

Planning Statement

Land at Ducks Nest Farm, Arborfield

March 2025

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Client
David Wilson Homes Southern

Our reference
01776

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Turley on behalf of our client David Wilson Homes (Southern) (DWS) ("the Applicant") in support of a hybrid planning application for the development of up to 135 dwellings and associated infrastructure, public space and a detailed application for the provision Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) at land at Ducks Nest, south of Arborfield ("the Site"). At present the site is in arable use.

1.2 The description of development is as follows:

"A hybrid application comprising:

- a. A full application for the change of use of land from agricultural land to provide an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), including the details of associated landscaping, planting, drainage measures, parking, walking routes and other works associated with the creation of the SANG.*
- b. An outline application with all matters reserved other than access into the site for a residential development of up to 135 dwellings, open space, internal accesses and parking, drainage measures, landscaping and all other associated works."*

1.3 The residential element of the application is submitted in outline form, with means of access into the Site subject to consideration and matters of appearance; landscaping; layout; and scale reserved for future determination.

1.4 The application is supported by a set of plans that establish the area in which development is proposed, vehicular access, as well as other key considerations which inform the proposals. The proposed plans submitted alongside the application illustrate how the site could be developed under this outline consent. Further consideration of the key development management concerns will be taken at the detailed design (reserved matters) stage.

1.5 The detailed application element of the application is focussed on the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) so as to address any impact on the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area. This is discussed in detail throughout this Statement.

Purpose of Planning Statement

1.6 This Planning Statement is submitted to Wokingham Borough Council ('WBC') in support of a hybrid planning application relating to land at Ducks Nest Farm for the development described above.

1.7 This Planning Statement describes the proposals, key material considerations in determining the application, and the economic, social and environmental benefits which will be delivered. Furthermore, it reviews and demonstrates compliance with the approved relevant development plan policies and the policy context advocated in the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (the 'Framework').

Accompanying Documentation

1.8 This Statement should be read together with the other documents which accompany the application comprising:

- Covering Letter prepared by Turley
- Agricultural Land Classification Report prepared by Strutt and Parker
- Air Quality Assessment prepared by SLR Consulting
- Application Forms and Certificates
- Application Plans and Drawings prepared by Mosaic
- Arboricultural Survey and Impact Assessment (AIA) prepared by HDA
- Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment prepared by Orion
- Biodiversity Net Gain Report prepared by Thomson Ecology
- Design and Access Statement prepared Mosaic
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy prepared by Vectos
- Ground Conditions Report prepared by Environmental Management Solutions
- Habitat Regulations Assessment by SLR Consulting
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Iceni
- Landscape drawings prepared by Iceni
- SANG Management Plan by SLR Consulting
- Noise Assessment prepared by Noise Solutions
- Ecological Impact Assessment and accompanying Ecological Surveys prepared by Thomson Ecology
- Statement of Community Involvement prepared by Turley Strategic Communications
- Sustainability Statement by David Wilson Homes
- Transport Assessment prepared by SLR

Structure of Planning Statement

1.9 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2:** Description of the site and its surroundings, planning designations and the relevant planning history.
- **Section 3:** Provides details of the proposed development
- **Section 4:** Sets out the relevant planning policy context of the adopted and emerging Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- **Section 5:** Provides a planning assessment of the proposal against a number of relevant considerations.
- **Section 6:** Provides draft heads of terms
- **Section 7:** Provides a summary and conclusions.

2. Site and Surrounding Area

Site Context

- 2.1 The Site is located within the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council. The Site extends to a total area of 17.73 ha and is currently of arable use.
- 2.2 The northern boundary of the Site runs south of the village of Arborfield Cross. To the east, the Site is bound by Eversley Road, and an area of residential and commercial uses that is excluded from this application. The western boundary is defined by mature tree and hedgerow vegetation that separate the site from further agricultural land parcels and Arborfield Court, a grade II listed residential country house.
- 2.3 Observer Way defines the south western edge of the Application Site.
- 2.4 The Site is situated adjacent to the northwest boundary of the area formerly known as Arborfield Garrison (now Arborfield Green), an identified Strategic Development Location (SDL) in the Wokingham Borough Development Plan. The Arborfield Garrison SDL area is currently being redeveloped for housing, alongside the necessary infrastructure and community facilities to support development in this location and is accordingly identified as a “major location for growth” in the Core Strategy (2010). In the settlement hierarchy set out in the Core Strategy (2010), the settlement of Arborfield Cross itself identified as a “Limited Development Location”, with the SDL identified as a “Modest Development Location”.
- 2.5 A review of Heritage England’s Map of listed heritage assets shows that the Site is located near to two Grade II listed buildings as follows:
 - Ducks Nest Farmhouse (list entry: 1312999) approximately 100m east of the site’s boundary, separated by industrial and commercial uses; and
 - Arborfield Court (list entry: 1118123) approximately 100m west of the site boundary, screened existing tree and hedgerow planting.
- 2.6 The Site is free from any other known historical constraints that would otherwise preclude the development on this Site. A full assessment of the development on heritage assets is provided in Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment prepared by Orion.
- 2.7 The Flood Map for Planning categorises the Site as being located within Flood Zone 1, and of low possibility of flood risk. The Site is not constrained by any other ecological or landscape designations that would prohibit the development.

Surrounding Area

- 2.8 In terms of the Site’s wider area, it sits adjacent to Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location (SDL), which provides a range of facilities and services which adds to the overall sustainability of the settlement and benefits the local and wider community. This includes employment areas alongside social and communal facilities which includes, but are not limited to, the provision of educational facilities through a primary school and secondary school; swathes of public open space and leisure facilities including a MUGA. In

due course, the SDL will comprise local and district centres; a supermarket and additional facilities. A convenience store is located to the east of the Site.

- 2.9 The settlement of Arborfield Cross is also in close proximity, located to the north of the Site. Arborfield Cross is recognised as providing a smaller range of facilities and services, including a primary school, convenience store, medical practice, the Royal British Legion centre, garden centre and Arborfield recreation ground.
- 2.10 The Site benefits from strong connections on the local highway network situated three miles south-east of the regional hub of Reading, which provides significant employment opportunities as well as retail and leisure offers and three miles west of Wokingham, which provides a similar scale of opportunity. The Site can also demonstrate good links to Junction 11 of the M4 Motorway (5 miles; 10 minute drive), A329(M) (5 miles; 10 minutes) providing connections to Bracknell (7 miles; 20 minutes) and the M3 Motorway (12 miles; 25 minutes).
- 2.11 With regards to public transport, the nearest train station, Wokingham Station, is located approximately 3.7 miles from the Site and offers public transport links to Reading (10 minute journey), London Waterloo (1 hour journey), and the wider South East. The Site is also serviced by the Number 3 bus services which stops along Eversley Road, and provides direct connections to Reading Town Centre, Arborfield Garrison, and Wokingham Town Centre, with services running every 20 minutes.

Planning History

- 2.12 A review of Wokingham Borough Council's online planning portal has identified that the site has an extensive planning history, however, this has been mostly to do with the existing use and is not considered relevant to this proposed development.
- 2.13 More recently, a hybrid planning application (ref: 230532) was submitted in March 2023 for up to 210 dwellings (Outline) and the proposed change of use from agricultural land to an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). This planning application was subsequently withdrawn in November 2023.

3. Proposed Development

- 3.1 The outline element of the proposal is for a residential development of up to 135 dwellings, public open space and related requirements, and supporting natural greenspace. The proposals will also include vehicular and pedestrian access arrangements, and internal circulation, as well as green infrastructure and SuDs.
- 3.2 It is proposed that the development also include a 10.5ha area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) so as to suitably mitigate the impact any (residential) development of this Site on the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (TBHSPA). It is proposed that the SANG include a 2.31km circular walking route for use and enjoyment by existing and future residents of Arborfield and will be built in accordance with Natural England's standards. It is proposed that a surfaced car park be provided to serve the SANG, including spaces for disabled users.
- 3.3 The accompanying Design and Access Statement provides a detailed account of the substance of the development scheme. However, in summary, the proposals include the following:
- Up to 135 new homes, which will contribute significantly towards the Council's five-year housing land supply;
 - Provision of 40% affordable housing and a mix of tenure and house types to meet local needs;
 - Retention of the majority of the existing trees and hedges, complemented by additional planting set within a high-quality landscape and green infrastructure framework;
 - Residential development and use of materials sensitively designed in the context of the local landscape features and designations;
 - Provision of supporting natural greenspace;
 - Integration of open spaces, structural planting and landscape corridors to respect long distance views across the Site;
 - New public open space for existing and future residents, complemented by landscaping and ecological improvements; and
 - A sustainable drainage system and the management of surface water run off to and from the Site.

Housing

- 3.4 The proposed development will comprise a mix of 1 bed apartments and 2, 3, 4 and 5 bed houses. The housing mix is indicative at this stage and will be determined through subsequent reserved matters applications.

- 3.5 The proposals will deliver an inclusive development that is designed to complement the surrounding character and to reflect the surrounding built form, including the adjoining Arborfield Garrison development. As detailed within the later sections of this Statement and the accompanying documents that support the application, the design approach allows for an efficient use of land that meets the needs of the ageing population within Wokingham Borough. We provide further details on the design proposals below and within the Design and Access Statement which accompanies the submission.
- 3.6 Whilst the detailed design will be decided at the reserved matters stage, the proposed development will take into consideration the surrounding character of the area, its relationship with open green space and landscape context in which it sits. The proposed scheme will be set towards the road frontage and existing built form along Eversley Road on the lower lying part of the site, so as to minimise the visual impact of scale and massing of built development on site.
- 3.7 The buildings will be up to two and a half storeys in height, and set back from site boundaries to retain the open landscape character and enhance the green infrastructure offer towards the west of the Site.

Accessibility and Movement

- 3.8 The outline strategy for accessibility and movement around the site has focussed around creating a safe, permeable and enjoyable pedestrian environment that is clearly defined with public and private spaces, cycleways, and footpaths whilst acknowledging the inevitable demands of the private car.
- 3.9 Access to the residential element of the Site is proposed via an access off Observer Way to the south of the Site, as well as a fifth arm off Eversley Road roundabout that abuts the eastern boundary of the Site. The location of the Site, adjacent to the existing residential area, means that residents would be able to use the existing footways, cycleways and crossing points provided in the local area for access to local facilities and services.
- 3.10 Improved pedestrian access will be provided through the inclusion of additional footpaths into the site to the north and south, alongside pavements and shared surface treatments within the site, to facilitate sustainable transport modes and enjoyment of green infrastructure and landscaped areas of the Site.

Green Infrastructure and landscaping

- 3.11 Multiple areas of public open space and landscaping will be incorporated into the proposed scheme and a safe network of connected paths will be delivered to facilitate pedestrian and cycle movement across the site and beyond. In addition to this, it is proposed that the site be linked via a series of interconnected footpaths with a landscaped circular route provided through the SANG, that forms the detailed element of this application, to further sustain an active and inclusive development.
- 3.12 The layout has been configured to ensure that the majority of existing trees and hedgerows will be retained and enhanced as part of the wider landscape strategy. The application is supported by a Landscape Masterplan which demonstrates how green infrastructure has informed the development proposals with existing vegetation along the

site boundaries being retained and enhanced to maintain the visual amenity and separation from Arborfield Cross to the north.

- 3.13 At present, the existing tree and hedgerow vegetation creates a strong definition and screening to the site from the south, east, and west. This will be reinforced by further new hedging and landscaping, with additional planting providing an opportunity for enhancing and increasing biodiversity within the site. The supplemental planting within the site will enhance the sense of place from the development, whilst also aiding wayfinding and identifying different spatial uses. A series of connected footpaths will run through the entire site, using natural wayfinding.
- 3.14 The supporting landscaping statement demonstrates how the provision of swathes of multi-functional green spaces help break up the built-form across the development and help assimilate the visual impact of the development with the existing built form of Arborfield Garrison SDL and retain the sub-urban nature of Arborfield Cross further north.

Community Engagement

- 3.15 The Applicant has engaged with the local community in order to seek the views of local residents on the previous proposals in relation to this Site. The scheme was advertised via a leaflet drop, online and via a webinar. Various methods of feedback were set to allow for comments from the general public to be received and this included online and hard-copy questionnaires which summarised the proposals and facilitated meaningful feedback.
- 3.16 The Applicant received a total of 31 feedback forms in response to the consultation set out above, with various respondents citing key themes pertaining to access to the site, traffic impact, drainage and coalescence with existing development. As a result of this feedback, a number of design changes have been incorporated within the proposed design:
- Reduced Net Drainage Area to accommodate all of surface water flood zone within the site
 - Relocation of drainage basins to accommodate swales and basins and existing hedges on the boundaries
 - Reduction in building height to two and a half storeys so as to reduce visual and landscape impact
 - Increased provision of SANG and public open space to maximise residential amenity and maintain the respective character of existing settlements.
- 3.17 Full details of the feedback received is set out within the SCI that accompanies this application with the evolution of the proposed design provided within the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

4. Planning Policy

The Development Plan

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that:

“Regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”

- 4.2 The site is located in the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council and the relevant Development Plan in this case consists of the Core Strategy (2010), Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDDL; 2014), the Arborfield & Barkham Joint Neighbourhood Plan (2019) and Saved Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (2009).
- 4.3 This Section outlines the key planning policy relevant to the proposed development at a national and local level.
- 4.4 At a national level, relevant planning policy and guidance is set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (‘the Framework’) published in December 2024 and the Planning Practice Guidance (‘the PPG’) which is updated as an online resource.
- 4.5 The Borough Council have submitted their Local Plan Update to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Planning Inspector on 28th February 2025, to replace the existing Core Strategy and MDDL. The new Local Plan is proposed to cover the period up to 2040 and, once adopted, will supersede the existing Development Plan policies.

Core Strategy (2010)

- 4.6 The Core Strategy was adopted on 29 January 2010. The specific policies found within the Core Strategy that are of relevance to the consideration of this development are summarised below:
- **CP1 – Sustainable Development:** Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that, amongst other things, maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment, ensure the provision of adequate drainage, and provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes;
 - **CP3 – General Principles for development:** Planning permission will be granted for proposals that are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life
 - **CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements:** Planning permission will not be granted unless appropriate arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure, services, community and other facilities required for the development taking account of the cumulative impact of schemes are agreed. Arrangements for provision or improvement to the required standard will be secured by planning obligations or condition if appropriate.

- **CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and affordability:** Planning permission will be granted for residential development providing a mix and balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures and sizes. The Council will negotiate the tenure, size and type of affordable units on a site by site basis having regard to housing needs, site specifics and other factors.
- **CP6 – Managing Travel Demand:** Planning permission will be granted for schemes that provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice; mitigate any adverse effects upon the local and strategic transport network, and provide appropriate vehicular parking, having regard to car ownership.
- **CP7 – Biodiversity:** Development which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly will be only permitted if mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts.
- **CP8 – Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area:** Development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effects on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.
- **CP9 – Scale and location of development proposals:** The scale of development proposals in Wokingham borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility.
- **CP11 - Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside):** Proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where it does not meet set criteria.
- **CP17 – Housing delivery:** Provision will be made for the development of at least 13,230 dwellings and associated development and infrastructure in the Borough in the period 2006-2026. For the period April 2021 to March 2026 – an average of 623 dwellings per annum is expected.

Managing Development' Delivery Local Plan (2014)

4.7 The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan was adopted on 21 February 2014. Those policies found within the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan that are considered relevant to the development proposals are summarised below:

- **Policy CC02 – Development Limits:** New development located at the edge of, but within the development limit, should demonstrate how the interrelationship between open countryside and the built form is respected. Careful siting and design of new development at the edge of development limits must allow for an approach which provides a transition between the built area and the open countryside. The aim is for development to recede and soften in relation to adjoining open countryside and avoid hard edges.

- **Policy CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping:** Development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside, protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features.
- **Policy CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction:** Planning permission will only be granted for proposals that seek to deliver high quality sustainably designed and constructed developments by seeking to achieve the requirements of the full Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4; and Meet internal potable water consumption targets of 105 litres or less per person per day (as part of the requirement to meet full Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4).
- **Policy CC09 – Development and Flood Risk (from all sources):** All sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding. Where required, suitable and appropriately detailed flood risk information will need to accompany a planning application.
- **Policy CC10 – Sustainable Drainage:** All development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development including taking into account climate change is managed in a sustainable manner must be demonstrated through a Flood Risk Assessment, or through a Surface Water Drainage Strategy.
- **Policy TB05 – Housing Mix:** Proposals for residential development shall provide for an appropriate housing mix which reflects a balance between the underlying character of the area and both the current and projected needs of households. Any scheme that requires the provision of affordable housing should provide an appropriate mix of accommodation on a site by site basis, which reflects the Council's Housing Strategy and the Affordable Housing SPD.
- **Policy TB21 – Landscape Character:** Proposals must 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. Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.
- **Policy TB23 – Biodiversity and Development:** Planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with Policy CP7 – Biodiversity of the Core Strategy and also demonstrate how they provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing features.
- **Policy TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation areas):** Proposals will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings.

South East Plan (2009)

- 4.8 The South East Plan has now been revoked with the exception of Policy NRM6:

‘Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area’ which relates to potential impacts of residential development on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Land at Ducks Nest, Wokingham lies within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and, as such, the policy is potentially applicable in this instance. The policy provides guidance on the standards and arrangements in relation to the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

Arborfield & Barkham Joint Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.9 The Arborfield & Barkham Joint Neighbourhood Plan covers the area of Arborfield and Newland and Barkham parishes and was made (adopted) by the council in April 2020. The Plan covers the period 2019-2036.

- 4.10 The following policies therein are relevant to the proposal.

- **Policy IRS1:** ‘Preservation of Separation of Settlements’. This policy requires development to comply with Policy P11 of the Core Strategy and avoid coalescence.
- **Policy IRS2:** ‘Recognise, Respect and Preserve Identity and Rural Setting of Settlements’. Policy IRS2 confirms that development proposals must recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements, and how development complies with relevant design guidance.
- **Policy IRS3:** ‘Protection and Enhancement of The Natural Environment and Green Spaces’ is relevant and seeks the protection of the natural environment, consistent with development plan policies.
- **Policy AD2:** ‘Prioritise Housing for Local Needs’ states that all proposals for new housing development must demonstrate how the types of homes provided will contribute to a balanced mix of housing and meet the needs identified in the most current assessment of housing needs. The policy also references prioritisation for ‘key workers’ regarding the sale of affordable housing.
- **Policy AD3:** ‘High Quality Development with Generous Open Space, Properly Landscaped’ emphasises quality development and suitable density.

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.11 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (‘the ‘Framework’) was adopted in December 2024. The Framework covers a range of land issues including, transport, infrastructure, the economy, climate change and the natural and historic environments. The following paragraphs of the NPPF are considered of particular relevance to the determination of this application.

- **Paragraph 7** of the Framework sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- **Paragraph 8** of the Framework reiterates that the planning system has three overarching objectives:
 - 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
 - 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
 - an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land.
- **Paragraph 10** states that at the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- **Paragraph 11** sets out that, for decision-taking, this means:
 - approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
 - 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 clear 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.

4.12 The following sections of the Framework are considered relevant to this application:

Decision Taking

- **Paragraph 39** states that local planning authorities should “approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way... and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”.

- **Paragraph 48** of the Framework reiterates that “planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.
- **Paragraph 49** states that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:
 - The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given)
 - The extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
 - The degree of consistency with the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)
- **Paragraph 50** deals with prematurity and explains that in the context of the Framework (and in particular the presumption in favour of sustainable development), arguments that an application is premature are unlikely to justify a refusal other than in limited circumstances.

Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

- **Paragraph 61** of the Framework emphasises the need to support the

“Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes”, by making sure that “a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed”.

Promoting healthy and safe communities

- Chapter 8 of the Framework outlines how planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places.
- **Paragraph 96** states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other.

Promote Sustainable Transport

- Chapter 9 of the Framework guides the important role transport plays in achieving sustainable development, seeking to maximise sustainable transport solutions.
- **Paragraph 109** states that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that:
 - (a) transport considerations are an important part of early engagement with local communities;
 - (b) patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places;

- (c) the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed;
 - (d) opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;
 - (e) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued; and
 - (f) the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains.
- **Paragraph 116** of the Framework emphasises that *“development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe”*.

Making effective use of land

- **Paragraph 124** emphasises that planning policies and decisions should *“promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses”*. This includes accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land.
- **Paragraph 129** asks that policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land.

Well-Designed Places

- **Paragraph 131** highlights that the creation of *“high quality beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”*.

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

- Chapter 14 of the NPPF focusses on the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure through new development. Opportunities relate to the landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping of proposed development

- **Paragraph 157** of the Framework sets out that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts.
- **Paragraph 165** of the Framework requires that *“inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk”*.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- **Paragraph 187** states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other things, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity; new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- **Paragraph 195** states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects). This does not apply where an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.
- **Paragraph 198** of the Framework asks that planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life.

4.13 Amongst the suite of changes introduced by the December 2024 revisions to the NPPF, one of the most significant updates relates to the method for assessing local housing need, to support the Government’s ambition to deliver 1.5 million homes over the next five years.

4.14 Whilst the previous NPPF (December 2023) mandated a standard method for calculating need based on household projections data from 2014, the new method is based on the following:

- An annual baseline need of 0.8% of the existing housing stock within the Local Authority.
- Adjustments for affordability, with no cap on increases within Local Authorities, and no urban uplift.

4.15 The proposed Local Housing Need figure derived from the standard method requires 1,336 dwellings per annum in this borough; significantly more than is required by the Core Strategy and the draft Local Plan Update.

Planning Practice Guidance

- 4.16 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides direction on the consideration and determination of planning applications, alongside various other technical and procedural matters, supporting the overall implementation of the policies contained within the Framework.

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance

- 4.17 The following documents are also considered relevant to the determination of the planning application:

- **Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (2015)** - Wokingham Borough Council is a Charging Authority for the purposes of Part 11 of the Planning Act 2008 and may therefore charge the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in respect of development in its administrative area.
- **Affordable Housing SPD (2013)** – This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) forms part of the guidance which accompanies the Development Plan and amplifies Core Strategy Policy CP5 (Housing mix, density and affordability). The SPD provides further guidance of the Council's approach to securing affordable housing through the planning process.
- **Borough Design Guide SPD (2012)** - This guide provides general design guidance for all development sites and detailed design guidance for certain topics, these being residential, streets and spaces, car parking and non-residential development issues.

Emerging Wokingham Local Plan

- 4.18 Wokingham Borough Council is in the process updating its adopted Development Plan. Upon adoption, the Local Plan update will replace the current Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery plans which cover the period to 2026.
- 4.19 The Council held public consultation (Reg. 18) on the Revised Growth Strategy for the emerging Local Plan between 22 November 2021 and 24 January 2022. The Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 (LPU) was then published for consultation under Regulation 19 in 2024, and submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Planning Inspector on 28 February 2025
- 4.20 Draft Policy SS3 is of particular relevance to the proposed development. It states that outside of the Green Belt, residential development proposals on unallocated sites adjacent to major and modest settlements will generally be refused unless all the following exceptional circumstances are met:
- a) Where a five year housing land supply of deliverable housing sites cannot be demonstrated and the plan is more than five years old, or the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years; and
 - b) The development proposal:
 - i. Is relative to the scale of the shortfall evidenced in the Housing Delivery Test;

- ii. Is demonstrably deliverable within 5 years and will contribute towards addressing the shortfall evidenced in the Housing Delivery Test;
- iii. Is consistent with the role and function of the relevant settlement in the settlement hierarchy;
- iv. Would integrate successfully with the community it adjoins having regard to core shape, form and size of the settlement, the mix of uses proposed and the design, layout and accessibility of the scheme;
- v. Is sustainably located where future residents would have realistic opportunities to use active and sustainable modes of transport for day-to-day travel and would not be reliant on private motor-vehicles;
- vi. Would not unacceptably compromise the visual or perceived separation of settlements; and
- vii. Would not compromise the delivery of any other site allocations.

5. Planning Assessment

- 5.1 The following section of this Statement provides consideration of the application proposals against the identified planning policy context and takes account of material considerations. Matters concerning the principle of development are considered, before the assessment moves to evaluate detailed and technical issues.

Principle of Development

- 5.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 confirms that proposals are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is noted that recent appeal decisions in Wokingham have determined that a number of the policies relating to the supply of housing are out of date and therefore less weight should be given to them.
- 5.3 As this Planning Statement establishes, the LPA acknowledges that it is unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites as required by the NPPF (December 2024) when considered against the standard method for calculating Local Housing Need. In those circumstances the NPPF includes the remedial measures required to try and address such shortfalls, as does Policy CC01. Moreover, as we acknowledge elsewhere in this Statement, there may be other reasons why the presumption in favour should be applied irrespective of housing land supply.
- 5.4 The Applicant accepts that the proposal lies outside of the Development Limits of Arborfield Garrison (as a Modest Development Location). However, Policy CP9 (Scale and location of development proposals) states that the scale of development proposals in Wokingham borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, whilst Policy CP17 states that *“Sites to be identified in Modest Development Locations where they should generally not exceed 100 dwellings”*. The Applicant considers that the proposal is consistent with the spatial strategy and role of directing development to such locations, and in accordance with the principles of CP17 in relation to the quantum of growth which might be appropriate at (although the Policy says ‘in’) Modest Development Locations. The Site is also located in close proximity to Arborfield Cross, which provides an additional range of services and facilities that should be taken into account.
- 5.5 Recent appeal decisions (including, but not limited to, appeal ref. 3275086) have found the Development Limits to be “out-of-date” insofar as they serve to restrict development. This is in contrast to the wider government objective to significantly boost the supply of housing and the localised need to address increased housing delivery within Wokingham Borough, given that the housing requirement within the adopted Development Plan documents is more than five years old in accordance with Paragraph 78 of the framework.
- 5.6 The Applicant considers that the SANG use is appropriate in this location, having regard to the principle of development. This is discussed further below.

Housing Land Supply

- 5.7 DWS understands that WBC acknowledges it is unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites as per the Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement at 31st March 2024 (published January 2025). The Applicant will consider whether it is necessary to submit its own evidence to WBC regarding the housing land supply position, should the Council's position change.
- 5.8 DWS consider that the fact that this application would contribute both market and affordable housing should be afforded weight in favour of the proposed development.
- 5.9 The Council published a 'Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement', with a base date of 31 March 2024 ("2024 5YHLS Statement") on 30 January 2025. The 2024 5YHLS Statement confirmed that that WBC could demonstrate a deliverable housing land supply of 1.7 years. The Wokingham Borough Core Strategy is more than 5 years old and so the Council now uses Local Housing Need derived from the Government's standard method calculation when calculating its housing land supply. Using the standard method, a Local Housing Need figure of 1,336dpa has been identified. This is significantly in excess of the requirement within the adopted and emerging Development Plan.
- 5.10 The Council's claimed housing land supply of 1.7 years (over the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2029) equates to a shortfall of 4,693 homes against a five year requirement, including the 5% buffer.
- 5.11 A recent appeal decision¹ in Twyford (February 2025) concluded that WBC cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. In allowing the appeal, the Inspector confirmed that:
- "there is a clear and pressing need for the delivery of both affordable and market homes in Wokingham. I therefore attach significant weight to the delivery of the market housing and in addition, very significant weight to the delivery of the affordable housing in this sustainable location."*
- 5.12 The Inspector also concluded that the existing Core Strategy and Local Plan policies *"present a more restrictive approach to development outside of defined development limits than the Framework."* As such, reduced weight was attached to conflicts with the development plan.
- 5.13 With ongoing uncertainty regarding the deliverability of sites within the emerging Local Plan that are yet to be tested at examination, and uncertainty surrounding the delivery rates of strategic development sites, WBC should be proactively seeking to support proposals for development in sustainable locations.
- 5.14 Through effectively bolstering its housing supply in this way, the Council would help safeguard and counter the ongoing uncertainty around housing delivery, which would directly support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, consistent with the approach as set out within Paragraph 61 of the Framework.

¹ APP/X0360/W/24/3350170 Land to the North of the A4, New Bath Road, Twyford

Draft Local Plan Update 2023-2040

5.15 As outlined above, the draft LPU has been submitted for examination by WBC. Whilst the draft plan is subject to examination and carries limited weight in the decision making process, it is important to consider the direction of travel of local planning policy.

5.16 Draft Policy SS2 confirms that Arborfield Green, directly to the south of the application site, is considered to be a 'modest settlement'. The draft policy goes on to clarify that modest settlements are:

"places which provide a reasonable range of services and facilities that serve the needs of those that live there. In general, they are medium sized villages. To maintain and enhance their role, these places will accommodate an appropriate level of housing growth, where opportunities exist."

5.17 Whilst draft Policy SS3 notes that there is a general presumption against development adjacent to modest settlement, except where specified exceptional circumstances are met. These are set out in the Policy section of this statement and the proposed development is assessed against each below.

5.18 The scale of the proposed development (up to 135 residential dwellings) is modest with regard to the scale of development at Arborfield Green, but would contribute to meeting an identified shortfall in housing delivery in recent years, being of a scale to enable practical delivery of this housing within five years. In this regard, draft criteria (i) and (ii) would be met.

5.19 Arborfield Green is characterised by medium density and proximity to large, high quality open spaces with links to Wokingham and Reading. The proposed development would function as part of the wider Arborfield Green settlement benefiting from proximity to transport links and amenities within the settlement. Criteria (iii), (iv) and (v) of the draft policy would be met by this proposal.

5.20 The high level of open space provision including the SANG to the northern part of the site will provide a clear and defensible separation for the development site (and Arborfield Green to the south) with the rural character of Arborfield Cross to the north. No housing allocation delivery would be compromised by this proportionate development proposal. Draft criteria (vi) and (vii) would both be met.

5.21 As summarised, whilst the LPU is in draft form and carries limited weight, the principle of residential development on this site adjacent to an existing modest settlement would evidently meet the exceptions criteria set out in draft Policy SS3. This must be fairly balanced against the countryside location of the site and the provisions of the draft Local Plan Update, namely Policy SS3.

Other Proposals in the Vicinity

Land off Langley Common Road, Arborfield

5.22 The Applicant is aware that WBC's Planning Committee has resolved to grant outline planning permission (WBC ref: 232490) for up to 50 dwellings on land north of Langley Common Road, Arborfield.

- 5.23 The Committee Report for that application states:

"The site is outside of, but opposite/adjacent to the northern settlement limits of Arborfield Garrison, which is a Strategic Development Location with a range of day-to-day facilities. The policies that establish settlement limits are however out of date by reason of the absence of a NPPF compliant housing land supply and this effectively reduces the weight of this spatial conflict."

- 5.24 In relation to accessibility, the Committee Report states:

"78. An assessment of facilities and services within walking distance is set out below. Whilst the New District Centre is outside of the maximum 1200m walkable guidelines, there are a range of facilities and services that have a high and medium level of accessibility, including a primary and secondary school. The walking route to most facilities and services will be through the Arborfield Garrison SDL which has, and is, being developed with appropriate pedestrian and cycle infrastructure. As stated elsewhere in this report, A new pedestrian crossing is being proposed across Langley Common Road which would provide a safe crossing point."

Arborfield Studios and Barkham Square

- 5.25 The draft Local Plan Update proposes a new allocation on land north of the Arborfield Garrison SDL at Barkham Square (for 600 homes) and at Arborfield Studios for 300 dwellings.
- 5.26 Accordingly, the Applicant considers that WBC must see the land around the SDL as being appropriate for strategic scales of additional housing delivery.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace

- 5.27 The Thames Basin Heath SPA is located 2.8km from the Site, and therefore the site lies within the 400m- 5km buffer zone. Special protection is given to the area to ensure any excessive pressure from recreation does not degrade habitats within the designated site or affect the population of protected nesting birds the Thames Basin Heath SPA is designated for.
- 5.28 Paragraph 195 of the NPPF states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects). However, it goes on to state that this does not apply where an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.
- 5.29 In this case, as part of the Thames Basin Heath SPA avoidance strategy set out in Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy, any residential development within 5km of the SPA will require Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). The provision of a SANG alongside the residential development will provide recreation (e.g. dog walking) to focus on the SANG itself by being convenient and accessible to the user, in turn dissuading them to travel further afield to recreate on SPA land. This in turn protects the protected habitats from an intensification of use. Therefore, through the provision of a SANG, the proposed dwellings will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the habitats site, and will continue to benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out in National Policy.

- 5.30 A Habitat Regulations Assessment accompanies this application and sets out the assessment approach further.
- 5.31 The SANG proposed has been included in full detail with this application in order to provide the Council with comfort that it will function as appropriate mitigation for the development in accordance with Natural England's requirements. The Habitat Regulations Assessment and the SANG Delivery and Management plan submitted with this application set out further how the SANG proposed meets with the appropriate requirements.

Character, Layout and Design of the Development

- 5.32 Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development) of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character of the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.
- 5.33 The character of the area has been significantly changed in recent years through the development of the Arborfield Garrison SDL, and the introduction of two and a half and three storey properties up to edge of the development boundary. The proposed development has sought to take design inspiration from this new local character, and it is proposed that, at the detailed design stage, careful consideration will be given to ensure they relate to one another and their surroundings are consistent with the guiding factors set out in Paragraph 135 of the NPPF.
- 5.34 The built development will be located towards the south-eastern edges of the site to ensure a sense of place for the development and so as to retain large swathes of open spaces and SANG towards the north-west of the site and comply with the levels of amenity as set out within Policy CP3 (General Principles for development) and the requirements of the Borough Design Guide. Public and semi-private spaces will be clearly separated by building frontages and boundary enclosures and the use of landscaping. The proposed layout seeks to retain as many of the trees and other vegetation on the site as possible and will provide new high quality hard and soft landscaping to complement this as supported by Policy TB21 (Landscape Character). In achieving the appropriate density for the proposed development, this Statement, alongside a suite of technical reports have demonstrated that the site can accommodate the required amenity space and services though appropriate landscaping, transport and design matters.
- 5.35 The overall layout of built form on the site has been designed so as to minimise the impact on local character whilst making an effective use of land in accordance with Paragraph 128 of the Framework. The proposals will result in a more inclusive development with amenity space that extends across the site so as to respond to views to the existing built form of Arborfield Garrison. The development has recognised the importance of open space and that it can perform numerous functions. This has been fundamental to the design approach in so far as creating a welcoming public realm and public open space for prospective residents.
- 5.36 Detailed commentary on the proposed design and access arrangements are provided within the accompanying Design and Access Statement. In general, much of the detailed design of the proposed development will be established through the reserved matters process. However, it is considered that the proposed development, as explained in the

supporting material, represents a positive response to Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development) and the need to ensure a high standard of design in all new developments.

- 5.37 Further details on the design evolution of the proposals are set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement. In summary the design concept has been determined by the desire to create a high quality, well connected new neighbourhood.
- 5.38 The design process has adopted a landscape led approach with the developable areas determined by the objective to limit the visibility of the site and assimilate the development within the wider area. These features include the existing trees on the Eversley Road frontage and the tree belt running through the heart of the site.
- 5.39 Green infrastructure links are at the heart of the concept and have been designed to enhance their natural qualities as a counterpoint to the built form. The intent is for the scheme to link seamlessly into Arborfield Garrison and provide an attractive, publicly accessible link between the site and the proposed SANG offering a comprehensive Green Infrastructure and footpath network benefiting the new and existing community.
- 5.40 The concept illustrates vehicular accesses off Observer Way and a fifth arm from the existing roundabout at Eversley Road / Langley Common Road / Baird Road. The access road will offer a direct, yet attractive, street running through the heart of the new neighbourhood. Secondary streets will then lead visitors and residents to the natural open space, a destination natural play area and the supporting natural greenspace which wraps around the residential area.

Ecology and Trees

- 5.41 A number of ecological surveys and baselines have been carried out in support of the proposed development, including Bats, Badger, Reptiles, Dormouse, Breeding Birds and Great Crested Newt. An Ecological Assessment accompanies this application submission.
- 5.42 The Ecological Assessment identified that the site has a range of habitats that are managed to serve the current farmland use of associated hedgerows. There is some evidence of and potential for, the presence of protected species within the site. Mitigation measures recommended within the assessment include the proposed SANG itself, the potential incorporation of bird boxes, management of artificial lighting, enhancement of hedgehog habitat features, native planting within landscaped areas, and methods to reduce the impacts of pollution during construction.
- 5.43 The outline, residential, aspect of the proposal will provide a biodiversity net gain in excess of the mandatory 10%, with the initial calculations showing 12.11% for habitat units and 28.12% for hedgerow units. The SANG will secure a 193.61% habitat unit net gain, with 30.16% for hedgerows.
- 5.44 It is considered that the proposal will not result in an unacceptable loss of habitat and will provide appropriate habitat enhancements and a net gain in biodiversity. The proposal accords with the relevant Development Plan policies in this regard, namely CP8 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and TB23 (Biodiversity and Development).

Flooding and drainage

- 5.45 A Flood Risk Assessment accompanies this application submission. In summary the assessment concludes that the site lies within flood zone 1 an area with a 1 in 1000 year risk of flooding; which is considered to be low risk.
- 5.46 Any surface water flooding within the Site can be managed through a combination of mitigation measures including avoiding locating residential development within these areas, the use of ditches to intercept and divert the flow of water and through the use of a comprehensive Sustainable Drainage System.
- 5.47 The Sustainable Drainage System will be attenuation led where water will be held through a series of detention basins restricting run off to greenfield rates before discharging into an adjacent ditch. To supplement these basins a series of swales will be integrated throughout the site. Wider SuDS measures will be considered at reserved matters stage.
- 5.48 Foul water will be discharged into the existing foul network.
- 5.49 With the above measured proposed it is considered that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact upon flooding or drainage and as such would comply with National and Local policies.

Heritage and Archaeology

- 5.50 This application is accompanied by a Heritage Desk-Based Assessment.

- 5.51 The report concludes that the site is considered to have low potential for archaeological remains of all periods; with the geophysical survey of the site failing to reveal any anomalies of archaeological potential. It is considered, given the low archaeological potential, that should any further surveys be required, they could be secured by way of a condition.
- 5.52 No part of the site is considered to constitute the setting of a designated heritage asset. The nearest asset, grade II listed Duck's Nest Farm will be separated from the proposed development by the existing modern buildings to the west, north west and south west of the farmhouse as well as by the former agricultural buildings to the north. The potential for views out of the development to the south will be screened by the existing hedge along the garden boundary. Furthermore, additional landscaping is proposed to bolster the screening in this area to reduce the intervisibility between the proposed development and the listed farmhouse. In addition, the location of the SUDs basin in the vicinity will create a natural separation between the listed building and the nearest edge of the proposed development.
- 5.53 The proposed mitigation will suitably protect the listed farmhouse and its setting from any adverse impact from the proposed development and will therefore comply with Policy TB24 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- 5.54 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment accompanies this application submission. The report concludes that the Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape, ecology or heritage. However, it is located within the 'Farley Hill Valued Landscape', which is identified within the Wokingham Borough Council Emerging Local Plan Update published October 2024.
- 5.55 The site has been assessed to be of medium landscape quality, medium landscape value and medium landscape sensitivity. The main scenic quality which is relevant to the Site is the hilly landform and wooded skyline which applies to the northern boundary only. As landscape mitigation on the Site establishes, views of the residential development will become increasingly filtered and eventually screened during summer, resulting in no substantial adverse visual effects.
- 5.56 Policy CC03 "Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping" of the MDDLDP emphasises that development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered green infrastructure, trees and landscaping. Specifically, the Local Plan stipulates that development should provide new or protect and enhance existing green infrastructure networks.
- 5.57 Significant landscaping is proposed throughout the development which over time will reduce visual effects of the development on the landscape.

Transport

- 5.58 In accordance with Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy, this planning application is supported by a Transport Assessment prepared by SLR. The Transport Assessment sets out how the Site's location and ease of connectivity to local services and transport networks make it a suitable location for growth and accordingly would not have a severe impact on the local highway network.
- 5.59 The Transport Assessment identifies that the Site is approximately 15 minute walk or 5 minute cycle from a variety of services, facilities and public infrastructure available in the local vicinity. Bus stops are available within a 4 minute walk of the site providing direct links to Wokingham and Reading. The accessibility of a selection of local amenities as set out in Table 3.1 of the Transport Assessment is provided below.

Facility	Distance	Walk Time	Cycle Time
Farley Hill Primary School	800m	10 minutes	3 minutes
Bohunt Wokingham Secondary School	1600m	24minutes	6 minutes
Co-op Arborfield	300m	4 minutes	1 minute
Arborfield Surgery	950m	11 minutes	4 minutes
Arborfield Green Community Centre	1100m	13 minutes	4 minutes

- 5.60 Future residents at the proposed development will therefore have the opportunity to access a range of destinations by a choice of sustainable transport modes. The proposed development is located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised.
- 5.61 The accompanying Transport Statement demonstrates that the Site is located in an accessible and sustainable location. Furthermore, it demonstrates that safe and suitable access can be achieved via an additional arm at the Eversley Road / Langley Common Road / Baird Road roundabout with an additional access provided from Observer Way in the location of the existing field access. The junction modelling work undertaken demonstrated that with the proposed development, all junctions are expected to operate within theoretical capacity with minimal delays and queues.

- 5.62 Therefore, the proposed development is considered to adhere to local and national transport policies and would not have an adverse impact upon the local highway or transport networks.

Air Quality

- 5.63 An Air Quality Assessment by SLR accompanies this application submission and concludes that the construction phase will have an insignificant effect on air quality due to the comparatively low volume of vehicle movements. Dust mitigation measures have been proposed that could be secured through a condition requiring a Construction and Environmental Management Plan.
- 5.64 Furthermore, the assessment concludes that for the operational phase, in accordance with EPUK & IAQM guidance, the impacts of the proposed development will 'negligible' and unmitigated effects are considered to be 'not significant'. The assessment concludes that it is recommended that sustainable measures are incorporated into the schemes design to encourage residential to use alternative transport modes, including walking, cycling and electric vehicles.
- 5.65 The proposed development is considered to comply with both Local and National policy in relation to air quality.

Noise Impact

- 5.66 Policy CC06 requires that development proposals demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts to protect noise sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed) from noise impacts.
- 5.67 A Planning Noise Assessment has been prepared by Noise Solutions Ltd to review the acoustic and vibration suitability of proposed new residential development on the site.
- 5.68 Noise solutions noted that the key noise source impacting upon the development is the existing commercial and industrial operations to the east of the site.
- 5.69 The initial noise risk assessment has determined that the site is low risk from noise from these commercial operations to the east and concludes that there will be no adverse impact on residential amenity. It is noted that commercial activities are understood to occur only during normal working hours. None occur during early morning or late evening when such commercial noise might be considered more intrusive and that the assessment is undertaken at the worst-affected areas. The impact on all other residential windows will be lower due to distance/screening losses.
- 5.70 The Noise Assessment demonstrates that the proposals will not give rise to significant adverse effects on health and quality of life and that reasonable practicable mitigation measures can be put in place in the detailed design stage to further mitigate any identified impact.
- 5.71 Paragraph 187 of the Framework establishes that Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (amongst other points) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable

risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of noise pollution (amongst others).

- 5.72 Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed development complies with Policy CC06 as well as the Framework in this regard.

Agricultural Land Condition

- 5.73 Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy asks that development avoid areas of best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land. The BMV land comprises that which is in grades 1, 2, and 3a. The majority of the site currently comprises agricultural land. The Agricultural Land Classification report from Strutt & Parker demonstrates that the Site should be considered as sub-grade 3b quality land and as such would not be classed as the Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land.
- 5.74 The development of this site would therefore not result in the loss of BMV agricultural and subsequently be in accordance with this aspect of Policy CP1, recognising that there are limited opportunities for development elsewhere within or surrounding Arborfield Garrison that would facilitate sustainable growth.

6. Draft Heads of Terms

- 6.1 It is envisaged that any planning permission may be granted subject to a Planning Obligation.
- 6.2 The Applicant is committed to agreeing Heads of Terms with the LPA at the appropriate time once the contributions required associated with the application proposals are understood, including providing onsite affordable housing provision. The Applicant considers that any requirement will need to be shown to comply with Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.

7. Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1 This proposal is for a high quality, well designed and sustainable residential development of up to 135 dwellings. This scheme has evolved in response to the characteristics of the Site and seeks to deliver a residential proposal which makes efficient use of land at an appropriate density, in a highly accessible location and which provides a mix of housing types, tenures and sizes.
- 7.2 The site is located adjacent to the Strategic Development Location of Arborfield Garrison, one of the most sustainable locations in Wokingham Borough, highlighted by the recent housing development and supporting range of services and facilities and access to employment opportunities within the local area that is accessible by a variety of sustainable transport methods.
- 7.3 The site's location means that the proposed dwellings will be ideally located to provide the opportunities for travel by public transport services. Rail services from Wokingham provide connections to Reading, London and elsewhere across the southeast, with bus services to the regional hub of Reading in Station.
- 7.4 It is evident that the Council continues to rely on the delivery of sites outside of settlement limits to meet its identified housing needs. It is noted that there exists a shortfall of housing delivery in Wokingham and that this proposal can help remedy the shortfall of housing in the Borough, at a settlement identified for growth.
- 7.5 In this context, the lack of policy conflict arising from this proposal, the Applicant considers that this proposal should be supported by the Local Planning Authority and planning permission granted.
- 7.6 This scheme should be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Planning permission should therefore be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.
- 7.7 The Applicant considers that this proposal will delivery key benefits, including the delivery of new market and affordable housing, a significant area of publicly accessible open space (which is not currently accessible) as a range of wider economic benefits. In the Applicant's view, any adverse impact of granting this application would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

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