

**Thames Valley Science Park, Loddon Garden
Village Link Road**

Planning Statement Incorporating Statement of Community Involvement and Design and Access Statement

Date of report: April 2026

PREPARED FOR



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Document History

Issue	Date	Issued by	Comment
1.0	20/04/2026	PB	

1. Introduction

1.1 The Application

- 1.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of the Applicant, the University of Reading, (hereafter referred to as 'UoR') in support of a full application for the delivery of the Link Road that will connect the existing Thames Valley Science Park (TVSP) and the forthcoming Loddon Valley Garden Village (LVGV).
- 1.1.2 The full description of the development is as follows:
- “Full planning permission for the construction of a Spine Road linking Cutbush Lane East through Thames Valley Science Park (as promoted under Local Plan Update Policy SS13). This would connect to the wider infrastructure for Loddon Valley Garden Village, under consideration for application refs: 232995 and: 252498. The application includes full details of access points into the promoted Science Park land. In addition, full details of a new foul water pumping station together with access to the proposed facility. The application includes landscaping, surface water attenuation and other associated works.”*
- 1.1.3 The proposed Link Road is, in part, an extension of the existing spine road through the TVSP, extended to provide an access road to the Natural History Museum building under planning permission 232995 in September 2024. It will also include a Foul Pumping Station (FPS) and an access track to it.
- 1.1.4 The Site is shown on the accompanying Site Location Plan which accompanies this application alongside detailed General Arrangement Drawings and a suite of technical reports as set out in the table below.

Table 1.1: Core application documents relating to this Planning Statement

Document / Drawing	Author
Site Plan	Abley Letchford
General Arrangement and Materials Layout Plans	Abley Letchford
Pumping Station Details Plan	Abley Letchford
Landscape Planting Plans	Savills
Transport Assessment	Abley Letchford
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	Savills
Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy	Abley Letchford
Ecological Impact Assessment	EPR
Biodiversity Net Gain Report	EPR
Arboricultural Impact Assessment	EPR
Heritage Assessment – Built Heritage and Archaeology	RPS

Sustainability Statement	RPS
Air Quality Assessment	RPS
Lighting Strategy	Abley Letchford
Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP)	Abley Letchford

The remainder of this Statement is set out as follows:

- **Section 2:** describes the site and its surroundings;
- **Section 3:** summarises the scheme proposals;
- **Section 4:** considers the prevailing Development Plan context within which the planning application should be considered;
- **Section 5:** provides a Statement of Conformity that explains how the proposed Link Road was included in the Environmental Impact Assessment for the wider LGV application and it is consistent with the conclusions on the identified effects;
- **Section 6** provides a summary of pre-application discussions, stakeholder engagement and public consultation took place prior to the submission of the LGV application of which this application is part;
- **Section 7** provides a Design and Access statement;
- **Section 8** identifies all other material considerations, establishes the principle of development and addresses the technical Assessments that support the planning application; and
- **Section 9:** sets out the planning balance and assesses the scheme proposal against the Development Plan, having regard to other relevant material considerations.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 UoR is the principal landowner within the Loddon Valley Garden Village (LVGV) as proposed via Policy SS13¹ of the Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan Update 2023 – 2040 (LPU).
- 1.2.2 The LPU was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination on 28 February 2025. The Part 1 Examination hearing sessions took place in November 2025. The Part 2 Hearings will commence on 17 March 2026.
- 1.2.3 The Inspectors Matters, Issues and Questions for the Part 2 Hearings state that:
- “Part 1 Hearings took place in November 2025 and covered matters relating to legal compliance and the Duty to Cooperate, Strategic transport, the proposed Strategic Development Locations(“SDLs”), and the housing requirement and supply. It is not our intention to revisit these matters. Instead, the Part 2 Hearings will cover other matters not addressed during the Part 1 Hearings.”*
- 1.2.4 This indicates that the LPU is making positive progress towards its adoption by WBC towards the end of 2026 and accordingly, this application is made in support of the delivery of Policy SS13.
- 1.2.5 In October 2025, the University submitted a planning application (ref 252498) pursuant to SS13, for their part of the LVGV. Known as the Loddon Garden Village (LGV), it comprises of 2,800 dwellings, along with other elements of SS13 including roads, bridges, schools, sports facilities, local centres,

¹ <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2024-10/Local%20Plan%20Update%20-%20Regulation%2019%20Plan.pdf>

and SANG. This application will deliver a new Garden Community in a highly sustainable location that will contribute significantly towards meeting WBC-wide housing needs. The application is under live consideration with an anticipated decision in late 2026.

- 1.2.6 LGV lies to the south of and will be linked, via roads and active travel routes, to UoR's TVSP, which has a proven track record for creating new jobs, with approximately 1,900 people currently employed in that location. Policy SS13 allows for the further expansion of the TVSP and the LGV proposal has evolved having very close regard to how TVSP will grow and develop in the future, and the mutual beneficial relationship between employment and housing growth.
- 1.2.7 The delivery of this proposed Link Road between the LVGV and TVSP is therefore important to realisation of the Policy SS13 proposals.

2. Site Context

2.1 Site Description

- 2.1.1 The Site is located to the east of Cutbush Lane East, on the southern edge of the TVSP. It incorporates an area of agricultural land to the north, west and east of New Covert, a woodland to the east of the TVSP. The TVSP lies to the immediate northwest and beyond that is the M4 Motorway and the residential area of Earley. Further to the west is the settlement of Shinfield.
- 2.1.2 The FPS compound area lies immediately to the south of the M4 Motorway to the north of the Link Road, connected via an access track.
- 2.1.3 The existing TVSP spine road runs eastwards from Cutbush Lane East up to a three-arm roundabout. Running from the southern arm of the roundabout is the NHM access which was previously approved under WBC application reference: 232995.
- 2.1.4 In total, the site covers an area approximately 5.83 Hectares in size. A run of pylons and associated overhead power cables is situated close to the south-eastern side of the Site. To the west of the Site are the large buildings associated with Shinfield Studios.
- 2.1.5 At the southern edge of the TVSP, is the British Museum buildings with associated car parking and security fencing. The consented Natural History Museum building will form a further large scale building to the south of the site, situated between the woodland areas of St John's Copse and New Covert.
- 2.1.6 The Agricultural Land Classification report accompanying this application confirms the site is primarily Grade 3a (good quality), representing 70% of the site area, with the remainder being 3b (moderate quality) land.

2.2 Green and Blue Infrastructure Context

- 2.2.1 The agricultural land over which the Link Road will cross comprises of a cropland field and a pasture field, with bordering hedgerows and broadleaved trees. To the south are semi-rural landscapes including the River Loddon and associated floodplains. Historical mapping suggests that the land has been in agricultural use since the 1840's at the latest. All the field boundaries with associated hedgerows and trees within the Site are largely unchanged and are likely to have existed before 1840.
- 2.2.2 The River Loddon lies approximately 450m east of the site's nearest boundary. This is a tributary of the River Thames which lies to the north. This water course is bounded by fields to its sides and is characterised by areas of woodland and trees along its length.
- 2.2.3 The key landscape features of the Loddon River Valley are demonstrated by the site. These are a flat floodplain with irregular pasture fields, partially screened by vegetation. One veteran tree is located within close proximity of the Site but are unaffected by the proposed development.
- 2.2.4 There are 54 individual trees, eight groups of trees, two woodlands and nine hedges within the site, with a range of quality and anticipated lifespans. None of these are protected by a Tree Preservation Order.
- 2.2.5 The site has no permanent water features, but stretches of hedgerow ditches are located along field boundaries. Within the wider area to the south there are areas of wet grassland associated with the Loddon floodplain.

- 2.2.6 There are several watercourses and culverts surrounding the site, including a ditch serving the motorway that is culverted under Cutbush Lane East.

2.3 Landscape Context

- 2.3.1 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVIA) accompanying this application confirms the spine road, roundabout and proposed access road to the north of the roundabout are not covered by any landscape designations. The eastern part of the Link Road and south-eastern part of the FPS track (east of New Covert) and the FPS compound is covered by the draft 'River Loddon Valued Landscape' designation as shown in the Wokingham Borough Council Valued Landscapes Assessment (September 2024) and covered by draft Policy NE6 in the Wokingham Borough Council Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update.
- 2.3.2 The site is situated at the south-western edge of National Character Area 115 Thames Valley (Natural England, 2015). This is described as a low lying area where the River Thames provides a unifying feature through a very diverse landscape of urban and suburban settlements, infrastructure networks, fragmented agricultural land, historic parks, commons, woodland, reservoirs and extensive minerals workings. The area is typified by much development, both in the past and planned for the next 20 years, and with 'virtually no undisturbed land'
- 2.3.3 Key characteristics of the Thames Valley area are:
- flat and low-lying land;
 - the underlying geology is dominated by the London Clay which, over much of the area, is overlain by river-lain sands and gravels;
 - the numerous hedgerows provide unity;
 - the field pattern is medium-scale and irregular; and
 - the area has an urban character.
- 2.3.4 The most recent local level Landscape Character Assessment was prepared in 2019. All but the western end of the Site lies within Area A2 Loddon River Valley. The eastern end lies within Area J3 Spencer's Wood Settled and Farmed Clay.
- 2.3.5 The level topography of the site is typical of Area A2 and is influenced by its floodplain location. Unlike other parts of the character area, the Site is not tranquil or remote-feeling but instead is influenced by the proximity of the M4 to the north and views towards the Shinfield Studios and the Natural History Museum building, currently under construction, to the west. Area A2 is judged by the Character Assessment to have a "moderate" landscape value, although there are fragmenting effects caused by views to the large scale development and busy infrastructure corridors.
- 2.3.6 The relevant characteristics of Area A2 are:
- broad, flat alluvial floodplain with wooded backdrops;
 - pasture and arable farmland in medium and large irregular geometric fields; pasture and wet meadow closest to the river;
 - little public access to the floodplain;
 - busy roads cross the flood plain, including the A33, M4 and Winnersh and Shinfield Eastern Relief Roads, creating visual severance; and
 - pylons, residential and commercial development are distinctive visual features in this open and flat landscape.
- 2.3.7 The valuable landscape attributes of the area include the floodplain landscape associated with the River Loddon, the woodlands and broadleaved woodland copse and the important wetland habitats.
- 2.3.8 The LVIA also outlines the key characteristics of Area J3:

- rolling clay ridge above the Loddon Valley to the east and the lowlands to the west,
- small scattered mixed deciduous woodland blocks and copses;
- fragmented unimproved meadow habitats, with BAP priority habitat lowland meadow
- densely settled landscape, with new large-scale residential estate development;
- network of rural lanes connect the original settlement pattern; some B roads have urbanised features including kerbs and pavements; the A33 forms the western border; and
- valuable hedgerow network.

2.3.9 The site and wider landscape is typified of some of these features set out above, including the broad alluvial flood plain of the River Loddon, the arable and pasture farmland and woodland. The urbanising influences mentioned are also highly typical, especially the visual and aural presence of the busy M4, the lack of public access and the visual intrusion of pylons.

2.4 Ecology Context

- 2.4.1 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) lies approximately 6km to the south of the Site. Three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and two Local Nature reserves (LNR) of National importance are located within 5km of the Site. Five LNRs are located within 1km of the site.
- 2.4.2 One area of Provisional Ancient Woodland (PAW) has been identified within close proximity of the Site. St John's Copse, located approximately 75m to the south of the Site boundary, is shown on maps dating from the mid-1700's
- 2.4.3 Field surveys conducted in respect of the wider LGV have shown the potential for the site to support bat and breeding bird activity, whilst the farmland habitat is potentially suitable for invertebrates and reptiles. Unlike the wider LGV site, the application site is not suitable for Great Crested Newts, Dormouse, riparian mammals and the White-clawed crayfish.
- 2.4.4 The legal protection for badgers is also relevant and confidential information on this will be provided to the Council under separate cover.

2.5 Heritage Context

- 2.5.1 There are no built heritage assets within the site. Within a 1km radius there are three Grade II listed buildings and several buildings meriting consideration as non-designated heritage assets, having been identified on Wokingham District Council's List of Buildings of Traditional Local Character, on the Berkshire Historic Environment Record
- 2.5.2 In terms of below ground heritage, there is low potential for the presence of significant Prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval activity on the Site. The remnants of a Romano-British field system of local significance may extend into the eastern part of the Site

2.6 Highways Context

- 2.6.1 The approved NHM access road, which forms part of the TVSP Spine Road, is currently under construction and routes east from Cutbush Lane to provide access to a new Natural History Museum building
- 2.6.2 The TVSP Spine Road incorporates a high standard of footway and cycleway provision, including a 3m wide shared use footway / cycleway on its southern side, offset from the carriageway by a 3m wide planted verge. A 4m wide segregated footway / cycleway is then provided on the northern side at its interface with Cutbush Lane to provide a direct connection to the pedestrian / cycleway overbridge that routes over the M4 motorway towards Lower Earley.

- 2.6.3 South of the overbridge, a footway is provided along the northern side of Cutbush Lane which provides a continuous footway link between the TVSP and the pedestrian / cycle overbridge to Lower Earley.
- 2.6.4 Footway and cycleway links are provided within the TVSP and 3m wide footway / cycleways run along the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road to the west, providing continuous connections over the M4.
- 2.6.5 There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the Site boundary, however PRoW 'SHIN Footpath 39 Link 1' runs to the north-west of the Site, along the route of Cutbush Lane. Cutbush Lane continues to the west of the site, linking with TVSP and on to the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road. To the north, the M4 motorway is a physical barrier to movement within the area.
- 2.6.6 Despite its relatively close proximity to Earley and the M4 to the north and Cutbush Lane/ TVSP to the west, the Site is situated within a relatively extensive area that remains inaccessible to the public. This would change once the consented Natural History Museum access road has been completed. Currently a private farm track leads to the proposed FPS compound.
- 2.6.7 There is an established and frequent bus service that operates between the Thames Valley Science Park and key destinations within Reading such as the rail station and the University of Reading's main campus at Whiteknights. This complements the other nearby bus routes operating within Shinfield and Lower Earley, which provide frequent service to Reading, Arborfield and Wokingham.

2.7 Relevant Planning History

- 2.7.1 There is no planning history directly related to the Site. Of relevance to this application are the two planning permissions already referred to above, that relate to the new Natural History Museum building and its access road:
- Planning application ref: 232833 was submitted on 17th November 2023 in relation to UoRs new Natural History Museum (NHM) building. It was approved in September 2024.
 - Planning application ref: 232995 was also submitted on 17th November 2023 associated with the access road to the NHM building. It was approved in September 2024

3. The Proposals

3.1 Description of the Proposed Development

3.1.1 The formal description of the development is:

Full planning permission for the construction of a Spine Road linking Cutbush Lane East through Thames Valley Science Park (as promoted under Local Plan Update Policy SS13). This would connect to the wider infrastructure for Loddon Valley Garden Village, under consideration for application refs: 232995 and: 252498. The application includes full details of access points into the promoted Science Park land. In addition, full details of a new foul water pumping station including together with access to the proposed facility. The application includes landscaping, surface water attenuation and other associated works.

3.2 The Link Road

3.2.1 Immediately to the east of the consented NHM building, the approved TVSP spine road / NHM access road is to be extended through the construction of the proposed Link Road, which will match the width and materials of the spine road. The Link Road is approximately 570m long in total and extends to a point to the south of the proposed FPS with a new access track providing a link to the FPS enclosure for future maintenance.

3.2.2 The proposals can be summarised as follows:

- The formation of a fourth northern arm off the roundabout at the TVSP Spine Road;
- provision of access road at the fourth northern arm with a shared use cycleway on each side to serve future development parcels to the north;
- Continuation of the 7.3m carriageway for circa 600m off the eastern arm of the roundabout in an easterly direction towards LGV;
Addition of the 4m wide footway/cycleway along the northern side of the TVSP Spine Road up the roundabout. This will continue along the entire length of the new Link Road, separated from the carriageway by a 3m wide verge;
- Introduction of new pedestrian crossing points at the 4-arm roundabout, a crossing west of the roundabout on the existing TVSP Spine Road, with two new crossings further east on the new Link Road;
- Provision of a SuDS basin immediately north east of the roundabout and additional SuDS at the southern side of the proposed Link Road to cater for highway drainage;
- Two ghost island priority junctions serving two separate future parcels of development to the north and southern side of the Link Road;

3.2.3 The extract from the Transport Statement over the page shows the proposed Link Road in context with the existing TVSP Spine Road and under construction access road for the NHM.

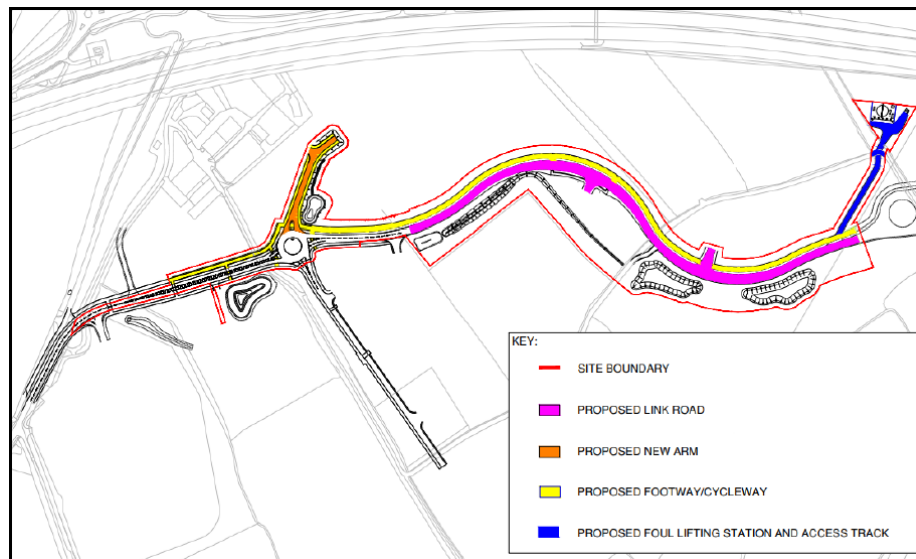


Figure 3:1 – Proposed Link Road in context

- 3.2.4 The proposal makes changes to the cycleway to the north and a new access road off the previously consented roundabout, including roadside footways and verges to the east of the consented roundabout. This includes the planting of six alder trees to the west of the roundabout, which were also shown within planning application 232995.
- 3.2.5 A proposed northern arm to the consented roundabout (which did not form part of the planning application 232995) would provide access to a proposed herbarium, which will be subject to a separate application in due course. This stretch of new road would include footways on each side of the carriageway.
- 3.2.6 The footway/cycleway associated with the northern side of the spine road is to be extended along the length of the proposed Link Road.
- 3.2.7 The Link Road will be illuminated with lighting that will follow Wokingham Borough Council streetlighting specification to achieve the lowest practicable levels.

3.3 The Foul Pumping Station

- 3.3.1 The proposals for the FPS can be summarised as follows:
- Motor Control Centre (MCC) Kiosk containing electrical control equipment necessary to operate the pumping equipment - dimensions of 2.0 metres in length by 1.2 metres wide;
 - Chemical Dosing Plant - dimensions 3.0 metres in length by 3.0 metres wide;
 - Below ground Wet Well and Pumping Equipment with access cover at ground level and an associated switch box to house pump controls;
 - A 4 metre high steel gantry above the wet well
 - 6m lighting column would be located along the northern boundary of the compound;
 - 2.0m high access gates and perimeter palisade fencing;
 - Concrete slabs, hard surfaced areas for vehicle parking and turning and a tanker hardstanding area.
- 3.3.2 The FPS will be accessed by an access track projecting northwards towards the eastern end of the Link Road.

3.4 Drainage

- 3.4.1 The drainage proposals primarily consist of four attenuation basins, one immediately northeast of the consented roundabout and three immediately south of the new link road. A new channel will be created north of the eastern section of the link road, which will also serve the access track to the FPS.
- 3.4.2 The basins will be part of a network that includes trapped gullies and pipes that will collect surface water runoff from impermeable areas, working in combination with roadside filter drains, to filtrate, store and transport water to the attenuation basins.
- 3.4.3 The application also proposes new foul sewers emanating from the Link Road, which will lie to the west of the site. These sewers terminate at the FPS.

3.5 Planting

- 3.5.1 Alongside the new road, an area of road edge wildflower mix (Emorsgate EM3 or equivalent) is proposed that will also include an alder tree within the verges to each side of the roundabout, but no trees on the proposed northern arm to the roundabout. These two trees are additional planting to that approved under application 232995.
- 3.5.2 The Sustainable Drainage Basin adjacent to the eastern side of the proposed northern arm of the roundabout would be seeded with a wetland meadow mix (Emorsgate EM8 or equivalent).
- 3.5.3 On the east of the consented roundabout a further five alders are proposed to the north of the spine road/ consented Natural History Museum within an area of road edge wildflower mix. This is an increase of one tree to the north of the road compared to the consented scheme.
- 3.5.4 Two alder trees are proposed to the south of the proposed road within an area of verge adjacent to the road.
- 3.5.5 Along the Link Road itself, 27 new trees are proposed to be planted within the verges, a section of new native species hedge planting approximately 240m in length and areas of native species thicket planting are proposed. Verges are to be seeded in a range of Emorsgate, or equivalent, grass and wildflower mixes selected to relate to the ground conditions
- 3.5.6 The SuDs basins proposed to the south of the Link Road would be seeded with a wetland meadow mix (Emorsgate EM8 or equivalent) and would take surface-water run-off from the road
- 3.5.7 The proposed track to the FPS would not be accompanied by any new planting, but its edges would be allowed to regenerate with natural grass and herbaceous species

4. Development Plan Policy and Material Considerations

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 directs Local Planning Authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 38(3) of the Act provides that the Development Plan includes the “*development plan documents (taken as a whole) which have been adopted or approved in relation to that area*”.

4.1.2 Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, states:

“In dealing with an application for planning permission or permission in principle the authority shall have regard to:

- (a) the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application,*
- (aza) a post-examination draft neighbourhood development plan, so far as material to the application,*
- (aa) any considerations relating to the use of the Welsh language, so far as material to the application;*
- (b) any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application, and*
- (c) any other material considerations.”*

4.1.3 The adopted statutory Development Plan for the Site comprises the following:

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

4.2 Adopted Core Strategy

4.2.1 The following policies from the 2010 Core Strategy are considered to be of most relevance to the application proposals:

- CP1: Sustainable development;
- CP2: Inclusive communities;
- CP3: General principles for development;
- CP4: Infrastructure requirements;
- CP5: Housing mix, density and affordability;
- CP6: Managing travel demand;
- CP7: Biodiversity;
- CP8: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area;
- CP9: Scale and location of development proposals;
- CP10: Improvements to the strategic transport network;
- CP11: Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside); and
- CP6: Managing travel demand;
- CP7: Biodiversity;
- CP8: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area;
- CP9: Scale and location of development proposals;
- CP10: Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network;

- CP11: Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside); and

4.2.2 Whilst technically the above policies are extant, all have been found by the Inspector to be 'out of date' pursuant to NPPF paragraph 11d in recent appeal decisions; as has been established in successive planning Appeals, for example appeal decision APP/X0360/W/24/3354667 (Berkeley Strategic, Blagrove Lane, May 2025.)

4.3 Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (MDD)

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

- CC01: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development;
- CC02: Development Limits;
- CC03: Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping;
- CC04: Sustainable Design and Construction;
- CC08: Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure;
- CC09: Development and Flood Risk (from all sources);
- CC10: Sustainable Drainage;
- TB23: Biodiversity and Development;
- TB24: Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas); and
- TB25: Archaeology.

4.3.2 Again, as with the Core Strategy, whilst technically extant, the above policies have been confirmed to be 'out-of-date' on Appeal, pursuant to the NPPF Paragraph 11(d).

4.4 Minerals and Waste Plan

4.4.1 A Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP) for Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has been produced. The Plan was adopted by Wokingham Borough Council on 19 January 2023. Parts of the application site falls within a Mineral Safeguarding Area and an Area of Search for Sand and Gravel.

4.5 Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan

4.5.1 The Site is located within Shinfield Parish, comprising land to the north of the River Loddon which forms the Parish boundary. A Neighbourhood Plan for Shinfield Parish, which covers the period from 2016 to 2026, was formally 'made' in February 2017.

4.5.2 Figure 4.1 below shows the extent of the Neighbourhood Plan area as well as existing settlements and infrastructure. Future residential development is shown in pink, which is now largely built out. The TVSP is shown in blue.

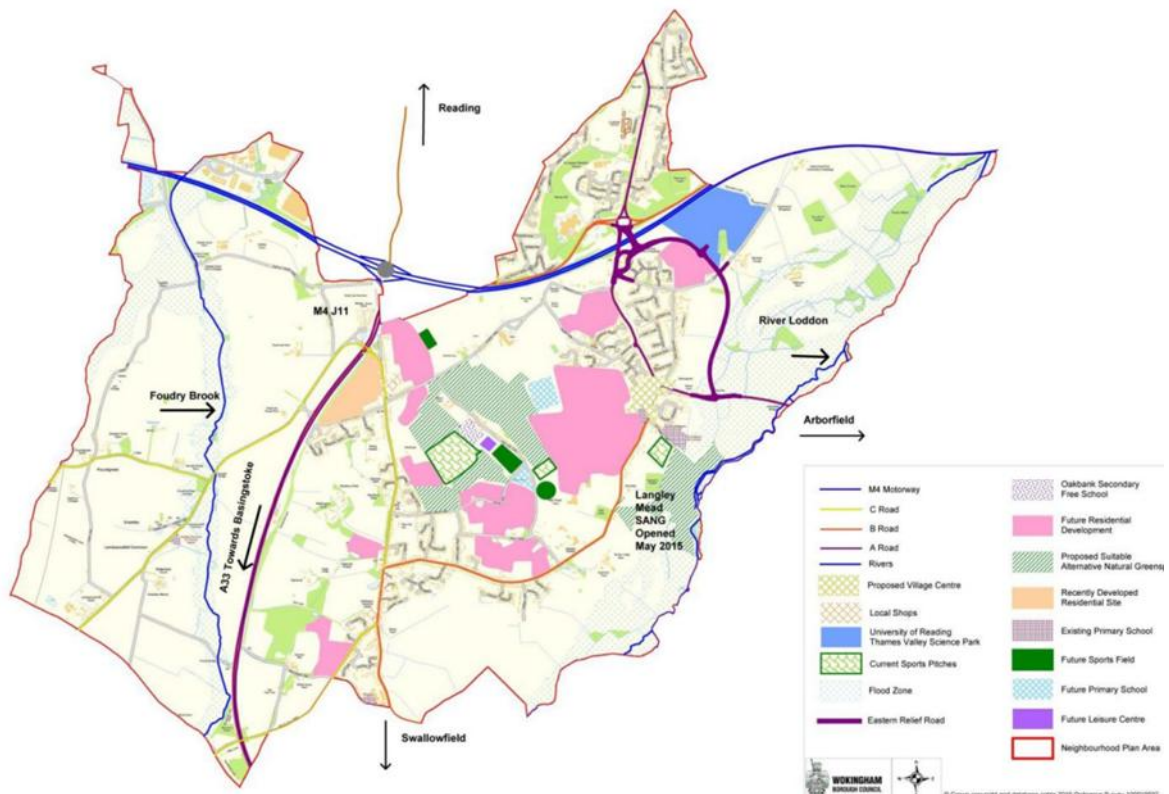


Figure 4.1: Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan Context Map. Source: Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.5.3 It is important to note that the Neighbourhood Plan only covers the period up to March 2026, which is the period of growth outlined in the South of M4 SDL Supplementary Planning Document (May 2011). This planning application will not be determined until after that point and so very limited weight should be added to the Neighbourhood Plan in the determining of this planning application.
- 4.5.4 Notwithstanding the above, there are elements of the LGV that would be consistent with the general aims of the Neighbourhood Plan, including in relation to:
- **Policy 4: Accessibility and Highways Safety:** which requires development proposals to demonstrate appropriate levels of accessibility and highway safety;
 - **Policy 6: Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland:** seeks to protect hedgerows, habitats, ancient woodlands, Local Wildlife Sites, ponds that are appropriate for retention;
 - **Policy 7: Biodiversity:** supports the enhancement of biodiversity;
 - **Policy 8: Flooding:** promotes the creation of SuDS in new developments;

4.6 Other Material Considerations

- 4.6.1 There are a number of documents that are material considerations in the context of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that may be referred to by the decision-taker for this planning application.
- 4.6.2 Material considerations include emerging Development Plan policy (notably the Local Plan Update), national policy, which is primarily expressed through the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance, as well as additional guidance produced by the Council

and other relevant authorities / bodies in the form of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

4.7 Emerging Local Plan Update ('LPU')

4.7.1 For around 10 years, Wokingham Borough Council been working to replace the extant Development Plan with what it refers to as the *Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update* ('LPU'). This process has undergone the following key steps:

- **August - September 2016:** Issues and Options consultation (*Reg 18*);
- **November 2018 - February 2019:** Homes for the Future consultation (*Reg 18*);
- **February - April 2020:** Draft Plan 2020 consultation (*Reg 18*);
- **November 2021 - January 2022:** Revised Growth Strategy consultation (*Reg 18*);
- **September - November 2024:** Proposed Submission Plan consultation (*Reg 19*);
- **February 2025** – Submission of Plan to Secretary of State for Examination;
- **November 2025 – June 2026:** Examination hearings

4.7.2 Paragraph 49 of the NPPF (December 2024) states that Local Planning Authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to three factors:

- 'a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);*
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and*
- c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).*

4.7.3 At this stage, UoR considers that substantial weight can be given to the LPU as a material consideration, given that it has progressed past the Part1 Examination Hearings, which have addressed its legal compliance and the Duty to Cooperate, strategic transport, the proposed Strategic Development Locations('SDLs'), and the housing requirement and supply (see paragraph 1.1.2 above). This is expected to increase further through the course of the determination of this planning application and as the Examination progresses through Part 2 of the Examination to an anticipated adoption at the end of 2026, with the LPU ultimately becoming part of the statutory Development Plan.

4.7.4 The following policies from the LPU are considered to be of most relevance to the determination of the application proposals

Delivering the Spatial Strategy:

- SS1: Sustainable development principles;
- SS13: Loddon Valley Garden Village;
- SS17: Transport improvements;

Connections:

- C1: Active and sustainable transport and accessibility;
- C2: Mitigation of transport impacts and highways safety and design;
- C3: Active travel;
- C4: Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way;

Flooding and Drainage:

- FD1: Development and flood risk (from all sources);
- FD2: Sustainable drainage;
- FD3: River corridors and watercourses;

Natural Environment:

- NE1: Biodiversity and geodiversity;
- NE2: Biodiversity net gain;
- NE3: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area;
- NE4: Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows;
- NE5: Landscape and design;
- NE6: Valued landscapes;

Design, Heritage and the Built Environment:

- DH1: Place making and quality design;
- DH2: Safeguarding amenity;
- DH5: The historic environment;
- DH6: Archaeology;

Healthy and Safe Communities:

- HC5: Environmental protection;
- HC6: Air pollution and air quality;
- HC7: Light pollution;
- HC8: Noise pollution;
- HC9: Contaminated land and water; and
- HC10: Odour, fumes, and dust.

4.8 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.8.1 An update to the NPPF was published in December 2024 with a further minor amendment being made in February 2025. The policy requirements of the NPPF are material to the consideration of applications for planning permission. The chapters and paragraphs of most relevance to this application are outlined below.

4.8.2 Paragraph 2 in the introduction states:

“Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements.”

4.8.3 Paragraph 8 sets out the overarching objectives of the planning system in achieving sustainable development:

*“a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*

*b) a **social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*

*c) an **environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."*

- 4.8.4 Paragraph 10 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the NPPF, which at paragraph 11, is defined for decision making as:

"c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or 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."

- 4.8.5 Paragraph 61 underlines the importance of land coming forward where needed to support to Government's overarching objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.

- 4.8.6 Paragraph 87 confirms planning decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for, "...clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for new, expanded or upgraded facilities and infrastructure that are needed to support the growth of these industries."

- 4.8.7 Paragraph 87 continues to highlight the importance of supporting "...the expansion or modernisation of other industries of local, regional or national importance to support economic growth and resilience."

4.9 Planning Practice Guidance

- 4.9.1 On 6 March 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued its Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), a web-based resource, which is updated regularly. The PPG provides detailed guidance on the implementation of the NPPF and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Parts have been updated to reflect the new NPPF, and the application proposals respond to the new advice and guidance.

4.10 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance (SPG)

- 4.10.1 The following SPDs and SPGs are potentially relevant to the determination of this application:
- Borough Design Guide SPD (2012); and

- Highways Development Design Guidance SPG (2019).

4.10.2 Account has been taken of these SPD and SPG in the preparation of this planning application.

5. EIA Statement of Conformity

5.1 Context

5.1.1 This Link Road application is submitted as a stand-alone application but forms part of the wider LGV Strategic Development Location (SDL), which is set out in Policy SS13 of the LPU. Consequently, this application will be considered in parallel with the applications that have been submitted pursuant to SS13:

- 232995: Extension of spine road to access Natural History Museum (Full, granted Sep 2024)
- 232498: UoR's main application for LGV (Hybrid, submitted October 2025)
- 232769: Gleeson's application for 430 dwellings (Outline, submitted November 2025)

5.1.2 Given its functional relationship with the wider LVGV, the Link Road was included within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the LGV planning application as part of a specific cumulative assessment scenario. The LGV ES remains a key component of the environmental information relevant to this application, due to its functional and spatial relationship with the wider LVGV allocation.

5.1.3 Accordingly, this application is supported as an EIA Statement of Conformity (SoC) that report considers whether the Link Road falls within the parameters assessed in the UoR LGV ES and identifies any new or materially different significant environmental effects.

5.2 Assessment

5.2.1 The SoC reviews the plans for the proposed scheme and confirms the applicability of the technical assessments undertaken for the SDL assessment scenario to ensure that the findings remain valid in relation to any significant environmental effects.

5.2.2 The findings are summarised in the below table:

Table 5.1: Assessment of Potential Environmental Effects

Potential Effect	Assessment
Air Quality	Likely traffic associated with the proposals was modelled in the LGV ES with mitigation measures proposed to ensure a negligible impact
Archaeology	A low potential has been identified for the presence of significant Prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval activity. Post Medieval agricultural activity may be present, but this would be of very limited archaeological interest
Built Heritage	The proposed development has the capacity to potentially impact upon the Former Upperwood Farmhouse and associated barns offer only very low local interest and the proposals will cause a negligible degree of harm
Climate Change	The proposals would not generate greenhouse gas emissions of a scale that would materially alter the conclusions of the LGV ES

Ecology	The proposals incorporate avoidance measures and with the mitigation measures proposed, mostly secured in a CEMP, no residual effects are predicted
Human Health	As the Link Road does not generate any traffic, any impacts have already been incorporated in the assessment of other effects
Hydrology	Flood risk from all sources is considered low. The SuDS strategy ensures that post-development runoff does not exceed greenfield rates
Landscape and Visual Impact	The proposals results in no significant landscape or visual effects, with all residual impacts assessed as minor adverse or negligible
Noise and Vibration	No new significant noise or vibration effects are thus expected beyond those already assessed.
Socio-Economics	No additional impacts relating to population, employment, community infrastructure or economic activity are predicted.
Transport and Access	The Link Road will not generate any new vehicular trips and was already embedded in the transport modelling for LGV

- 5.2.3 The SoC conclude, no changes have been identified that would materially affect the conclusions of the ES, the significance of the predicted effects, or the mitigation measures established. Therefore, the approach to EIA in this application is robust and proportionate

6. Statement of Community Involvement

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The proposed Link Road is an integral part of the wider LVGV and the University's own LGV scheme and accordingly, it has been the subject of the extensive pre-application engagement that took place prior to the submission of the LGV application.
- 6.1.2 We set out below a summary of the LGV public engagement.

6.2 Core Phase of Public Engagement, 2025

- 6.2.1 The most substantial element of public-facing engagement at the pre-application stage was a phase of consultation undertaken in Spring 2025, comprising a variety of different methods and channels. The major elements of that process were:

- **11 March:** Formal launch of consultation, including publication of press release, and distribution of newsletter
- **17 March:** Webinar for invited Key Stakeholders;
- **27 March:** Shinfield public engagement event, Shinfield School Green Centre;
- **28 March:** Earley public engagement event, Meadow Suite, University of Reading, White Knights Campus;
- **29 March:** Arborfield public engagement event, Arborfield Village Hall;
- **3 April:** Arborfield and Barkham area stakeholder meeting, Arborfield Village Hall;
- **3 April:** Earley area stakeholder meeting, Radstock Lane Community Centre;
- **23 April:** Winnersh area stakeholder meeting, Crone Plaza, Winnersh Triangle;
- **16 July:** Winnersh and Earley area stakeholder meeting
- **17 July:** Shinfield, Arborfield and Barkham area stakeholder meeting; and
- **25 September:** Winnersh and Earley public engagement event

- 6.2.2 Over the six-week consultation period the University received written feedback from over 400 people, via 376 feedback forms, 14 comments on interactive map, ten emails and two letters. Around 350 people attended the meetings and events

- 6.2.3 The theme that generated the most feedback and concern from residents and stakeholders was transport, because of the impact on everyday lives. Existing traffic congestion across the local area was mentioned frequently, the common concern being whether this would worsen with further development, despite proposed road upgrades. Concern over ongoing disruption during construction was also a common concern.

6.3 Pre-application discussions

- 6.3.1 A Planning Performance Agreement has been in place with WBC since 2022, through which a series of site visits, workshops and pre-application meetings have been held with a range of planning and technical officers. These meetings have provided a range of feedback that has been discussed and informed the submitted application. In particular, in relation to:

- Street design, based on the principles of LTN1/20;

- Street design to accommodate the swept paths of a wide range of vehicles, including HGV's busses and refuse vehicles; and
- The design of pedestrian and cycle corridors, allowing for verges and tree planting.

7. Design and Access Statement (incorporating Transport)

Design

- 7.1.1 Various policies from the adopted Development Plan have the aim of achieving high quality design. The emerging Local Plan Update also includes a specific policy on place making and quality design: Policy DH1. This requires all new development to be of high-quality design to endure over the lifetime of the development and create a strong sense of place. The policy sets out design principles that should be achieved as part of delivering high quality design.
- 7.1.2 The Link Road will establish a multi-functional route between the LVGV and the TVSP to encourage active travel and lifestyles amongst both new and existing residents and workers at the education and commercial facilities in the area, through the provision of a dedicated pedestrian/cycle route.
- 7.1.3 The proposals take the opportunity to provide nature based solutions along a tree lined route, providing connectivity between different areas of habitat. Drainage features and attenuation ponds have been carefully curated along the route to support the street drainage function and also create natural habitats. A diverse range of planting will be beneficial to a wide variety of species.
- 7.1.4 The Lighting Strategy has been prepared to ensure the lighting design associated with the site is compliant with relevant guidance. The design is sympathetic to sensitive receptors, such as local wildlife, including bats.
- 7.1.5 Overall, the appearance of the road is defined by its function, but the above measures demonstrate how the Link Road will be assimilated into its edge of settlement surroundings to contribute to the overall sense of place that will be shared between the TVSP and the LVGV.
- 7.1.6 The FPS has a functional appearance and so has been positioned well away from the main link road, backing onto the M4 where a more functional character already exists. As the proposed scrub planting establishes adjacent to the eastern side of the compound, this would integrate with the wider landscape, especially during the winter months. From the west and south-west, an existing double-hedgerow close to the Site's boundary, including trees, already provides a good degree of screening to the area of the proposed compound. Therefore, any visual impacts will be minor.

Access and Transport

- 7.1.7 Policy CP6 (Managing Travel Demand) of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure development proposals provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice, improve the existing infrastructure network, enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, mitigate any adverse effects upon the local and strategic transport network that arise from the development proposed, enhance road safety and do not cause highway problems or lead to traffic related environmental problems.
- 7.1.8 Within the emerging Local Plan Update, Policy C1 (Active and sustainable transport and accessibility) requires development proposals to support the delivery of active and sustainable transport. Development should prioritise travel by active means (including walking, cycling and wheeling), public transport, and incorporate inclusive infrastructure which provides connections to and within the development and should support the increased uptake of electric and zero emissions vehicles
- 7.1.9 As discussed in Section 2, the NHM access road now under construction is a 7.3 metre wide carriageway with a footway/cycleway. Similarly, the Link Road extension proposed by this application will be formed of a 7.3m carriageway extending c600m east of the existing roundabout located

adjacent to the NHM site to link with the western arm of a 3-arm roundabout proposed as part of the LGV application.

- 7.1.10 The Link Road includes two ghost island priority junctions to serve separate parcels of development to the north and south of the road. The new northern arm of the roundabout will be formed of a 6m carriageway providing access to a development parcel to the north. A priority junction is then proposed at the link to provide access to another parcel at the north west.
- 7.1.11 The Link Road has been designed in accordance with a design speed of 30mph. Accordingly, visibility splays measuring 2.4m x 43m have been provided at the junctions along the Link Road. Swept path analysis has been undertaken for a variety of vehicles including HGVs to ensure the layout has been designed to ensure that movements of such vehicles can be accommodated in a safe and satisfactory manner. Swept path analysis has also been undertaken for the turning area serving the FPS.
- 7.1.12 It is proposed to continue the 4m wide segregated footway / cycleway along the northern perimeter of the TVSP Spine Road to the 4-arm roundabout, then beyond the roundabout along the northern side of the Link Road separated from the carriageway by a 3m verge.
- 7.1.13 The new northern arm of the roundabout then includes a 3m wide shared use footway/cycleway at either side. Similarly, the ghost island priority junction on the southern side of the Link Road is provided with 3m wide footway/cycleways at either side and two pedestrian island crossings connecting to the 4m facility on the northern side.
- 7.1.14 New tactile paving crossings at the northern, eastern and western arms of the 4-arm roundabout are also proposed.
- 7.1.15 The Link Road is sufficiently wide to accommodate an extension to the Leopard 3 or 600 bus services which currently operate at TVSP, although those services may ultimately take a different route to serve the wider LGV.
- 7.1.16 The proposed Link Road itself will not generate new vehicle trips, the route is being delivered to connect to the Loddon Valley Garden Village to the east and provide access to adjacent future development parcels within the expansion area for the TVSP. The Link Road has however been assessed as part of the extensive transport modelling work completed on behalf of the University in relation to their LGV planning application.
- 7.1.17 The Transport Statement accompanying this application has been informed by an exercise that has extracted the modelling for the Link Road and considered the scenarios which allows for the full completion of the Loddon Valley Garden Village site (including the employment proposals adjacent to the Link Road).
- 7.1.18 The assessment of each junction along the Link Road has been undertaken for the 2040 with development scenario for both the AM and PM peak hours. This shows all junctions will operate well within their capacity in the completed development scenario that considers all LGV traffic.
- 7.1.19 Accordingly, the development proposals are considered to be acceptable in terms of highways and transport matters.

8. Planning Assessment

8.1 Principle of Development

- 8.1.1 Under adopted policy, the Link Road and FPS are proposed on land that is outside of the development limits established by the Core Strategy (Policy CP9), MDD (Policies CC02 and SAL07) and the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (Policy 1). The same approach is taken forward in the LPU.
- 8.1.2 Therefore, the route of the access road crosses land designated as countryside. Core Strategy Policy CP11 indicates that development in the countryside '*will not normally be permitted*' except where certain criteria are met (our underlining).
- 8.1.3 Whilst, the proposed access road does not meet the requirements of the criteria provided by Policy CP11, it is important to note, however, that through the inclusion of 'normally' in the wording of the Policy, development in the countryside may still be acceptable even if the criteria are not met. Policies CP11 and CC02 should not, therefore, be read in isolation. Regard must also be had to the objectives of these policies, contained in the policy subtext and other relevant material considerations, including the NPPF and the Wokingham Local Plan Update and in particular the contribution that this planning application makes to the delivery of the Loddon Valley Garden Village under LPU Policy SS13.
- 8.1.4 WBC has previously considered this policy scenario in relation to the application to extend the NHM access road where officers concluded that, "*The application should also be read in conjunction with national planning policy. Section 2 of the NPPF outlines three interdependent objectives regarding sustainable development and promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.*"
- 8.1.5 The permissive stance taken in the case of the Natural History Museum remains relevant to this proposal, although even more so as it supports the delivery of the LVGV in accordance with NPPF paragraph 61, which underlines the importance of land coming forward where needed to support to Government's overarching objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.
- 8.1.6 A further consideration is that the policies of both the Core Strategy and the MDD have been found to be out of date (see 4.2.2 and 4.3.2 above). In this context, it is appropriate to continue to attach significant weight to the contribution that the application proposals makes to the delivery of the Wokingham Local Plan Update Spatial Strategy, and particularly the LVGV via Policy SS13.
- 8.1.7 Accordingly, through its enabling of the LVGV, the Link Road will help to bring about a number of significant planning benefits that should be afforded positive weight in the planning balance, including the delivery of:
- Approximately 3,930 new homes, 2,800 of which will be within the University's LGV, in a highly sustainable location, selected by WBC for inclusion in the emerging Local Plan;
 - New affordable homes, in line with emerging LPU policy;
 - The University's EcoValley, that will serve the LVGV, adjoining communities and the wider Borough of Wokingham, with the inclusion of SANG that will facilitate other developments;
 - A significant quantum of community facilities which will serve not only the LVGV, but the surrounding area;
 - A substantial sports hub which will provide a strategic opportunity for greater activity both for the LVGV and surrounding communities;
 - Land for a Secondary School and two Primary Schools.
- 8.1.8 It is also important to recognise the economic benefits of LGV, which the Link Road will help facilitate, including contributing to the continued success and expansion of the TVSP through providing

substantial amounts of residential accommodation – both affordable and market – in close proximity, thus supporting the existing and future workforce.

- 8.1.9 There will also be provision of new commercial, business and service development within the District Centre, Local Centre, and Community Hub, providing a significant number of new job opportunities. The LGV is expected to generate of around 5,120 construction job-years on site, and the Link Road will boost this number further.
- 8.1.10 The Link Road will be delivered alongside the early phases on LVGV and will likely occur once the LPU is adopted, and so notwithstanding the findings of Appeal Inspectors that the adopted Development Plan policies are out of date, the application proposals will be in accordance with the adopted Local Plan Update.
- 8.1.11 Thus, the principle of this development can straightforwardly be agreed.

8.2 Ecology and Biodiversity

- 8.2.1 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF sets out that planning decisions should minimise impacts on and provide net gains in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.
- 8.2.2 Policy TB23 (Biodiversity and Development) of the MDD sets out that development proposals must demonstrate how they:
- a) Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing*
 - b) Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation*
 - c) Ensure that all existing and new developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network."*
- 8.2.3 Chapter 11 of the LPU relates to the Natural Environment. Policy NE1 (Biodiversity and geodiversity) sets out that development proposals should protect and enhance biodiversity and/or geodiversity features of conservation value and implement appropriate conservation management. The degree of protection will be proportionate to the status of the Site or species in terms of its international, national and/or local importance.
- 8.2.4 The Ecological Impact Assessment accompanying the application confirms the application proposals will have no significant effect on any of the nationally or locally designated sites considered. A suite of plans and strategies accompany this application, the most relevant being the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Lighting Strategy and Drainage Strategy.
- 8.2.5 Whilst not located within immediate proximity of the Site, Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill SSSI and the Loddon River LWS are potentially hydrologically connected to the Site via the local ditch network and River Loddon. Therefore, the CEMP details measures to prevent and mitigate dust and other forms of pollution. The proposed drainage scheme (discussed below) has been designed to the relevant standards through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), taking care to prohibit untreated runoff to existing watercourses and ecological features
- 8.2.6 During the construction phase, to prevent any damage or degradation to any LWS in the area, this application is accompanied by a Lighting Strategy that confirms any lighting will WBCs street lighting specification.

- 8.2.7 Luminaires will be used with integral LEDs and only where the luminaire photometry is available from the manufacturer. This is to ensure the photometric footprint of the luminaires can be modelled to ensure the potential effects of light spill are minimised or mitigated.
- 8.2.8 Post completion, lighting is required for safety and security measures. In order to minimise impacts as a result of artificial lighting, a lighting strategy will be implemented that utilises directional lighting to minimise light spill to acceptable levels.
- 8.2.9 The CEMP includes measures to protect trees, including the root zone and canopy, through the use of fencing to prevent construction activities encroaching within sensitive areas. The root protection area to be included within the CEMP will be informed by the Arboricultural Assessment discussed below.
- 8.2.10 The proposal will pass through suitable foraging features currently utilised by bats. To prevent any disturbance to foraging and commuting bats, the lighting strategy detailed within the CEMP includes consideration for sensitive habitats to minimise impacts arising during the construction phase.
- 8.2.11 Post completion, an increase in artificial lighting in the area will be minimised through the implementation of the lighting strategy
- 8.2.12 During construction vegetation clearance will take place outside of the breeding bird season or a nesting bird check will be undertaken prior to the commencement of works.

8.3 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 8.3.1 NPPF Paragraph 193 states that opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.
- 8.3.2 Policy NE2 (Biodiversity net gain) of the LPU requires all development proposals to demonstrate a biodiversity net gain calculated via the most up-to-date national biodiversity accounting metric and provide details of the long-term maintenance and management of the net gain. This should be delivered on site in the first instance, or through biodiversity off-setting where appropriate.
- 8.3.3 This application is accompanied by a BNG Assessment that assesses the current value of the existing habitats on site, which consist of cropland field and a pasture field, with bordering hedgerows and broadleaved trees, to be 11.43 habitat units.
- 8.3.4 The proposed habitat creation on the site consists of new species rich grassland and new hedgerows. The application will also benefit from the associated enhancements to the River Loddon valley. These combine to offer a net gain in +4.59 habitat units (24.611%) and 0.39 hedgerow units (20.35%).
- 8.3.5 Once trading rules have been met, this increases to a net gain of +16.03 units (84.89%), +2.04 hedgerow units (+105.37%) and +0.04 watercourse units (+72.97%).
- 8.3.6 Should permission be granted, full details of the arrangements for the delivery of minimum 10% BNG will be set out in a Biodiversity Gain Plan and final Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and submitted to Wokingham Borough Council for approval.

8.4 Landscape and Visual Impact

- 8.4.1 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF seeks to ensure the protection and enhancement of Valued Landscapes.

- 8.4.2 Policy TB21 (Landscape Character) of the MDD requires proposals to demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues. The policy seeks to ensure proposals retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.
- 8.4.3 Policy NE5 (Landscape and drainage) of the LPU supports development proposals where they adopt a landscape led approach which protects and enhances the character and distinctiveness of landscapes.
- 8.4.4 Policy NE6 (Valued Landscapes) sets out that development proposals location within a Valued Landscape, including the River Loddon Valued Landscape, should have particular regard to the list of attributes set out within the policy
- 8.4.5 As set out in Section 4, the LVIA accompanying this application considers the application site is typified by the landscape features of the area, including the flood plain of the River Loddon, the arable and pasture farmland and woodland, but also the urbanising effects of the M4.
- 8.4.6 The WBC Local Character Assessment seeks to conserve and enhance the Loddon River Valley character area, especially its rural character with *"typical river valley components and sense of remoteness."*
- 8.4.7 The landscape proposals seek to support the aims of the Character Assessment through minimising the need to remove existing trees and hedgerows and offering a comprehensive suite of new planting proposals, comprising:
- Planting of 27 new trees, including trees in hedgerow;
 - Planting 240 linear metres of mixed native species hedgerow;
 - Planting of blocks of mixed native understorey species along the edge of New Covert to create a woodland edge;
 - Seeding of new verges with a range of mixes relating to the site conditions and context and;
 - Seeding of wetland grass mixes to the proposed drainage basins.
- 8.4.8 The western part of the Site lies within the Spencer's Wood Settled and Farmed Clay Character Area. This is a diverse area, with an undulating rural landscape to the south but urbanising influence at the north. The site is strongly influenced by this urban development, especially the adjacent Shinfield Studios and British Museum developments immediately adjacent to it.
- 8.4.9 The proposed Link Road would not affect the flat alluvial floodplain that is typical of the area, and it is designed to marry in with the existing land levels and would benefit from the backdrop and screening effects of New Covert and St Johns Copse but would not result in any effects on them given that they lie outside of the Site boundary.
- 8.4.10 The hedgerows and hedgerow trees will be largely retained and what is lost will be replaced with new planting.
- 8.4.11 Whilst the FPS compound would introduce a new element to the landscape, this would not result in a significantly adverse effect on the overall character of the area. The landscape sensitivity of the FPS site is considered low, reflecting the influence of the adjacent M4, the loss of historic hedgerows, the urbanising effects of the adjacent pylons, the lack of public accessibility and the (more distant) views to/from TVSP.
- 8.4.12 Overall, the proposals are considered to have a "low adverse" magnitude, which given the low sensitivity, leads to a "minor adverse" effect. The LVIA conclusions on the effects of the local landscape features are as follows:

- Vegetation and Land Use – Neutral following mitigation planting;
- Landform and Water Features – Negligible
- Accessibility and Movement – Minor

- 8.4.13 The LVIA confirms in its visual appraisal that the only visual receptors from within the site are therefore currently agricultural workers and University employees. All of these users have a 'low' sensitivity and the same would apply to users of the new spine road.
- 8.4.14 The introduction of the new arm to the roundabout and section of Link Road would result in a change to the view that is of 'low adverse' magnitude, given that the NHM Access Road element of the spine road is already under construction within this area.
- 8.4.15 The visual changes to receptors at the eastern end of the Site are judged to be of 'High adverse' magnitude, reflecting the clear changes to foreground views. Given their low sensitivity however, the overall significance of this change would be 'minor adverse'.
- 8.4.16 To the north of the Site, the only public views are from a short stretch of the M4 motorway, immediately to the north of the FPS compound area, where there is a break in the existing roadside vegetation. Given the 'low' sensitivity of these visual receptors, the overall significance of this change would be 'minor adverse'.
- 8.4.17 There are no public views of the Site from the south and east due to the lack of public access. Views of the spine road from the Site area are screened by the St John's Copse and New Covert woodlands, with further screening offered by the NHM facility
- 8.4.18 To the west, the only changes to public views would be from a short section of Cutbush Lane immediately adjacent to the western side of the Site. Beyond this, the Shinfield Studios building screens views. Users of Cutbush Lane have a medium sensitivity here, however the proposed road would be scarcely seen ultimately leading to a 'negligible adverse' effect.
- 8.4.19 Overall, the application proposals are assessed to have a neutral impact on the landscape character of the area, given the extensive mitigation planting and so no significant adverse effects will occur from a visual appraisal perspective.

8.5 Arboricultural Assessment

- 8.5.1 Within the Core Strategy, Policy CP7 (Biodiversity) states that development which may harm veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna, will only be permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts or appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided.
- 8.5.2 Policy CC03 (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping) of the MDD sets out that development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved a number of criteria, including:
- protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features; and
 - incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.
- 8.5.3 The policy goes on to say that development proposals which would result in the loss, fragmentation or isolation of areas of green infrastructure will not be acceptable.

- 8.5.4 Within the emerging Local Plan update, Policy NE4 (Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows) sets out that development proposals should:
- incorporate existing trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows and ensure they are well integrated within the public realm, in a suitably landscaped setting;
 - ensure the existing pattern of fields, hedges and hedgerows, woodland, trees, watercourses, water bodies, underlying topography and other landscape features are retained and that the design of the scheme is integrated into the landscape;
 - provide sufficient space to enable existing trees to thrive by maintaining adequate root protection areas and space for the trunk and branches to grow;
 - ensure buildings are carefully sited to limit excessive shading to residential properties;
 - provide appropriate buffer zones around woodlands, including semi-natural ancient woodlands, planted ancient woodland sites, orchards, hedgerows and individual trees;
 - provide enhanced and additional tree and hedgerow planting wherever possible, but particularly where there are opportunities to restore or develop habitat and landscape links between woodlands and hedgerows and between these features and other landscape or habitat features such as river corridors;
 - maximise opportunities for planting urban trees, shrubs and hedges within streets and greenspace to create rich urban landscapes; and
 - demonstrate sufficient rooting volume of soil, irrigation and drainage for trees to thrive in the long term.
- 8.5.5 The Arboricultural Impact Assessment accompanying the application considers the quality of trees, groups, woodlands, hedges and scrub across the site, using the methodology of British Standard 5837:2012, and identifies there are trees and groups across all categories, including 12 Category A and 18 Category B trees, whilst the two woodlands adjacent to the site are also Category A. The hedges are all of a lower Category C quality.
- 8.5.6 To facilitate the proposed development, the removal of one tree is required. There is also a requirement to partially remove one Group of trees and three hedges. These limited losses are more than compensated for by the extensive new planting proposed in association with the delivery of the Link Road, as summarised in 8.4.7 above. A range of species will be used to diversify the tree population to increase resilience to pests & diseases and in the long term, improve the arboricultural resource at the site.
- 8.5.7 Although a short term adverse impact is unavoidable, the tree management and tree planting plan intrinsic to the development would serve to provide a net positive impact in line with Policies CP7, CC03 and (emerging) NE4.

8.6 Historic Environment

- 8.6.1 Paragraph 212 of the NPPF sets out that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 213 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.
- 8.6.2 Paragraph 215 states that 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
- 8.6.3 Within the adopted Development Plan, Policy TB24 (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas) seeks to ensure the conservation and enhancement of designated heritage assets and their settings.

- 8.6.4 Policy DH5 (The historic environment) of the LPU also seeks to ensure development proposals conserve and, wherever possible, seek to enhance, the archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest of all heritage assets, including the contribution made by their setting. Where a development proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, clear and convincing justification will need to be provided to demonstrate the public benefits of the proposal that could not otherwise be achieved. The level of public benefit must outweigh any harm to a designated heritage asset.
- 8.6.5 The Heritage Statement accompanying this application confirms that historical mapping shows that the application site largely remains as it was in the early nineteenth century, being made up of field parcels all set over to arable use. During the 20th century the wider surroundings begin to urbanise with housing being built along routes into Shinfield and also east along Cutbush Lane, a short distance east beyond Upperwood Farm. By 1979, the M4 motorway had been built to the north of the site.
- 8.6.6 The Site still runs through six parcels, though the broader make-up of the parcels has been altered by the motorway. In addition to this, the New Covert, woodland copse is also present to the east of the Site, near to St John's Copse. By 2001, the mapping shows the site is now made up of three parcels with urbanisation now more marked with the development to the west, including the British Museum Archaeological Research Collection building and the large scale development associated with the Shinfield Studios.
- 8.6.7 The application Site is not considered to have any visual, functional or historic association with the three listed buildings so the proposed development will have no impact on their setting, or significance, or would have such a small impact as to not materially impact that significance.
- 8.6.8 Similarly, all listed buildings associated with Oldhouse Farm, Cutbush and Hall Farm as well as the non-designated heritage asset, Shinfield Grange will be unaffected. The scale of development that has already taken place between these heritage assets and the site means this proposal is unlikely to materially impact their significance and any views or additional light spill or activity is likely to be inconsequential to their setting.
- 8.6.9 The one built heritage asset potentially affected by the proposal is a collection of three buildings, the former farmhouse and two detached small barns that make up the Former Upperwood Farmhouse. These are not identified on either the Council's List of Buildings of Traditional Local Character, or on the Berkshire Historic Environment Record but the Heritage Statement considers them a non-designated heritage asset worthy of consideration.
- 8.6.10 The farmhouse appears to date from the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century and is two-storey faced in brick on the southern gable end and principal west facing front elevation. Historic imagery dating from 2010 shows the north facing gable end with render partially removed, showing a timber framed building with brick infill. The adjacent barns appear to be all that now remain of the original farmstead. These barns, timber framed with various unsympathetic alterations, appear in relatively poor condition.
- 8.6.11 Collectively, the three remaining buildings share a limited group value in forming part of the original farmstead though are now quite disparate and their significance is primarily derived from its architectural and historic interest in comprising the remains of a late eighteenth/early nineteenth century farmstead. The degree of physical interventions and alterations seen to these buildings, allied to cessation of an agricultural role for the buildings has impacted the overall significance.
- 8.6.12 The Heritage Statement considers that given existing screening, there will be limited intervisibility between the farmstead and the site but the proposed Link Road will further divorce it from the wider rural landscape. Given the changes that have already occurred to the buildings that have eroded the buildings significance, this proposal will cause only a negligible degree of harm.

- 8.6.13 As such, this proposal causes no material harm to any built heritage assets.

8.7 Archaeology

- 8.7.1 Policy DH6 (Archaeology) of the LPU requires the archaeological assessment accompanying the planning application to explore and explain any likely impact of development upon archaeological remains. The policy sets out that development proposal should take appropriate measures to protect any archaeological remains by preservation in situ. Where an assessment of archaeological potential demonstrates this is not justified or proportionate, applicants will be responsible for the excavation, recording and archiving of remains.
- 8.7.2 There have been some archaeological investigations within and surrounding the site in recent years. Six archaeological evaluation trenches have previously been excavated to the west of the site, prior to development works starting on the NHM. The trenching identified only sparse features that were interpreted as being of a Post Medieval or Modern origin (and the report concluded that the proposed development would have little impact on significant archaeological remains). Similarly, trial trenching was undertaken to the east where only limited evidence of potential settlement was recorded in the form of two pits and a few sherds of Roman pottery.
- 8.7.3 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Shinfield Studios. It consisted of 78 trial trenches on a random array and very little evidence of archaeological activity was encountered during the evaluation. That development was deemed to have no impact on any significant archaeology, and no further archaeological mitigation was recommended. Similarly, trial trenching undertaken prior to the British Museum Archaeological Research Collection Facility also found nothing of archaeological interest.
- 8.7.4 Consequently, the Desk Based Assessment accompanying this application considers there is only a low potential for the presence of significant Prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval activity on the Site. The remnants of a Romano-British field system of local significance may extend into the eastern part of the study site. Post Medieval agricultural activity may be present, but this would be of very limited archaeological interest
- 8.7.5 The proposed Link Road has the potential to truncate archaeological deposits, but these are likely to be of only local significance and should not preclude development

8.8 Flood Risk and Drainage

- 8.8.1 Within the adopted Development Plan, Policy CC09 (Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)) of the MDD requires all sources of flood risk to be taken into account at all stages to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding. The policy requires development to be guided to areas of lowest flood risk by applying the sequential approach.
- 8.8.2 Policy CC10 (Sustainable Drainage) of the MDD requires all development proposals to ensure surface water arising from the proposed development takes into account climate change in a sustainable manner
- 8.8.3 LPU Policy FD1 (Development and flood risk (from all sources)) states that development proposals must take into account at all stages of development, all sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, current and future impacts of climate change, and cumulative impacts.
- 8.8.4 The Environment Agency's online Flood Map for Planning confirms the majority of the Site is located in Flood Zone 1 (low risk). The eastern section of the site is partially within Flood Zone 2, with a small area of Flood Zone 3 at the east boundary.

- 8.8.5 Detailed modelling in 2021 modelled flood extents with a +14% and +23% climate change allowance and indicates the majority of the site is located outside the 1 in 100 year flood scenario for both scenarios. A small area along the southern boundary falls within the 1 in 100 annual probability flood extent when applying both the +14% and +23% allowance. In addition, the southeastern corner of the site encroaches slightly into the flood extents associated with the 1 in 100 annual probability event under both the +14% and +23% climate change scenarios.
- 8.8.6 Nonetheless, the overall fluvial flood risk is considered to be low.
- 8.8.7 Environment Agency mapping confirms that most of the site is not at risk from surface water flooding, but a surface water flow route is evident at the west of the site, associated with a ditch serving the adjacent education facility. The watercourse flows in a southeast direction through the network of western watercourses towards the River Loddon
- 8.8.8 The risk of surface water, groundwater, sewers and reservoirs is considered to be low.
- 8.8.9 In line with national and local flood advice, this proposal has been designed to match a 1 in 100 year flood probability with a 14% allowance for climate change, the proposed link road is located outside of the fluvial flood extent for the design event, so there can be no impact on fluvial floodplain storage or conveyance as a result of the proposals.
- 8.8.10 There is a surface water flow route at 'High', 'Medium' and 'Low' risk of flooding from surface water at the western part of the site. There is an existing culvert in this location designed as part of the initial access road application to convey surface water flows from north to south of the access road. This culvert will be retained, and the surface water flow route will be maintained.
- 8.8.11 Runoff reaching the carriageway will be adequately managed within the surface water drainage strategy through the use of SuDS features, to ensure there will be no negative impact on floodplain storage from this proposal.
- 8.8.12 For the drainage strategy, the FRA confirms the site drains via infiltration and overland flows towards the boundaries. The proposed network of attenuation basins, pipes and gullies meets both national and local standards.
- 8.8.13 Due to the likelihood of clay within the site the surface water drainage proposals will be designed to attenuate runoff with controlled discharge to the existing local watercourses, i.e. the existing open field ditch on site, which would be a feasible point of discharge.
- 8.8.14 Discharge rates will be controlled to greenfield run off rates - 3l/s/ha for all storm events up to and including the 1 in 100 year storm event plus 40% allowance for climate change.
- 8.8.15 To provide a robust drainage strategy and ensure the development does not contribute to off-site flooding, the attenuation basins have been designed to accommodate all excess surface water flows generated by the 1 in 100-year storm event, including a 40% allowance for climate change
- 8.8.16 The FRA demonstrates the risk of flooding is adequately managed, and, with the implementation of a suitable surface water drainage strategy, the offsite flood risk is not increased, meeting the requirements of local and national policies.

8.9 Air Quality

- 8.9.1 Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) of the Core Strategy states that development proposals should minimise the emission of pollutants into the wider environment. In addition, development should avoid areas where pollution may impact upon the amenity of future occupiers.
- 8.9.2 Policy HC6 (Air Pollution and Air Quality) of the emerging Local Plan Update sets out that development proposals should maintain, and where possible improve air quality. Development

proposals should consider the prevailing air quality and potential impacts upon air quality arising from airborne particulates, dust and odour associated with the construction and operation of a proposal (including vehicular traffic).

- 8.9.3 This application is accompanied by an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) that considers both the construction and post completion (operational) phases. This confirms that there are no known air quality issues in the area surrounding the site, despite the presence of the M4.
- 8.9.4 During the construction period, the main consideration is dust as activities such as demolition; earthworks; handling and disposal of spoil; wind-blown particulate material from stockpiles; handling of loose construction materials and movement of vehicles all have potential to cause dust. The AQA considers the overall risk is considered to be medium.
- 8.9.5 During the operational phase, the only consideration will be vehicular movements, although the Link Road itself will not cause any movements. Later applications for developments that the Link Road enables will need to consider the air quality impacts from the operational traffic caused.
- 8.9.6 The AQA proposes a number of mitigation measures that should be implemented during the construction of the Link Road. These include a Dust Management Plan, regular monitoring and typical practical measures such as solid screens or barriers, equipment guards, wheel washing and covered storage areas. These can all be secured by condition to ensure any risks are minimised in line with policy.

8.10 Land Contamination and Ground Conditions

- 8.10.1 Adopted Development Plan Policy CP1 (Sustainable development) includes the requirement to minimise the emission of pollutants into the wider environment.
- 8.10.2 Within the emerging LPU, Policy HC9 (Contaminated land and water) sets out that development proposals on or near sites which are known, or suspected to be potentially contaminated, or proposals for sensitive land uses, will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the sensitive receptors set out in the policy would not be exposed to levels of potential contamination that would give rise to unacceptable risks or harm to health, or other adverse impacts.
- 8.10.3 This application is accompanied by a Desk Top Study & Preliminary Risk Assessment that identifies that there are no significant 'contaminant pathway- receptor' linkages for the Site given the proposed end use. Any potentially active linkages are designated as having a low-risk rating.
- 8.10.4 The Assessment considers that the low risk of soil or groundwater contamination identified is unlikely to present an intolerable risk to human health, controlled waters or nearby ecological receptors.
- 8.10.5 If any contamination is found during construction, further investigation will be needed, and these can be controlled by condition.

8.11 Noise

- 8.11.1 Policy CC06 (Noise) of the adopted MDD requires proposals to demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts to protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impacts.
- 8.11.2 Within the LPU, Policy HC8 (Noise pollution) also requires proposals to demonstrate how noise impacts have been addressed. Where there is no adverse impact, noise pollution will not be a material consideration. Where there is an adverse impact, then the policy sets out the approaches that must be taken
- 8.11.3 This application is supported by a Noise and Vibration Assessment that identifies that there are residential properties closer to this site than the LGV application, but these are all located on the

opposite northern side of the M4 motorway. These properties have the potential to be affected during both the construction and operational periods.

- 8.11.4 With the incorporation of the mitigation measures contained in the CEMP, the significance of noise effects during construction would be negligible to minor adverse. These mitigation measures include the use of site hoarding, acoustically screening pumps and generators, and proper maintenance of all vehicles, plants and equipment.
- 8.11.5 During the operational phase, any traffic noise would be indistinguishable from the existing motorway traffic, so impacts are predicted to negligible.

8.12 Utilities

- 8.12.1 In the LGV Policy (SS13) of the WBC Local Plan Update, clause 13 is relevant and states:

“Development proposals should devise and implement a comprehensive utility and digital infrastructure and communications strategy. This will include the:

Phased delivery of water, foul water, sewerage and electricity upgrades; and

The phased delivery of Fiber to the Premises (FTTP) connectivity, including access to full fibre 3 gigabit-capable broadband, and 4G and 5G mobile technologies.”

- 8.12.2 This application is accompanied by a Utilities Statement that confirms that all major services (electricity, potable water, telecommunications) are located within the vicinity of the Site. Given the prevalence of existing infrastructure in close proximity to the site, it is not anticipated that there should be significant problems with provision of new supplies to the Site. Further investigations would be undertaken to ascertain the precise location of services before engaging with the relevant service providers.
- 8.12.3 It is anticipated that sufficient capacity is, or can be made, available to serve the proposal.

8.13 Sustainability

- 8.13.1 Within the adopted Core Strategy, Policy CP1 (Sustainable development) expects development to contribute towards the goal of reaching zero-carbon developments, include appropriate on-site renewable energy features, and minimise energy and waste consumption by measures including the use of appropriate layout and orientation, building form, design and construction, and design to take account of microclimate so as to minimise carbon dioxide emissions through giving careful consideration to how all aspects of development form.
- 8.13.2 Within the MDD, Policy CC04 (Sustainable Design and Construction) requires developments to seek to deliver high quality sustainably designed and constructed development.
- 8.14 Policy CE5 (Embodied Carbon) of the LPU requires development proposals to take opportunities to reduce the development's embodied carbon content, through the careful choice, use and sourcing of materials
- 8.15 This application is accompanied by a Sustainability Statement that outlines the sustainability aspects that have been incorporated into the design of the proposals. These include:
- Enhancement of the site's ecological value through retention of existing features of ecological value, tree protection during development and planting scheme designed to enhance the number of species on site;
 - Minimisation of noise, dust and vibration generation during construction;
 - Minimisation of construction waste stream quantities and targets for diversion of non-hazardous construction waste from landfill

- Minimisation of the generation of construction waste;
- Monitoring and implementation of air quality management strategies.

9. Conclusions and Planning Balance

- 9.1.1 The University's ambition is for the Loddon Garden Village to be a fully integrated and sustainable new community and the manner in which the Link Road is proposed in this application will connect the new community to the TVSP, a key employment site in the Borough, makes it a crucial piece of infrastructure that needs to be delivered alongside the early phases of the LGV.
- 9.1.2 The proposed Link Road represents a sensible extension of the TVSP spine road and the recently approved NHM access road currently under construction and will provide options for travel by car, on foot, by cycle or public transport.
- 9.1.3 The principle of this proposal can be straightforwardly agreed, given both the recent consent for the first phase of the Link Road to serve the NHM and the substantial weight that can be applied to the emerging LPU, in particular, Policy SS13.
- 9.1.4 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out the social, economic and environmental roles of sustainable development.
- 9.1.5 The proposal performs an economic role by creating full time jobs during the site clearance and construction period. Once operational, the Link Road will perform an economic role by enabling the expansion of TVSP as envisioned by Policy SS13 as the necessary transport infrastructure will be in place to allow future staff easy access to the park via a variety of means,
- 9.1.6 Similarly, the proposal fulfils a social role through being a key piece of infrastructure that helps to enable the construction of over 3,000 homes in a highly sustainable location, selected by WBC for inclusion in the emerging Local Plan, where 40% will be affordable. The Link Road will also allow the new residents of LGV to access a key employment site, allowing them opportunity to live and work in a highly sustainable manner.
- 9.1.7 The proposal contributes to the environmental objective by using low grade agricultural land to provide the road through an area of low sensitivity, as identified by WBCs own Landscape Character Assessment, which respects the key green features of the area, such the River Loddon, its floodplain and adjacent woodland. Furthermore, the extensive new planting proposals represent a net gain over the current situation.
- 9.1.8 It has been demonstrated above that there are a number of significant benefits weighed with the scheme, which should be assessed in the planning balance. Whilst there are adverse effects as specified above arising from the development, these do not significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 9.1.9 The technical reports and assessments accompanying the application demonstrate that the scheme can be accommodated on site either with no impact or subject to mitigation, limited impact. Whilst there are some adverse effects, given that the tilted balance is engaged, notwithstanding compliance with the Development Plan, paragraph 11 of the NPPF is engaged.
- 9.1.10 Having weighed the benefits and impacts, the impacts do not significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits having regard to the Framework as a whole.
- 9.1.11 It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission is approved without delay.

Contact

Phil Brown MRTPI
Director Planning

+44 (0) 7968 550302
pbrown@savills.com

Jon Gateley MRTPI
Director Planning

+44 (0) 7977 197906
Jon.gateley@savills.com

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

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