%7C996ee15c0b3e4a6f8e65120a9a51821a%7C0%7C0%7C638802270348170371%7CUnknown%7CTWFPbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIIYiOilwLjAuMDAwMClslIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbClslldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=0fQjOniLjqNlgD2%2BVVCWBRF9k2y6EkCAeAjuaWLePM0Q%3D&reserved=0>

## APPENDIX 2 – Arborfield & Newland Parish Council Comments

PLANNING REF : 250735  
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Arborfield Village Hall  
: Eversley Road, Arborfield  
: RG2 9PQ  
SUBMITTED BY : Arborfield & Newland Parish Council  
DATE SUBMITTED : 23/04/2025

### COMMENTS:

Addendum to objection to previous planning application 242421 to respond fully to new planning application 250735.  
Arborfield and Newland Parish Council strongly objects to planning application 250735.

This new application for 70 properties on fields behind The Coombes school is fundamentally no different to the previous application for 95 properties at the same site. Minor alterations to the layout and a small reduction in properties in no way mitigate the outstanding issues surrounding this speculative planning application. This is still a greenfield development outside the settlement of Arborfield Cross, an area of limited development, relying on small village facilities and offering nothing of benefit to the village and its surrounds.

The development document highlights the reasons for the previous application refusal and then states how these reasons have been addressed in the new document while simultaneously failing to offer any substantive information in response to the previous planning refusal. For example, eight of the reasons provided are the same repeated again and again without providing any firm commitment to what will be done to mitigate the issues previously forming the reason for refusal.

In the revised planning application both the plot of land for development and the number of houses has been reduced. However, this is disproportionate - the land area has reduced by 33% and the housing numbers by only 22.5% - resulting in more development on less land increasing the density of the houses. This is not in keeping with the surrounding settlement.

The Framework Travel Plan document does very little to demonstrate how this site would increase sustainable travel; in fact, it relies on already in-situ pathways to support the development and current facilities while offering nothing in addition to the village. The idea that being able to use Cole Lane to access facilities in the village and that it would save much if any travel time is farcical for anyone familiar with the area. The layout and position of the site will do nothing to encourage sustainable travel but instead forces the residents into using vehicles for even the smallest of journeys in the locality. The travel plan indicates that the residents will be able to walk to the Arborfield Green site but fails to recognize the distances involved and again residents will simply favour the use of a car over any journey made on foot or bicycle.

The Travel plan aims to 'raise awareness' and 'discourage' car use; these are an intangible set of aims while the developer does nothing to alleviate the problems they would be bringing to the location with the addition of 70 homes and their vehicles to the village. The entire travel plan relies on current provision and offers nothing in addition bar the employment of a travel plan coordinator to 'signpost' residents to information - measure that is very unlikely to address the issues of sustainability or active travel.

The agricultural report from Croudace has several errors in it, it states the site is 5.5ha in size, the development plan only accounts for 3ha of good quality land. The report also goes on to state that this is a permanent pasture field and this is also incorrect as the land has been farmed as an arable field for many years. The field has been left fallow this year we suspect due to the pending planning application. The Parish Council finds it disappointing that the commissioned report is factually incorrect.

The visual impact assessment attached to this planning application does demonstrate very well the greenfield rural setting of this development and ably demonstrates how completely out of place a development of 70 properties would be in this location.

The development will increase the size of the village by 25% for which there will be no additional facilities from the development site. Travel from the development will be solely by car, increasing congestion on the country roads of the area and increasing the volume of traffic passing The Coombes School. Passing traffic on School Road has already been significantly reduced by a permanent Traffic Regulation Order, closing School Road to through traffic, so the impact of additional vehicles will be considerable - a fact that this application fails to address.

The speed at which the new application has been submitted, after the previous application was refused, is a cynical attempt to bring an application in before the new local plan update has been finalized which will see much increased development within Arborfield and Newland Parish.

Planning application 242421 - School Road applicable to Planning application 250735

Arborfield and Newland Parish council strongly objects to this planning application for 95 properties off School Road. The application is a speculative proposed development out of keeping with the locality and development of a greenfield site outside the settlement boundary. The development offers nothing in the way of additional infrastructure or benefit to the local community and brings additional issues to the village locality with respect to traffic volumes and stresses on current services.

This planning application tries to circumvent through timing the implementation of the new Local Plan Update which is currently in process.

From the Planning Statement provided by Marron on behalf of Croudace:

7.11 The village of Arborfield Cross falls within the Plan Area for the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan which was made in April 2020. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land to meet its identified housing requirement. Therefore, for the same reasons that the Core Strategy and MDD are out of date, the Neighbourhood Plan is also out of date and the policies should be attributed limited weight.

It is worth noting that the developer misunderstands the nature of the Arborfield and Barkham neighbourhood plan. It does not go out of date and is suggested to be reviewed every 5 years to remain current. The planning statement document contradicts itself by showing the document adopted in April 2020 which would indicate the document is very much still live and within any suggested review period.

Therefore, the proposed development should hold much weight to the policies contained within the neighbourhood plan, which it fails to do.

Previous planning history of applications - There have been many planning applications along School Road which have been refused for similar reasons and include: Oakwood View (172165 - Jul 2017) for 70 dwellings, Langley Pond Farm (171186 - Apr 2017) for 18 dwellings,

Langley Pond Farm Stables (171597 - May 2017) for 3 dwellings, Land N & S of School Road (180596 - Apr 2018) for 120 dwellings and Suncot (210874 - Mar 2021) for 4 dwellings.

The proposed development fails to meet the policies of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan as detailed below:

IRS01 - Preservation of separation of settlements - this settlement decreases the separation between Arborfield Cross and Barkham Hill and begins a coalescence of the villages removing the rural nature of both villages.

IRS02 - Recognise, respect and preserve identity and rural nature of settlement - this proposed site fails to preserve the nature of the rural identity of the village by building on greenfields that define the rural nature of the village. It fails to respect the green fields around the village in its entirety as the proposed development sits on greenfields outside the settlement boundary

IRS03 - Protection and Enhancement of the natural environment and green spaces - such as the locally valued assets of The Coombes Woodland - this development would encroach on the locally recognised ancient woodland which has recently been bought by the local parishes to protect it for future generations of residents.

As with IRS02 the proposed development makes no consideration for the protection or enhancement of the natural environment as its intent is to take open green fields and develop them for housing. The development offers no enhancement to the natural environment and in many ways will harm the local environment with its size and scale of the development and relying solely on the use of cars to service the development further.

IRS04 -- Protection and enhancement of the historic character of the area - the proposed development makes no attempt to address this policy and the proposed 95 properties being out of keeping with the historic nature of the area.

TC2 - Properly planned and designed new facilities - the development fails to offer any new facilities for the local area of any kind.

AD1 - New development within development limits - the development fails to meet any of the criteria for this policy in that this is solely a green field development outside the settlement boundary of Arborfield Cross

GA1 - minimise additional traffic on unsuitable roads - the entry point to the proposed development brings traffic past the front of The Coombes Primary school, as school road was closed to reduce traffic volumes past the school which it did successfully, subsequently increasing traffic volumes on this stretch of road is counter to the aims of closing school road and reduces road and pedestrian safety on this stretch of road during school times.

GA3 - Public transport improvements and long-term viability - the proposed development shows no intent to improve public transport with the exception of mentioning bus stops in its planning statement. The village is served by a daytime bus route which links to Reading and to Wokingham, but buses are infrequent and poorly routed for most required services.

The proposed development

ails to meet the Wokingham Borough Councils Core Planning Policies as shown below:

CPI - Sustainable Development

7) Avoid areas of best and most versatile agricultural land - the land in question is well used agricultural land and farmed annually. This development site sits wholly on greenfield agricultural land outside the settlement boundary of Arborfield Cross.

11) Demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car in line with CP6 - the development relies solely on the use of cars, the local bus routes are poor and not directly linked with this site, which would push most residents to opt for the car as their primary source of transport. The addition of a connection to a PROW does not offer any inducement for residents to forego cars and use alternative forms of transport.

CP2 - Inclusive communities - the development fails to meet any of the core principle of inclusive communities and offers nothing to the local community bar some vague aspirations and in fact relies solely on the link to the local community infrastructure while adding or offering nothing of value in return.

CP3 - General Principle for development

a) Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area - the massing of this site is completely at odds with the size of Arborfield Cross village. Currently the village has circa 300 properties and the development proposes to add another 95 properties which would be a 30% increase in the size of the village and unsustainable for the facilities currently in the village.

b) Contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities; - the proposed development offers no additional facilities to the community but solely relies on those already in place to provide for the development.

CP6 - Managing Travel demand

a) Provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice; - the proposed development offers little in the way in terms of choice for residents. There is a bus service through the village, but this is limited to day time travel and not well connected with local towns and centres. The PROW are more for leisure use and shouldn't be considered as alternatives to car usage when proposing the development. This development relies solely on the use of cars to and from the site with alternative forms of transport given little thought.

c) Improve the existing infrastructure network, including road, rail and public transport, enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, - The development offers no improvements to the infrastructure network locally with only additions to facilities being for entry and exit to the site and altering the present network to add only benefit to the proposed development.

e) Mitigate any adverse effects upon the local and strategic transport network that arise from the development proposed;

f)

Enhance road safety; and

g) Do not cause highway problems or lead to traffic related environmental problems.

e/f/g can be taken

together and the important point to make is that the entry and exit point for this development moves traffic past the entrance to The Coombes Primary school, having an additional 100 cars moving past the entrance at busy times every day will have a dramatic effect on road safety outside the school and create a pinch point for traffic

congestion at peak times in the local network. School Road was closed to traffic for this very reason and has markedly improved safety around the school as a consequence. The development ignores completely this issue and goes to change the local road network to solely facilitate the development over the safety of the school entrance.

CP9 - Scale and location of development proposals.

3) The limited development locations of Arborfield Cross - The proposed development sits wholly outside the settlement boundary of Arborfield Cross but relies completely on the settlement to provide justification for its development. Arborfield Cross is designated as an area of limited development due to the levels of facilities and services and this development would put an additional 95 properties to the village which only consists of 300 properties and increase of 30% and offering no improvement to services or facilities currently in place. The proposed development would create an unsustainable site relying solely on the facilities already in place.

CP11 - Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)

2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; - the development fails to meet this policy in all facets of the development. It is a greenfield development outside the settlement boundary, expanding the settlement away from its original buildings towards Barkham Hill into the countryside.

CP18 - Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location

As note to CP18, this proposed development site outside the Arborfield Garrison SDL but as with many other previous refused applications tries to imply the use of the facilities and its location close to the SDL as part of the reasoning for planning approval.

## APPENDIX 3 – Barkham Parish Council Comments

PLANNING REF : 250735  
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Arborfield Green Community Centre  
: Arborfield, Reading  
: RG2 9ND  
SUBMITTED BY : Barkham Parish Council  
DATE SUBMITTED : 23/04/2025

### COMMENTS:

Barkham Parish Council object to this application.

There has been no fundamental change since the last application (242421) in December 2024 , just a reduction in housing numbers. This reduction does not change our concerns or objections submitted to the previous application, as outlined below.

The easterly part of this site on the north side of School Road was included in an earlier planning application dating back to 2018 - 180596 - which was refused. The reasons for refusal then are just as valid as today even though the proposal does not extend south of School Road as did the earlier failed application.

Barkham strongly opposed Application 180596 as it does the current version. The reasons for this continued opposition are briefly summarised below:

The development will do considerable and unnecessary harm to the countryside

- It lies outside the settlement area
- It will encroach on the green wedge between Barkham Hill and Arborfield Cross and will lead to the urbanisation of a countryside area.
- It is contrary to many local policies including: CP1, CP3, CP11 of the 2010 Core Plan and CC01, CC02 and TB21 of the 2014 MDD.
- The Site is not sustainable

In 2018, BPC carried out an extensive survey of access to a number of facilities - both existing and planned - and matched these to the requirements of The Wokingham Borough Guide SPD dated Jun 2012. The requirements were not satisfied.

The deficiencies identified in 2018 become even more significant today as WBC has declared a climate emergency and there is even more need to reduce the frequency of private car travel.

Policies CP1 and CP3 of the 2010 Core Plan are amongst those that are not satisfied by these proposals.

This site is not included in the LPU submission on grounds which include being located between settlement limits of Arborfield and Arborfield Cross and it would fail to provide a satisfactory relationship within the existing settlement pattern.

### Planning History and Location

There have been many planning applications along School Road which

have been refused for similar reasons and include: Oakwood View (172165 - Jul 2017) for 70 dwellings, Langley Pond Farm (171186 - Apr 2017) for 18 dwellings, Langley Pond Farm Stables (171597 - May 2017) for 3 dwellings, Land N & S of School Road (180596 - Apr 2018) for 120 dwellings and Suncot (210874 - Mar 2021) for 4 dwellings.

The site is close to the Arborfield Cross conservation area and The Coombes Woodlands which are designated a local wildlife site, an area of geological interest and ancient woodlands.

Barkham Parish Council strongly requests that this application be refused.

## APPENDIX 4 – Councillor Barley Comments

PLANNING REF : 250735  
PROPERTY ADDRESS : West Lodge  
: Park Lane, Finchampstead, Berkshire  
: RG40 4QH  
SUBMITTED BY : Cllr Joseph Barley  
DATE SUBMITTED : 22/04/2025

### COMMENTS:

This submitted application contains a great number of concerns that have been raised on many previous occasions. I would like to list this application if recommended for approval and I object to its approval on the following grounds:

Planning history in relation to the site, sustainability, and its impact on the character and landscape:

It is important to note that previously officers have stated on application 180596 which was an application for 120 houses on the same site that "The proposed development, as described above (in relation to WBC planning policy) would be in a location that cannot accommodate such development without an unacceptable impact on the character and setting of the countryside and this area as a whole". This was reiterated in the council's refusal of application 242421 which was an application for 95 houses on the same site. It is therefore the opinion of officers that any application for a development on this site, no matter its design, layout or scale, should always be refused permission.

The site is outside of settlement limits, within the countryside and would result in an urbanising encroachment into said countryside. Its location being right between Arborfield Cross, Arborfield Green, Langley Common, and the proposed Barkham Square site, will greatly erode the separate identity of these individual settlements. The recent approval of 50 houses north of Langley Common Road (application 232490) gives further justification for this sites unsuitability as we are now in a position where developments on the school road site would result in a greater level of settlement erosion than what previous applications were subject to. This example of 'urban creep' into the countryside proves that the location cannot accommodate a development, especially of this scale, without an unacceptable impact on the character and setting of the countryside.

WBC's LPU is now at an advanced stage and in a position where it is close to adoption, this site was not included in the regulation 19 LPU due to its unsuitability and its absence from the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Development Plan further outlines the unsuitable nature of the site.

The application has attempted to address the many reasons for the numerous historical refusals for applications on this site, though these are limited and vague in comparison to the scale and detail of Wokingham Borough Council's prior reasons for refusal. The applications similarity to previous applications, especially its total dwelling count which is not much less than the figures proposed for prior applications on the same site, prove the sites grave unsuitability for any development, no matter the scale.

Failure to promote active travel and public transport:

The application has overexaggerated its mitigation of the limited active and public transport options within the local area. Currently

it takes over 40 minutes to travel to Wokingham via bus, with buses stopping only every hour, twice what WBC define as 'good service'. The site is still well over a half an hour walk away from the planned

Arborfield Green District centre, which is much further than what is normally considered acceptable. With limited services in Arborfield Cross this would force residents into using private vehicles which would congest the local road network even further than its current state. If we average each household with a conservative estimate of 1 vehicle each, in addition to the expected congestion brought by tradesmen, delivery vehicles, refuse vehicles and other vehicles into the site, we are likely to see well over 100 traffic movements to and from the site during rush hour. This would be in direct contrast to the provided justifications to approve the permanent TRO to close School Road as provided by WBC earlier this month. The increased level of traffic from the development would bring significant harm and an unprecedented level of risk to children that the TRO's approval is intended to mitigate.

#### Impact on climate, wildlife and biodiversity:

Wokingham Borough Council consider the site to form part of the Barkham and Bearwood Valued Landscape, an area of land which represents landscape of high value with a high sensitivity to residential development. This development would result in a significant loss of agricultural fields which make up a significant proportion of the valued landscape, leading to a degradation of the quality of the valued landscape. In addition to this its effects on the surrounding landscape through a drastic rise in both light and air pollution would undoubtedly have a negative impact on surrounding sites such as the Coombes Woodlands and their resident animals. This application has therefore underestimated the significance of its effects on both the site and its surroundings. The lack of suitable public and active travel/transport would undoubtedly result in a negative effect on our climate, being in direct contrast to Wokingham Borough Council's commitment to combatting the climate emergency that the council declared in 2018.

#### Violation of Historic and Emerging Strategic Policies:

The above evidence and the applications documentation when viewed in line with Wokingham Borough Council's current planning policies show that this application at the very least would violate CP1, CP2, CP3, CP4 CP6, CP9, CP11 and CP17 of the Core Strategy Development Plan and its numerous related strategic policies of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan. Additionally when viewed from the perspective of the emerging local plan this application would at the very least

violate strategic policies SS1, SS2, SS4, SS5, SS15, C1, C2 and C3.

## APPENDIX 5 – Appropriate Assessment

|                    |                                                   |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Site Address       | Land to the north of School Road Arborfield Cross |
| Application Number | 250735                                            |

### The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 Screening Assessment and Appropriate Assessment

In the light of the “Sweetman Judgement” (People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta, April 2018), the comments below comprise an Appropriate Assessment which includes advice on necessary avoidance and mitigation measures which is consistent with the advice provided to the Planning Inspectorate on such matters.

#### Summary of Response

WBC, in consultation with Natural England, has formed the view that any net increase in residential development between 400m and 5km straight-line distance from the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) is likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. An Appropriate Assessment has been carried out which includes regard to mitigation requirements.

This site is located approximately **4 km** (measured from the access road to the application site) from the boundary of the SPA and therefore is likely to result in an adverse effect on the SPA, unless it is carried out together with appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures.

The strategy is for relevant developments to make financial contributions towards the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) in perpetuity as an alternative recreational location to the SPA and financial contributions towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures.

In this instance, the proposed development would result in a net increase of up to **70 dwellings** within 5km of the SPA and as such, it is required to propose measures to avoid and mitigate against its effect upon the TBH SPA. The applicant proposes to consume capacity of up to 70 dwellings within the suite of SANGs, which includes the Ridge SANG which was approved and secured in planning permission O/2014/1432 (as varied under S73 application VAR/2014/0624) and its extension which was secured as SANG in planning 181499.

The proposed development is required to make a contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) which is also calculated on a per bedroom basis. As the proposal is for an outline planning permission, the exact housing mix is not known at this stage. The SAMM would be calculated at Reserved Matters stage, where the proposed housing mix would be known.

The applicant **must agree** to enter into a S106/s111 agreement to secure this SAMM contribution prior to occupation of each dwelling. The applicant **must agree** to securing of an adequate SANG capacity. Subject to the completion of the S106 agreement, the proposal would not lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA and would comply with SEP Saved Policy NRM6, policy CP8 of the Core Strategy, and the NPPF.

## **1. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended**

In accordance with The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended, Regulation 63, a competent authority (in this case Wokingham Borough Council (WBC)), before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which—

- a. is likely to have a significant effect on a European site...(either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and
- b. is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site.

must make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives.

A person applying for any such consent, permission or other authorisation must provide such information as WBC may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment or to enable it to determine whether an appropriate assessment is required.

WBC must for the purposes of the assessment consult Natural England (NE) and have regard to any representations made by that body. It must also, if it considers it appropriate, take the opinion of the general public, and if it does so, it must take such steps for that purpose as it considers appropriate. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, and subject to Regulation 64 (Considerations of overriding public interest), WBC may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

In considering whether a plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of the site, WBC must have regard to the manner in which it is proposed to be carried out or to any conditions or restrictions subject to which it proposes that the consent, permission or other authorisation should be given.

## **2. Stage 1 Screening for Likely Significant Effects**

WBC accepts that this proposal is a 'plan or project' which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site. The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is a European designated site which affects the borough, and WBC must ensure that development does not result in an adverse impact on the SPA. The potential adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA include recreational activities from inside the SPA and air pollution from inside and outside the SPA.

At this stage WBC cannot rule out 'likely significance effects' on the SPA (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) because the proposal could undermine the Conservation Objectives of these sites. This is because the proposal lies within **4 km** of the SPA and represents a net increase in dwellings within 400m - 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) which will lead to an increase in local population and a potential increase in recreational activity on the SPA.

As the 'likely significance effects' cannot be ruled out at this stage an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken.

### **3. Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment**

Based on the information proposed by the applicant, WBC must decide whether or not an adverse effect on site integrity (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) can be ruled out. Mitigation may be able to be provided so that the proposal is altered to avoid or reduce impacts.

The following policies and guidance set out WBC's approach to relevant avoidance and mitigation measures which have been agreed with Natural England. For the majority of housing developments this will comprise the provision of (or contribution towards) Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and a contribution towards the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project. The financial contributions towards SANG would be either through an obligation in a s106 agreement that requires WBC to allocate an appropriate amount of the development CIL receipt towards the provision of SANG, or through an obligation in an agreement under s111 of the Local Government Act, that requires the developer to make an appropriate financial contribution towards the provision of SANG (to be used in the event that the developer successfully seeks CIL relief). Developers will be required to secure an appropriate financial contribution to the SAMM project through an obligation in a s106 agreement.

For SDL development (and occasionally some other larger non SDL developments) within 5km of the SPA, SANG is required at a minimum of 8 ha per 1,000 new residents, constructed and delivered to Natural England's quality and quantity standards and a contribution towards pan SPA access management and monitoring (as advised by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board). For SDL development (and occasionally some other larger non SDL developments) between 5 and 7km, the proposals will need to be individually assessed but it is likely that SANG will be required on site in line with Natural England's quality and quantity standards, although the exact requirement will be agreed having regard to evidence supplied.

#### **a. Policies and Guidance**

For this proposal the following guidance and policies apply:

- South East Plan (May 2009) Policy NRM6 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area) <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100528160926/http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/planning/regionalPlanning/815640/>
- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) Policy CP8 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area) sets out the approach WBC will take in order to protect the TBH SPA <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Final%20adopted%20Core%20Strategy%20inc.%20cover.pdf>
- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) Policy CP7 (Biodiversity) sets out the approach WBC will take in order to protect national and international nature conservation sites <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Final%20adopted%20Core%20Strategy%20inc.%20cover.pdf>
- Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) Policy TB23 (Biodiversity and Development) <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Adopted%20MDD.pdf>
- Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD (2011) <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Adopted%20Infrastructure%20De~nd%20Contributions%20SPD.pdf>

The project as proposed would not adversely impact on the integrity of the SPA if avoidance and mitigation measures are provided as stipulated by these policies and guidance.

b. SPA Avoidance and Mitigation Measures

**i) The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and its ongoing maintenance in perpetuity.**

In accordance with the development plan, the proposed development will be required to provide alternative land to attract new residents away from the SPA. The term given to this alternative land is Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

The developer has proposed using strategic SANG capacity available at a University of Reading owned and managed suite of SANGs, which includes the Ridge SANG and its extension. The SANG has been tested against the Natural England criteria when earlier planning applications were considered – the most relevant of these being O/2010/1432 and 181499. It is accepted that the suite of SANGs meets the Natural England requirements to be considered SANG. Existing legal agreements on the land secure the in perpetuity management of both the Ridge and Ridge Extension, with step in rights for WBC should WBC establish a need to step in in order to maintain in perpetuity management.

A review by the University of Reading and WBC of the allocated capacity at the suite of SANGs confirms that there is sufficient unallocated capacity at this specific SANG to provide the required capacity for this project (1.34ha based on the maximum quantum of development being 70 units). The suite of SANGs together have a catchment area that covers the proposed development.

A commencement restriction would be included in the Section 106 Agreement in order to ensure that a sufficient contribution has been made to the University of Reading to purchase the required capacity prior to planning permission being implemented and for the University of Reading to provide the SANG requirement in perpetuity thereafter. This gives the certainty required to satisfy the Habitats Regulations in accordance with South East Plan Policy NRM6 (iii) and Core Strategy Policy CP8.

**ii. Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Contribution**

The proposed development will also be required to make a contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM). This project funds strategic visitor access management measures on the SPA to mitigate the effects of new development on it.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 SAMM contributions have been updated across the 11 Local Authorities affected by the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Following engagement with Natural England, the Joint Strategic Partnership Board agreed this change is necessary to ensure sufficient income is raised to cover the costs of the SAMM project in perpetuity. Without this change the SAMM project would be at risk of being unable to deliver the objectives of the SAMM project, and therefore secure positive outcomes for the SPA

The level of contributions are calculated on a per bedroom basis. The application for this development is for up to **70 dwellings**, Depending on the dwelling mix (to be ascertained at the Reserved Matters stage), the level of SAMM payments are calculated as follows:

| No. of bedrooms         | SAMM Contribution 5km | Aggregate SAMM Contribution  |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 bedroom               | £563.00               | No. of dwellings x £563.00   |
| 2 bedrooms              | £784.00               | No. of dwellings x £784.00   |
| 3 bedrooms              | £1,042.00             | No. of dwellings x £1,042.00 |
| 4 bedrooms              | £1,225.00             | No. of dwellings x £1,225.00 |
| 5+ bedrooms             | £1,400.00             | No. of dwellings x £1,400.00 |
| Total SAMM Contribution |                       |                              |

Prior to the permission being granted the applicant must enter into a Section 106 Agreement based upon the above measures.

#### **4. Conclusion**

An Appropriate Assessment has been carried out for this development in accordance with the Habitats Regulations 2017. Without any appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures the Appropriate Assessment concludes that the development is likely to have a significant effect upon the integrity of the SPA with the result that WBC would be required to refuse a planning application.

Provided that the applicant is prepared to purchase adequate SANG capacity within the Ridge suite of SANGs to secure SPA avoidance and mitigation measures, the application will be in accordance with the SPA mitigation requirements as set out in the relevant policies above.

WBC is convinced, following consultation with Natural England, that the above measures will prevent an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA. Pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 63(5) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended, and permission may be granted.

If the applicant does not agree with the above mitigation and does not enter into a Section 106 Agreement to secure the measures, then the application must be refused using the following reason for refusal.

#### **5. Example Reason for Refusal**

In the absence of a planning obligation to secure suitable avoidance and mitigation measures and access management monitoring arrangements, in terms that are satisfactory to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), the LPA is unable to satisfy itself that the proposals include adequate mitigation measures to prevent the proposed development from having an adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, in line with the requirements of Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended and Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43/EEC. The proposal would be contrary to Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan, Policies CP8 and CP4 of the Core Strategy.

|              |              |                |                      |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|----------------------|
| <b>Date:</b> | 30 June 2025 | <b>Signed:</b> | <i>Joanna Carter</i> |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|----------------------|

