

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared by the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) project team (See Section 1.5) on behalf of the University of Reading (the 'Applicant', 'UoR') to support the planning application for the development of land to the north of Arborfield and east of Shinfield, Wokingham hereafter known as Loddon Garden Village (the 'Site').

1.1.2 The Applicant has submitted a hybrid planning application to Wokingham Borough Council (the Council), which is the local planning authority (LPA) for the location, seeking planning consent for the development of a sustainable new Garden Community known as the Loddon Valley Garden Village (the Proposed Development). The description of development for the planning application is as follows:

*"Application for the phased development of a new community at Loddon Garden Village, comprising, in outline:*

- *up to 2,800 residential dwellings to include 100 custom and self-build plots;*
- *2 primary schools (up to 3 forms of entry) to include early years provision and 1 secondary school (up to 12 forms of entry);*
- *one District Centre, to incorporate up to 11,000m<sup>2</sup> of Class E (Commercial, Business and Service, to include a including food store of around 2,500m<sup>2</sup>), and Class F (Local Community and Learning)*
- *one Local Centre; to incorporate up to 2,400m<sup>2</sup> of Class E*
- *a Sports Hub to include sports pitches and pavilion space;*
- *up to 4,250m<sup>2</sup> of further Class E, Class F, and sui generis development to include commercial, health care and public house*
- *comprehensive green infrastructure including a Country Park, landscaping and public open space, and ecological enhancement measures;*
- *20 gypsy and traveller pitches;*
- *comprehensive drainage and flood alleviation measures to include Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and engineering measures within Loddon Valley for the River Loddon;*
- *internal road network including spine road with pedestrian and cycle connections and associated supporting infrastructure;*
- *new and modified public rights of way;*
- *associated utilities, infrastructure, and engineering works, including the undergrounding of overhead lines.*

- *Ground reprofiling to accommodate infrastructure, flood alleviation and development parcels*
- *Up to 0.5ha of land adjoining St Bartholomew's church for use as cemetery*
- *Electricity substation (up to 1.5ha)*

*All matters reserved other than access, incorporating:*

- *a new pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access to Lower Earley Way via a new 4th arm to the Meldreth Way roundabout;*
- *a new pedestrian, cycle and vehicular bridge over the M4;*
- *a new pedestrian, cycle and vehicular bridge over the River Loddon;*
- *a new vehicular access to the A327 Reading Road, via a new arm to the Observer Way roundabout;*
- *a new pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access to Thames Valley Science Park;*
- *an initial phase of internal roads with associated drainage, landscape and engineering works and ground reprofiling, between the A327 and the south eastern boundary of the site.*

*Application includes full permission for the change of use of 40.4 hectares of agricultural land to Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), 18.35 hectares of SANG link, and provision of Biodiversity Net Gain measures, the demolition and clearance of 20,809 m<sup>2</sup> of buildings and structures at the Centre for Dairy Research (CEDAR) and at Hall Farm, the demolition of 2 existing dwellings on Carter's Hill Lane, and the retention of specified buildings at Hall Farm.”*

## 1.2 Background and Planning Context

1.2.1 The Site is a large area of land to the west of Wokingham, between the villages of Shinfield, Arborfield and Sindlesham. It is located outside of the Green Belt and is adjacent to the University of Reading's Thames Valley Science and Innovation Park (TVSP).

### *The Wider Strategic Development Location – Loddon Valley Garden Village*

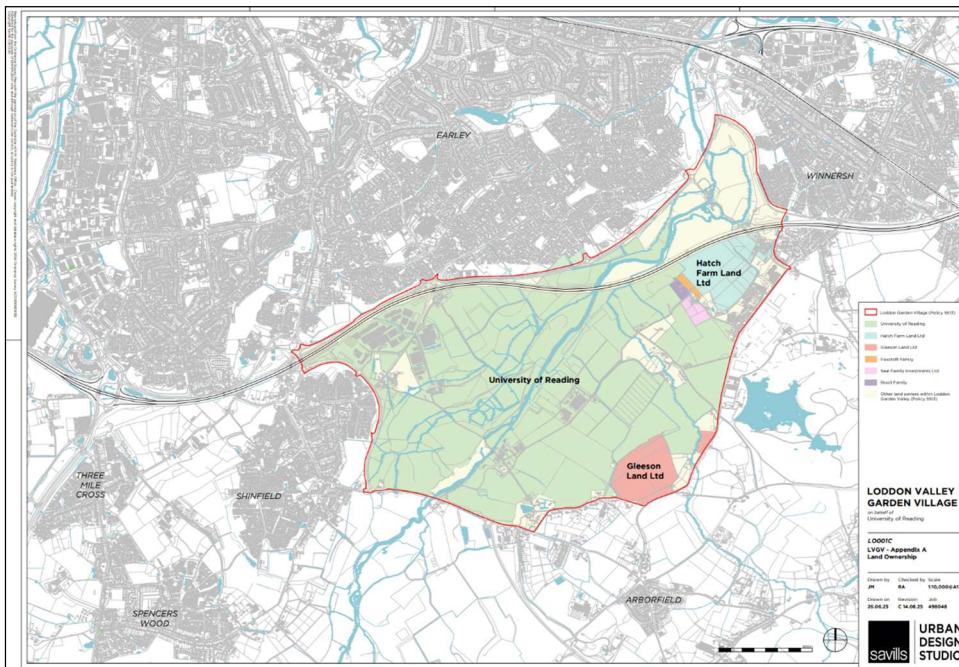
1.2.2 The Site is located on land proposed to be allocated as a Strategic Development Location (SDL) in the emerging Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU). The SDL is referred to in the LPU as the Loddon Valley Garden Village (LVGV) and this application is referred to as the Loddon Garden Village (LGV). The development principles for the LVGV are set out in LPU Policy SS13 (Hall Farm / Loddon Valley Strategic Development Location). This policy includes phased delivery of around 3,930 dwellings, expansion of the Thames Valley Science and Innovation Park, neighbourhood centres (including retail, leisure, sports, cultural, health and service facilities), and education provision.

1.2.3 The LPU was submitted for Examination on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025. The Examination is expected to continue throughout 2025 before the LPU is adopted in 2026.

1.2.4 The land comprising the SDL is primarily owned by three landowners: The University of Reading, Gleeson Land and Hatch Farm Land Ltd. (the landowners). The combined area for the SDL extends to 732.57 hectares (ha). The red line boundary for the SDL is shown in Figure 1.1 alongside the associated land ownerships (see separate '*Figure 1.1 LO001B Appendix 1 – Land Ownership*' to view full size drawing).

1.2.5 The location and extent of the Site (to which this ES relates) is identified by the red line shown in Figure 1.2 below (see separate '*Figure 1.2 LP01 LGV – Site Location Plan revF*' to view full size drawing). In total, the Site covers an area of approximately 397 ha.

**Figure 1.1 Red line boundary for the Wider SDL (LO001B Appendix 1 – Land Ownership)**



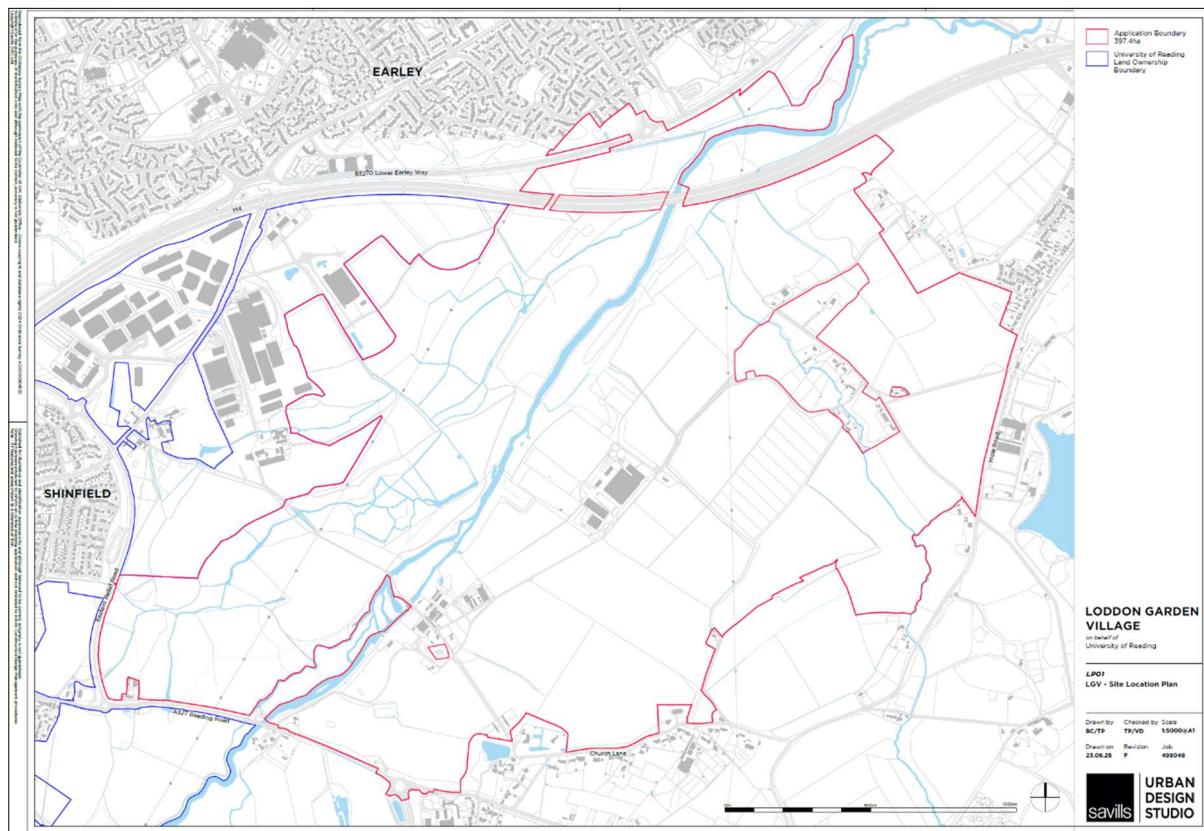
1.2.6 Prior to the preparation of this Environmental Statement, all the landowners forwent the submission of a request for a Screening Opinion and undertook a joint EIA scoping exercise. The landowners are progressing separate planning applications covering their parcels of development which will be subject to their own separate Environmental Impact Assessments.

1.2.7 The Gleeson Land and Hatch Farm Land Limited planning applications will be assessed as part of the Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA) as such, the EIA will assess the Proposed Development using the following assessment scenarios:

- Baseline
- Baseline + UoR Application Proposals (The Proposed Development)
- The Proposed Development + wider development within the LGV (Policy SS13) allocation (based upon available information) (The LGV Project)
- The LGV Project + wider Cumulative Development (The Cumulative Effects Assessment)

1.2.8 Further details on the approach to the assessment are set out within Chapter 5.

**Figure 1.2 Site Location Plan**



### **1.3 Environmental Impact Assessment**

- 1.3.1 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process that formally considers the construction and operational aspects of a proposal that may have significant effects on the environment. The findings of an EIA are described in a written report known as an Environmental Statement (ES). An ES provides environmental information about the scheme, including a description of the development, its predicted environmental effects and the measures proposed to mitigate adverse effects: information that is taken into account in the planning decision.
- 1.3.2 This document is the ES submitted with the planning application for the Proposed Development and sets out the results of the EIA undertaken. This ES is prepared in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations'). A separate Non-Technical Summary (NTS) provides a summary of the main findings of the ES.
- 1.3.3 A request was made to the Council for its EIA scoping opinion in December 2024 (Appendix 5.1). The purpose of this was to identify what the Council considers to be the main environmental issues associated with the Proposed Development. The Council consulted with statutory consultees and issued a formal EIA scoping opinion on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025 (see Appendix 5.2). The EIA has been undertaken in accordance with the Scoping Opinion insofar as it relates to the UoR application Site.
- 1.3.4 An EIA has been undertaken for the Proposed Development described in Chapter 3. A list of tables, figures and appendices is listed above in the contents page. Subsequently, when the Council is deciding whether to grant planning permission, it can do so in the full knowledge of any significant effects predicted, and take this into account in the decision-making process.

## 1.4 Environmental Statement Structure

1.4.1 This ES comprises the Main Report, Figures, supporting Appendices and a separate NTS. Following this introduction and description of the Site, the ES Main Report is organised as follows:

2. Site and Local Context
3. Proposed Development
4. Consultation, alternatives and design evolution
5. Approach to Assessment
6. Planning Policy Context
7. Air Quality
8. Archaeology
9. Built Heritage
10. Climate Change & Greenhouse Gases
11. Ecology
12. Human Health
13. Hydrology (Flood Risk & Drainage)
14. Landscape & Visual Impact
15. Noise and Vibration
16. Socio-economics
17. Transport and Access
18. Summary of mitigation, residual effects and interaction effects

1.4.2 Chapter 2 provides a description of the Site and its surroundings, including the Wider SDL, and Chapter 3 explains each element of the Proposed Development and defines the physical and operational aspects assessed by the EIA. The alternative options considered during the site selection and environmental influences on the design process are explained in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 sets out the approach taken to the assessment. Chapter 6 – Planning Policy Context outlines the relevant planning policy in relation to the Proposed Development and the assessments undertaken within the EIA.

1.4.3 Environmental issues assessed in the EIA process are then reported in Chapters 7 to 17, with the majority of associated figures provided as separate files (PDF), although some are set within the text of the Chapters. Chapter 18 provides a summary of the proposed mitigation, residual and interaction effects.

## 1.5 The Project Team

1.5.1 Those working on the EIA of the Proposed Development are as follows:

**Table 1.1 Project Team**

Chapter	Title	Responsibility
1	Introduction	Savills
2	Site Description	
3	Proposed Development	
4	Consultation, Alternative and design evolution	
5	Approach to Assessment	
6	Planning Policy Context	
7	Air Quality	RPS
8	Archaeology	RPS
9	Built Heritage	RPS
10	Climate Change & Greenhouse Gases	Savills
11	Ecology	EPR
12	Human Health	Savills
13	Hydrology (including Flood Risk and Drainage)	ALP/RPS
14	Landscape & Visual Impact	Savills
15	Noise and Vibration	RPS
16	Socio-Economics	Savills
17	Transport & Access	ALP
18	Summary	Savills

1.5.2 The EIA has been coordinated by Savills with the technical assessments and input undertaken by the project team. An outline of the qualifications/experience of the assessors to demonstrate competency in accordance with the EIA Regulations is provided in Appendix 1.1. Furthermore, a glossary of terms is provided in Appendix 1.2.

## 1.6 Availability of environmental information

1.6.1 The Environmental Statement (including its figures and technical appendices) and other planning application documents can be viewed on the Council's planning applications website:  
<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning/existing-planning-applications>

1.6.2 A copy of the ES on USB Flash Drive can be obtained for a charge of £25 from: *UK\_SouthamptonPlanning@savills.com*, Telephone 02380 713 900. A printed copy of the NTS can also be obtained free of charge from Savills.

## 1.7 Consultation

1.7.1 Should interested parties wish to make representations on the content of this ES, they should be made in writing by post or by email at:

[planning.enquiries@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:planning.enquiries@wokingham.gov.uk)

Wokingham Borough Council

Shute End

Wokingham, Berkshire

RG40 1BN

0118 974 6000

1.7.2 Alternatively, representations can be made online by following instructions at:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning/existing-planning-applications/comment-planning-application>