

PLANNING REF : 243188
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Arborfield Village Hall
: Eversley Road, Arborfield
: RG2 9PQ
SUBMITTED BY : Arborfield & Newland Parish Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 22/01/2025

COMMENTS:

Arborfield & Newland Parish Council response to the Hall Farm/Loddon Valley SDL Scoping Opinion Notification - 243188

The LGV Scoping

report is 189 pages long and makes extensive reference to the maps and drawings provided. Releasing this very important set of documents over the Christmas Holidays made it extremely difficult to respond appropriately and adequately. Arborfield & Newland Parish Council

(A&NPC) are grateful for the additional time granted to respond to this report, but it is still not clear if this "scoping" report was requiring a response or is for information only. Will officers be publishing a response to this "consultation"?

Please note, 8.2.23 and 9.2.8 both refer to Arborfield and Newham Parish. We are Arborfield and Newland Parish Council. Furthermore, at 2.2.6: "To the south of the Site are the existing villages of Arborfield and Arborfield Cross". Arborfield Village does not exist. The settlements here are either Arborfield Cross or Arborfield Green.

Landscape impact

9.4.11 Arborfield Conservation area will be severely and negatively impacted by the development of houses along the Mole Road and behind Church

Lane as the essentially rural character of the landscape will be changed to an essentially urban one.

9.4.12 Carters Hill House will

also be significantly affected in that it will no longer be in a rural setting.

2.2.11 A review of historical maps indicates that since 1872 the land has predominantly been within agricultural use. The Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (NP) includes the following policy objectives:

- Protect and enhance the countryside – new development should blend into the landscape, not dominate landscape views.
- Retain separation of settlements to preserve their individual identities.
- Protect and enhance heritage and natural environment and extend conservation designations where possible.

Heritage

2.2.19 Within the Site boundary there are twenty-four built heritage assets. This does not include the Locally Valued Heritage Asset, The Avenue of Trees between the Old Priory and the Old Churchyard. This heritage asset has not been acknowledged in the Local Plan and will, if this proposal goes ahead, be bisected by a major new road into the Loddon Valley Garden Village (LVGV).

8.2.14 defines Archaeological interest as heritage assets which hold or

potentially could hold evidence of past human activity worthy of investigation at some point. The site of the Iron Age Village, known locally as "Aeberfeld" and located somewhere near the old church/old

mill has still to be properly investigated. Will this site still be accessible for future investigations?

8.2.19 Refers to the NPPG

guidance on preservation of heritage assets. The Old Church and Churchyard are a Grade II Listed Scheduled Monument. It is the responsibility of A&NPC to protect and preserve the Old Churchyard, but how it will be preserved and protected going forward is not at all clear from the master planning documents currently available to us.

Fig 9.2. Built Heritage Reception Plan. Some valued heritage buildings have been omitted from the plan:

Monks Cottage - Carters Hill Lane, RG2 9JD. This building was originally constructed as 3 farm workers' cottages in the late 17th century.

Mens Mess Room - at end of The Avenue of Trees (near to remains of St Bartholomew's Church). This is a historic building and forms a focal point when walking north-west along The Avenue of Trees.

Reading Room Cottage, Church

Lane, RG29JD. Built in 1881 by Sarah Hargreaves of Arborfield Hall in memoriam of her son, Arthur, as a library and community function room. Noted in Arborfield Local History and Neighbourhood Plan.

This

building has been included as HB17 in Fig 9.2 but de-scoped in the EIA Scoping Report pages 9-11.

These buildings are key heritage

landmarks on the Hall Farm Estate and should continue to be valued as such, with due consideration to their position in the landscape and impact upon them from the proposed built environment.

Indicative Phasing

It is proposed to deliver at least 2,700 houses by 31st March 2040.

The M4 Bridge will be required to move construction traffic away from the current access roads which are already heavily congested at peak times. It is the opinion of A&NPC that the spine road and M4 crossing should be delivered as part of Phase 1 to avoid local road congestion.

Table 5.2 shows proposed cumulative schemes of development within the vicinity of the LVGV. This takes no account of recent proposals in the area such as North Of Reading Road, School Road, Bridge Farm and Barkham Square, all of which will contribute significantly to pressure on local infrastructure if they go ahead.

5.4.34 states that LPAs should have regard to the possible cumulative effects arising from any existing or approved t.

Environmental impact

5.4.10 considers the probable impact of a disaster occurring at the site as unlikely; however, the Bearwood Lake Dam is not considered within the report. Elsewhere in the report, the impact of climate change is considered but this is not considered in relation to the potential for flooding downstream of the lake should we see rainfall of the type increasingly experienced due to the impact of climate change going forward into 2040 and beyond.

5.4.17 describes the site as partly comprised of undeveloped agricultural land but goes on to say no site-specific assessment data is available. A&NPC would like to see the land assessed as a matter of urgency. This was once a "model farm" and has been used by the University of Reading as a site for teaching agriculture. Parts of the site are described as Grade 3 and it needs to be established if other parts of the site could be Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land.

9.4.13 Sindlesham

Mill is recognised as being on the Loddon Valley flood plain so no houses will be built here. However, it is proposed to build a new road from Mill Lane to Hatch Farm Way, which is also in the flood plain. This road will cut across an area that is currently designated as SANG.

14.2.6 NPPF and PPG guidelines state that, in plan making, LPAs should approach site selection so that development is located where the risk from flooding is lowest. Next to a flood plain and below a major dam is not lowest flood risk when other sites, such as Ashridge, do not have these problems.

Support the transition to a low carbon future.

10.2.4 The Loddon Valley development will be car dependent as there is no public transport currently available. It is not practical to assume walking and cycling will be the predominant forms of transport when people may be elderly, feel unsafe or have shopping to carry,

10.2.31 Climate change adaptation. What happens beyond 2080?

10.4.4 Options for local food production. Given this is currently farmland, why is on-site food production not part of the planning?

Biodiversity

11.3.57 White clawed crayfish (WCC) are an endangered native species. A&NPC are aware of a survey undertaken by Martin Moore for Loddon Fisheries and Conservation Consultative in 2024 that indicates WCC may be present at one site in Barkham Brook. We note there appear to be several paragraphs of the EIA redacted at this point and would like to understand why this is the case.

Water supply and treatment.

14.2.57 Currently Arborfield Water Treatment Plant overflow goes into Barkham Brook. The addition of 3,930 houses can only exacerbate this problem.

14.4.12 Permanent increase in run off. A&NPC are aware of surface run off issues elsewhere in the borough that have been subject to high levels of development (e.g. allotments in construction at Nightingale Fields). There is a SUDS Scheme here yet groundwater flooding still occurs. How confident can we be the SUDS here will be any better?

14.5.2 Groundwater flooding has been scoped out of the EIA.

Traffic Assessment

7.5.2 states that the amount of construction traffic is expected to be minimal and

therefore detailed assessment of this has been scoped out. What is the evidence for this expectation? Surely the point of the scoping exercise is to consider the full environmental impact of building here.

Table 9.3 gives criteria for assessing magnitude of change/impact. It is the view of Arborfield and Newland Parish Council that the Spine Road proposed to cut across the avenue of trees and the building of houses around the scheduled monument of the old church

will have a Major impact.

17.5.5 Phasing of infrastructure: It is proposed to build the M4 bridge towards the end of the development. A&NPC are concerned this has not been properly costed and that delivery of the bridge towards the final stages of construction will place a huge burden of additional traffic on existing roads that are already at peak capacity.

18.2.1 Transport assessment report is over optimistic regarding take

up of public transport, cycling and walking.

18.3.2 The site is largely isolated from existing highways infrastructure and will need a new spine road that will cut through a locally valued heritage site in the west and a SANG in the East. It will also require a new M4 crossing to the North. This will not alleviate the traffic problems on small rural roads locally.

18.3.5 Mole Road and Mill Lane are already roads that suffer from congestion at peak times and will be expected to cope with much of the additional traffic generated during the early phases of construction and occupation. Both these roads have no footpath or street lighting for much of their length.

16.5.3 Vibration effects of construction should be scoped in. Impact of vibration caused by existing traffic on residents near to local roads is already significant and will be made worse by this development.

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Submitted on behalf of Arborfield and Newland Parish Council.

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22/01/2025