

6 Planning Policy Context

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This chapter summarises the planning policy context for the planning application and the EIA. The environmental assessments have been undertaken with reference to relevant local, regional and national policies in respect of the environmental topics covered within the EIA. Any applicable standards or targets within these policies have been considered when evaluating potential environmental impacts and effects. Where relevant this is set out within the technical chapters.

6.1.2 Further details on the planning policy context is set out within the Planning Statement submitted as part of the suite of documents supporting the planning application.

6.2 National Planning Policy

6.2.1 The Proposed Development will be considered in accordance with relevant policies and guidance at local, regional and national levels.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), revised December 2024

6.2.2 The revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 12th December 2024¹ and, as set out in paragraphs 2 and 231, is a material consideration in the determination in this planning decision.

6.2.3 Section 2 of the NPPF confirms that the purpose of the planning system '*is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner*' (paragraph 7). As set out in paragraph 8, this has three distinct objectives:

- **Economic:** including '*to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy*', which includes '*ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth*';
- **Social:** which includes '*ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations*';
- **Environmental:** which centres on the need to '*protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment*'.

6.2.4 Paragraph 10 of the NPPF 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

¹ The NPPF was amended in February 2025 to correct cross-references and amend paragraph 155. These amendments were not so significant as to constitute a change to the policy set out in the Framework.

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.”*

- 6.2.5 Footnote 8 sets out that the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date for applications involving the provision of housing, where: the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 78); or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years.
- 6.2.6 In relation to paragraph 11(d)(i), footnote 7 confirms that the policies referred to are those in the NPPF relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.
- 6.2.7 NPPF 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.
- 6.2.8 NPPF Paragraph 66 states that for major developments, planning policies and decisions should expect that the mix of affordable housing required meets identified local needs, across Social Rent, other affordable housing for rent and affordable home ownership tenures.
- 6.2.9 NPPF Paragraph 77 sets out that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes).
- 6.2.10 The NPPF is accompanied by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which is considered within this Environmental Statement.

6.3 Local Planning Policy

6.3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all planning applications to be determined in accordance with the relevant Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for Wokingham Borough Council comprises of the following:

- Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework – Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (January 2010)
- Wokingham Borough Development Plan – Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (February 2014)
- South East Plan (February 2013)²
- Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals & Waste Plan (2019)
- Neighbourhood Development Plans

6.3.2 Wokingham Borough Council is currently undertaking a review of the Local Plan. The Local Plan Update (LPU) was submitted for Examination on 28 February 2025 with examination taking place through 2025 and adoption anticipated in 2026. Although it does not carry full weight, the LPU is at an advanced stage such that the draft policies and allocations should already be given some weight in determination. This weight will increase during examination of the plan, and full weight would be attached to policies upon their formal adoption.

Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework – Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (January 2010)

6.3.3 The Adopted Core Strategy (CS) ‘sets out the vision for how the Borough will develop in the period to 2026 and how the council aims to protect and enhance the good quality of life enjoyed in the borough.’

6.3.4 The relevant planning policies within the Adopted Core Strategy are as follows:

- Policy CP1 – Sustainable Development
- Policy CP2 – Inclusive Communities
- Policy CP3 – General Principles for Development
- Policy CP5 – Housing mix, density and affordability
- Policy CP6 – Managing Travel Demand
- Policy CP7 – Biodiversity
- Policy CP8 – Thames Basing Heath Special Protection Area
- Policy CP9 – Scale and location of development proposals
- Policy CP10 – Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network

² Abolished with the exception of Policy NRM6.

- Policy CP11 – Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)
- Policy CP13 – Town centres and shopping
- Policy CP15 – Employment Development
- Policy CP16 – Science Park
- Policy CP17 – Housing Delivery

Wokingham Borough Development Plan – Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (February 2014)

6.3.5 The Adopted Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan adds to the Adopted Core Strategy. The MDD ‘sets out where new homes will be delivered within the Borough. [...] These policies will enable the Council to ensure that any new housing will be built to a high quality and provide a range of housing types and sizes...’.

6.3.6 The relevant planning policies within the Adopted MDD are as follows:

- Policy CC01 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Policy CC02 – Development Limits
- Policy CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
- Policy CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction
- Policy CC05 – Renewable Energy and decentralised energy networks
- Policy CC06 – Noise
- Policy CC07 – Parking
- Policy CC08 – Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure
- Policy CC09 – Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
- Policy CC10 – Sustainable Drainage
- Policy TB05 – Housing Mix
- Policy TB07 – Internal Space Standards
- Policy TB08 – Open Space, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development
- Policy TB09 – Residential accommodation for vulnerable groups
- Policy TB11 – Core Employment Areas
- Policy TB12 – Employment Skills Plan
- Policy TB13 – Science and Innovation Park
- Policy TB15 – Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre development

- Policy TB17 – Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops
- Policy TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use
- Policy TB21 – Landscape Character
- Policy TB22 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value
- Policy TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
- Policy TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas)
- Policy TB25 – Archaeology
- Policy TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
- Policy SAL02 – Allocated housing development sites
- Policy SAL04 – New open space associated with residential development within and adjoining the Borough
- Policy SAL05 – Delivery of avoidance measures for Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals & Waste Plan (2019)

6.3.7 The Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals & Waste Plan was adopted on 19th January 2023 and covers Wokingham Borough, Bracknell Forest, Reading Borough, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Councils. The Joint Plan sets out the strategy for managing minerals and waste related development, including the extraction of minerals such as sand, gravel and disposal of waste and recycling.

6.3.8 Parts of the site are within a Mineral Safeguarding Area and Area of Search for Sand and Gravel.

6.3.9 The relevant planning policies within the Joint Minerals & Waste Plan are as follows:

- Policy M2 – Safeguarding sand and gravel resources

Other plans and policies

South East Plan (February 2013)

6.3.10 Following the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies in May 2010, the South East Plan was formally abolished in February 2013, except for Policy NRM6 – Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area relating to new residential development close to the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area. Therefore, this policy formally remains part of the Development Plan.

Neighbourhood Development Plans

6.3.11 Wokingham Borough contains a number of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). NDPs are produced by Town and Parish Councils in order to enable the local community to influence how their local area should develop and grow. The site area is covered by two NDPS: Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan & Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan³.

Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (April 2020)

6.3.12 The relevant planning policies within the Arborfield and Barkham NDP are as follows:

- Policy IRS1: Preservation of Separation of Settlements
- Policy IRS2: Recognise, respect and preserve identity and rural setting of settlements
- Policy IRS3: protection and enhancement of the natural environment and green spaces
- Policy IRS4: Protection and enhancement of the historic character of the area
- Policy TC2: Properly planned and designed new facilities
- Policy AD2: Prioritise housing for local needs
- Policy AD3: High quality development with generous open space, properly landscaped
- Policy AD4: Address local flood risk management
- Policy GA1: Minimise additional traffic on unsuitable roads
- Policy GA2: Implement local network of green routes for non-motorised users
- Policy GA3: Public transport improvements with long term viability

Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan (February 2017)

6.3.13 The relevant planning policies within the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan are as follows:

- Policy 2: General design principles
- Policy 3: Sustainable development
- Policy 4: Accessibility and highway safety
- Policy 5: Parking provision
- Policy 6: Trees, hedgerows and woodland
- Policy 7: Biodiversity
- Policy 8: Flooding

³ Once the new Local Plan is adopted, and due to both plans being more than five years old, the policies in both Neighbourhood Plans would be considered out of date. Nevertheless, both plans have been included here for additional context.

- Policy 9: Community Assets
- Policy 10: Community and sports facilities
- Policy 11: Commercial development
- Policy 12: Broadband provision

Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 Proposed Submission Plan

6.3.14 The Local Plan Update sets out a clear strategy to deliver a vision of thriving, green and inclusive communities in the period to 2040. The plan is at a far advanced stage to allow submission for examination. Loddon Garden Village forms the centre piece of the proposed local plan and remains the principal location for development.

“It will deliver new homes near key employment locations. It will increase educational provision and provide a substantial new country park for the enjoyment of the community as well as biodiversity improvements, flooding betterment, and good connections to other areas.”

6.3.15 The relevant planning policies within the Proposed Submission Plan are as follows:

- Policy SS1 – Sustainable development principles
- Policy SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy
- Policy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements
- Policy SS4 - Development within or adjacent to minor settlements
- Policy SS5 – Development within the countryside
- Policy SS8 – Meeting employment needs
- Policy SS13 – Loddon Valley Garden Village (see Appendix 6.1 for full wording)
- Policy SS15 – Securing infrastructure
- Policy SS16 – Safeguarded routes
- Policy SS17 – Transport improvements
- Policy CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings
- Policy CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development
- Policy CE3 – Environmental standards for residential development
- Policy CE4 – Supporting a circular economy
- Policy CE5 – Embodied carbon
- Policy CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings
- Policy C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility
- Policy C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highways safety and design

- Policy C3 – Active travel
- Policy C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way
- Policy C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging
- Policy C6 – Technology and innovation in transport
- Policy C8 – Utilities
- Policy ER4 – Employment and skills plans
- Policy ER5 – The hierarchy of centres
- Policy H1 – Housing mix, density and standards
- Policy H3 – Affordable housing
- Policy H7 – Specialist accommodation
- Policy FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources)
- Policy FD2 – Sustainable drainage
- Policy FD3 – River corridors and watercourses
- Policy NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Policy NE2 – Biodiversity net gain
- Policy NE3 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- Policy NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows
- Policy NE5 – Landscape and design
- Policy NE6 – Valued landscapes
- Policy NE7 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value
- Policy DH1 – Place making and quality design
- Policy DH2 – Safeguarding amenity
- Policy DH3 – Shopfronts
- Policy DH5 – The historic environment
- Policy DH6 – Archaeology
- Policy HC1 – Promoting healthy communities
- Policy HC2 – Community infrastructure
- Policy HC3 – Local Green Space
- Policy HC4 – Open space, sports, recreation and play facilities

- Policy HC5 – Environmental protection
- Policy HC6 – Air pollution and air quality
- Policy HC7 – Light pollution
- Policy HC8 – Noise pollution
- Policy HC9 – Contamination land and water
- Policy HC10 – Odour, fumes and dust

6.3.16 Further details on the key policies which relate to the assessment of environmental topics scoped into the EIA are set out within the respective chapters (Chapter 7-17).