

Barkham Square, Arborfield Green, Wokingham

Planning Supporting Statement
On behalf of Crest Nicholson Operations Ltd
April 2026
Our Ref: 22-01931



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Quality Assurance

This report has been prepared within the quality system operated at Rapleys LLP according to British Standard ISO 9001:2015.

We confirm that the undersigned is an appropriately qualified and experienced Chartered Planner experienced in the commercial property sector.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Overview

1.1 This Planning Supporting Statement has been prepared by Rapleys LLP on behalf of Crest Nicholson Operations Limited hereafter referred to as “Crest”.

1.2 It is provided in support of an Outline planning application. The formal description of development is therefore as follows:

Outline application (with all matters reserved except for access) for residential development (Use Class C3), plus elderly care dwellings (Use Class C2/C3), associated open space, allotments, green and blue infrastructure including the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and other associated works.

1.3 The proposed development comprises a range of components, including:

- Up to 660 residential dwellings (Class C3)
- Elderly care dwellings (Class C2/C3)
- Public Open space (including play provision and allotments)
- Green and blue infrastructure
- On-site Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)
- Vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from Langley Common Road and Commonfield Lane (allotments/SANG only)

1.4 The proposed development would form a logical extension to the existing Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location (SDL), which has been subject to comprehensive residential-led development further to its allocation within the Wokingham Core Strategy (2010) for 3,500 dwellings plus extensive supporting infrastructure (including District Centres, Local Centres, Primary and Secondary Schools and extensive open/green space provision).

1.5 This opportunity is reflected in the Site’s allocation as part of an extended Arborfield Green SDL (as it is now known), via draft Policy SS11, as detailed within the Wokingham Local Plan Update (Regulation 19: Pre-Submission Version).

1.6 This Planning Statement sets out the context for Crest’s proposals – providing detail in regard to the context of the application site and the nature of the proposed development, before summarising the relevant Development Plan policies and other material considerations, (including emerging policies and the National Planning Policy Framework), against which the application will be determined.

1.7 The Statement then assesses the compliance of the proposed development with the relevant policies of the Development Plan and other material considerations, providing reasoned justification for the granting of planning permission.

Development Need

- 1.8 Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) faces significant housing pressures, similar to many areas in the South East. The provision of up to 660 homes at Barkham Square will contribute significantly to meeting the identified need for housing.
- 1.9 This proposal supports the government's housing delivery targets, ensuring Wokingham remains an attractive, thriving place for residents and businesses. The NPPF demonstrably seeks to significantly boost housing supply – including in Wokingham, whereby the annual requirement (as defined by the Standard Method) will require Wokingham to deliver 1,336 new homes annually, a figure that is significantly in excess of the figure of 748 per annum, as expressed within the prior iteration of the Standard Method. Evidently, this proposal will contribute significantly in terms of establishing a requisite supply of housing, whilst also boosting actual delivery.

About Crest Nicholson

- 1.10 With over 50 years of experience, Crest Nicholson is an established leading housebuilder that has designed and built high-quality and aesthetically pleasing developments across the country. Crest Nicholson's aim for the present and future is to improve the quality of life for communities and individuals by creating inviting landscaped public realms, extensive green infrastructure and appropriate community facilities. As the lead developer of Arborfield Green, Crest Nicholson is well placed to deliver the proposed development at Barkham Square.
- 1.11 Crest recognises that successful development must go 'hand-in-hand' with adequate infrastructure provision. Crest is therefore committed to working closely with the Council and stakeholders to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is delivered. The proposals will include contributions towards local services and infrastructure improvements, where appropriate, ensuring that the development integrates with the existing community, and the Arborfield Green Development directly south of the site.

Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.12 Crest has considered the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in accordance with Regulation 15 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations').
- 1.13 Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ("EIA Regulations") identifies that an Environmental Impact Assessment ("EIA") is only required where an urban development over 5ha in size or more than 150 dwellings is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.
- 1.14 Having assessed the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development, Crest is of the view that the proposed development constitutes EIA development and therefore has undertaken an EIA in support of this planning application.

- 1.15 Having reached this conclusion, Crest has not submitted a request to WBC for a Screening Opinion. Instead, Crest progressed directly to the submission of a Scoping Opinion, seeking WBC's confirmation of matters that are to be expressly considered within an Environment Statement.
- 1.16 In accordance with good practice, a Scoping Report was prepared by Rapleys and submitted to WBC on 9th December 2024, in order to identify the potential likely significant environmental effects of the proposed development
- 1.17 WBC's response was issued on 28th January 2025, detailing that the following factors could be scoped out of the ES:
- Historic Environment (built heritage and archaeology)
 - Noise
 - Vibration
 - Ground Conditions
 - Climate Change (note: only those areas of potential effects the report identifies as "non-significant")
 - Society, Economy and Population
 - Major accidents and natural disasters
 - Human Health
- 1.18 In accordance with the approach set out in the Scoping Report, an Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared and is submitted alongside this Planning Statement. The ES includes an assessment of the likely significant environmental impacts of the proposed development. Notwithstanding the factors to be scoped out, as identified at paragraph 1.18 above, the ES has progressed to consider the matters of archaeology and noise and vibration within the ES scope.
- 1.19 By following the full EIA process, Crest has ensured that any potentially significant effects on the environment resulting from the proposed development are considered and, where appropriate, mitigated.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

- 1.20 In addition to the assessment of potential environmental effects under the EIA Regulations, there is a requirement under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (SI 2017 No. 1012) (the 'Habitats Regulations') to undertake a screening exercise to determine whether any European sites are likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other projects and, if so, whether these effects will result in any adverse effects on the integrity of any European sites. If significant effects are likely, there would be a need for an Appropriate Assessment to be undertaken.
- 1.21 The screening, and any subsequent Appropriate Assessment, form part of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process. Screening and any subsequent Appropriate Assessment

will be undertaken by WBC (as the 'competent authority' for HRA), drawing upon information about the likely adverse effects of the proposed development on the integrity of European sites.

- 1.22 In undertaking its assessment, WBC is required to consult with Natural England and to facilitate the HRA process; Crest will also liaise with Natural England, and other interested parties as appropriate.
- 1.23 To assist in this process, a Shadow Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been undertaken on the potential for significant effects on the European designated sites identified within 10km of the Site. The Shadow HRA, which forms part of the wider Environmental Statement, concludes that the proposed development will not result in likely significant effects on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

Pre-Application Engagement

- 1.24 This Outline planning application is submitted further to Pre-Application discussions between Crest and the Local Planning Authority (LPA).
- 1.25 Pre-application meetings with WBC have been undertaken via a Planning Performance Agreement. The meetings have been multi-faceted, focusing on:
- Agreeing the scope of assessments to be undertaken in support of the planning application – with particular focus in respect of transport/highways, landscape, ecology, flood risk/drainage and heritage/archaeology; &
 - Identifying the key planning considerations and discussions in respect of potential mitigation measures, to be secured either through appropriate conditions or as obligations to form part of a Section 106 Agreement.
- 1.26 The Pre-Application engagement process has resulted in the preparation and submission of a Masterplan Framework Document which is provided for the purpose of establishing parameters for future Reserved Matters applications, in the event that Outline consent is granted.

Community Engagement

- 1.27 In order to maximise community participation in the Planning process, Crest Nicholson held a public exhibition event on Wednesday 4th December 2024 at Arborfield Community Centre, Princess Marine Drive, RG2 9NN. The exhibition was held between 14.00 and 20.00 and this included a one-hour preview session for Councillors and stakeholders.
- 1.28 To introduce the emerging proposals and inform the local community of the public consultation event, the Applicant produced an invitation leaflet which was distributed to 3,188 addresses around the site on Tuesday, 26th November 2024.
- 1.29 Letters were also sent to Wokingham Borough Council Ward members, the Leader of the Council, Wokingham Borough Council Planning Committee members and Arborfield & Newland and Barkham Parish Councils inviting them to the Councillor preview session of the public exhibition which ran from 2pm-3pm on the same day, at the same location.

1.30 A project website - barkhamsquareconsultation.co.uk - was used to host information on the public exhibition. The website has been live since Tuesday, 26th November 2024.

The public exhibition was attended by 43 people, and this number includes members of Wokingham Borough Council.

11 feedback forms were completed and returned at the public consultation event, with a further 5 forms completed online via the project website.

1.31 To support the consultation process, a dedicated telephone number and email address for enquiries were established to provide opportunities for interested parties to provide comment.

1.32 Further detail in respect of the community engagement process is contained within the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement, prepared by Cratus.

Submitted Documentation & Plans

1.33 As advised from Pre-Application engagement and in accordance with WBC's adopted Validation Checklist, the outline application package is inclusive of the following:

- Application Forms – Rapleys
- Ownership Certificate/Occupier Notices – Rapleys
- Community Infrastructure Levy Form 2 - Rapleys
- Existing & Proposed Plans – BMD
 - BMD.23.0016.DR.P003.D - Site Location Plan
 - BMD.23.0016.DR.P005.J Parameter Plan - Land Use
 - BMD.23.0016.DR.P006.K Parameter Plan - Green Infrastructure
 - BMD.23.0016.DR.P007.J Parameter Plan - Access & Movement
 - BMD.23.0016.DR.P008.I Parameter Plan - Building Heights
 - BMD.23.0016.SK.022.E SANG Illustrative Plan
 - BMD.23.0016.DR.P101B SANG General Arrangement Plan
 - BMD.23.0016.DR.P301A SANG Planting Plan
- Proposed Access Plans - iTransport:
 - ITL11337-GA-001C – Langley Common Road
 - ITL11337-GA-002A – Commonfield Lane

Standalone Documents

- Planning Supporting Statement (March 2026) – Rapleys (this statement)
- Masterplan Framework Document (Design and Access Statement) (March 2026) - BMD
- Planning Obligations Statement (March 2026) – Rapleys

- Health Impact Assessment (March 2026) - Rapleys
- Statement of Community Involvement (February 2026) – Cratus
- SANG Management Plan (including Costs and Funding) - RPS
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment (SJA AIR 23205-1A – February 2026) – SJA Trees
- Agricultural Land Assessment (November 2025) – Reading Agricultural Consultants
- Heritage Assessment (March 2026) – Icení
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and Metric 4.0 - RPS
- Ground Conditions Assessment (P10532/DS.6) – GRM
- Energy and Sustainability Statement (Rev V4- March 2026) – Aether

Environmental Statement

- 1.34 The Environmental Statement (ES) reports the detail of the Environmental Impact Assessment undertaken. The structure for the ES adheres to the requirements of the relevant regulations and other good practice guidance.
- 1.35 The ES comprises two volumes, plus a standalone Non-Technical Summary. The structure of the ES is provided below;

CHAPTER	TITLE	GENERAL SCOPE
VOLUME 1: PART A – SCOPING REPORT		
PART B – THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT		
1	Introduction	Outline the proposed development, legislative framework, structure of ES and details of the design team.
2	Methodology	Confirming the scope of the ES and methodology adopted, confirming the terminology for assessment of effects, committed development and assumption and limitations
3	Background to Development	Description of site and surrounding area and evolution of the proposals.
4	Development Description	Summary of proposed land use and form of development, including phasing where appropriate.
5	Alternatives	Summary of the alternatives considered.

6	Planning Policy	Identification of appropriate Planning Policy affecting the site.
7	Transport	Assessment in line with relevant guidance and Regulations.
8	Ecology/Conservation	Assessment in line with relevant guidance and Regulations.
9	Historic Environment - Archaeology	Assessment in line with relevant guidelines and Regulations in respect of buried archaeology.
10	Landscape & Visual	Assessment in line with relevant guidelines and Regulations.
11	Water/Drainage/Flood Risk	Assessment in line with relevant guidelines and Regulations.
12	Air Quality	Assessment in line with relevant guidelines and Regulations.
13	Climate Change	Assessment in line with relevant guidelines and Regulations.
14	Noise	Assessment in line with relevant guidelines and Regulations.
15	Cumulative Effects	Assessment and summary of likely cumulative effects of the development.
16	Overview of Residual Effects and Conclusions	Summary of the residual and effects of the development.
17	References, Glossary, Abbreviations	
Volume 2 - FIGURES		
1.1	Site Location Boundary Plan	
2.1	Key Stages of EIA Process	
5.1	Land Use Parameter Plan - BMD.23.0016.DR.P005.J	
5.2	Access and Movement Parameter Plan - BMD.23.0016.DR.P007.J Parameter Plan	
5.3	Green Blue Infrastructure Parameter Plan - BMD.23.0016.DR.P006.K Parameter Plan	
5.4	Buildings Heights Parameter Plan - BMD.23.0016.DR.P008.I Parameter Plan	

7.1	Link Receptors
7.2	Connectivity in Arborfield Green
7.3	Public Rights of Way
7.4	Local Highway Network
7.5	Local Amenities
7.6	Recorded Collision Record
7.7	AADT Flows
7.8	Delay Do Something Development Scenario AM
7.9	Delay Do Something Development Scenario PM
14.1	Noise Sensitive Receptors
14.2	Measurement Locations
14.3	Areas of Noise Mitigation Required
14.4	Assessed Construction Phases
14.5	Assessed Cumulative Sites
Volume 3 – TECHNICAL APPENDICES	
1.1	Scoping Report - Rapleys
1.2	Scoping Opinion Response – Wokingham Borough Council
1.3	ES – Statement of Competency
7.1	Transport Assessment – iTransport
7.2	Framework Travel Plan – iTransport
8.1	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – CSA Environmental
8.2	Breeding Bird Surveys - RPS
8.3	Bat Surveys – RPS
8.4	Badger Surveys – RPS
8.5	Dormouse Surveys – RPS
8.6	Reptile Survey – RPS
8.7	Great Crested Newts Survey – RPS
8.8	White Clawed Crayfish Survey - RPS

8.9	Invertebrate Surveys – RPS
8.10	Riparian Mammals Survey – RPS
8.11	River MoRPH Survey – RPS
8.12	Report to Inform a Habitat Regulations Assessment - RPS
9.1	Archaeological Desk Based Assessment - RPS
9.2	Geophysical Survey - RPS
10.1	LVIA Glossary of Terms - BMD
10.2	LVIA Methodology – BMD
10.3	LVIA Planning Policy and Guidance - BMD
10.4	LVIA Supporting Figures – BMD
10.5	LVIA Viewpoint Photographs Winter - BMD
10.6	LVIA Viewpoint Photographs Summer - BMD
10.7	LVIA Schedule of Likely Landscape Effects – BMD
10.8	LVIA Schedule of Likely Visual Effects – BMD
10.9	LVIA Discounted Viewpoints – BMD
11.1	Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy - Ardent
12.1	Air Quality Assessment – Create Consulting
14.1	Acoustic Assessment – Create Consulting
Volume 4 – NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY	

Statement Structure

1.36 The remainder of this Planning Supporting Statement is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** provides a detailed description of the site, its context, constraints, designations and relevant planning history.
- **Section 3** reviews the current planning policy context for the proposed development including relevant Development Plan policies, national planning policy and guidance and other material considerations including relevant case law.
- **Section 4** provides details of the application site and describes the proposed development.
- **Section 5** assesses the proposed development in terms of its compliance with the Development Plan, national planning policy and guidance and other relevant material considerations.

- **Section 6** considers the appropriate exercise of the planning balance
- **Section 7** presents the overall conclusions of the Planning Statement in terms of the proposed development's compliance with planning policy and concluding that planning permission for the scheme should be granted.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

Context

- 2.1 The main body of the application Site (as defined by the red line boundary) measures approximately 41.8 Ha and is identified below (in context)) by Figure 1.



Figure 1: Red line boundary of the site, within immediate site context.

- 2.2 Barkham Square is situated to the immediate north of Arborfield Green, an existing development site of approximately 167 hectares that forms part of the wider Arborfield Garrison SDL, as it was known when allocated for comprehensive residential-led development within the WBC Core Strategy (2010).
- 2.3 The Site lies adjacent to the northern boundary of Arborfield Green and 1km south-west of Barkham Village, with nearby settlements of Arborfield Cross to the north west and Finchampstead to the south east. Wokingham lies to the north-east at a distance of circa 2km and Reading is a circa twenty-minute 13km drive to the north. The Site is located within the county of Berkshire, to the west of Greater London.
- 2.4 The Site is well connected, with direct access from Langley Common Road to the west, and Commonfield Lane to the east, (for access to the allotments and SANG carpark only). It is approximately 10 km north of Junction 10 of the M4 and 16 km south of Junction 4a of the M3. Wokingham Railway Station is 4 km northeast, just a 7-minute drive along Barkham Road. There is a network of public rights of way (PRoW) routes to the north, west and east of the Site which will be unaffected by the proposed development.

- 2.5 The Site is mainly low lying, whilst visually it is open and free from built development. The topography of the Site is undulating and generally sloping down towards either side of a stream, Barkham Brook, which bisects the site in a north east to south west orientation.
- 2.6 The northern boundary is formed by hedgerows and trees with fields beyond; the western boundary by Langley Common Road and residential properties; the southern boundary by residential properties and Arborfield Studios; the eastern boundary is bound by Barkham Street and Commonfield Lane, with hedgerows and trees forming a green boundary.
- 2.7 The Site comprises agricultural grassland, sporadic mature tree coverage, including parcels of Ancient Woodland, linear boundary vegetation including native hedgerows, ditches, existing ponds. The Barkham Brook watercourse runs through the centre of the Site, adjacent to a parcel of the identified Ancient Woodland.

Facilities and Connectivity

- 2.8 Chapter 2.7 of the Masterplan Framework Document provides details of local amenities and facilities. It finds that future residents would be able to access:
- A village hall, place of worship and public house within 20 minutes' walk (Barkham Village)
 - A leisure centre in 20 minutes' walk (Arborfield Green)
 - Farley Hill Primary School in 5 minutes' walk (Arborfield Green). Bohunt School - secondary and sixth form – within 22 minutes' walk.
 - 3 x convenience stores within 20 minutes' walk.
 - Playing fields and sports pavilion within 10 minutes' walk (Arborfield Green) and Hazebrouck Meadows SANG within 12 minutes' walk (Arborfield Green).
 - A pharmacy, doctor's surgery and dental surgery are within comfortable cycling distance (Finchampstead)
- 2.9 Chapter 2.8 of the Masterplan Framework Document identifies sustainable transport links, including:
- A network of Public Rights of Way to the north, west and east of the site, including BARK 7, which runs along the northern boundary of the site. Proposals exist, outside of this application, to improve the PROW network, as set out in the Wokingham Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2020).
 - Walking and cycling links associated with the proposed development.
 - A regular bus service (Leopard 3) to Wokingham, which runs every 20 minutes and stops at Arborfield Green and Finchampstead. A new bus service to Bracknell is planned, which will follow a similar route.
 - Wokingham train station, which is circa 4km from the site, provides direct connections to Reading and the national rail network with connections to London in circa 40 – 50 minutes.

Heritage

- 2.10 There are no listed buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM) within the demise of the application Site, and neither is it located within a Conservation Area. The absence of designated heritage assets within the Barkham Square site was expressly referenced within the Sustainability Appraisal that informed the Local Plan Update preparation process - whereby the site was referred to as notably free from constraints.
- 2.11 Beyond the Site demise itself, there are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) located within the existing Arborfield Garrison – a medieval moat (HER ref:01007) and Arborfield Infirmary Stables (HER Ref:01008) – these are considered unlikely to be subject to any effects arising from the Proposed Development as there is no intervisibility between them and the Proposed Development Site;
- 2.12 A further Scheduled Monument, The Moated Site and Associated Enclosure at Church Farm (NHLE ref.1013181) is located to the immediate east of the Site parcel proposed for Biodiversity Net Gain use. This moated site and associated enclosure at Church Farm comprises a moat ditch and below ground archaeological remains. There is no intervisibility between the proposed residential development Site and this Scheduled Monument, and therefore the potential for harmful impacts to arise is considered to be negligible.
- 2.13 There are several Grade II listed buildings and a Conservation Area (designated heritage assets) within the wider context of the Site, but, in the context of the application proposals, the potential for change to their setting is considered to be limited. For clarity, these assets are as follows:
- Barkham Square farmhouse - circa 100m to the north-east of the Site
 - Sparks Farm and the Bull Inn – circa 350m from the northern boundary of the Site
 - Arborfield Cross Conservation Area – to the west, beyond Langley Common Road
- 2.14 There are no specific landscape or ecological designations within the Site boundary – although consideration of ecological impacts and landscape impacts (including visual receptors) are detailed within the relevant chapters of the accompanying ES.

Relevant Designations

- Barkham and Arborfield Ward
- At a national level the Site is located within NCA 129: Thames Basin Heaths.
- Within the 'Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019)'
- The Site is wholly located within Landscape Character Type J: Settled and Farmed Clay
- The Site is wholly located within LCA J2: Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay
- 'Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide SPD (2012)'.
- 'Wokingham Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2020)'

Emerging Policy Designations

2.15 An extract from the emerging Local Plan policies map is included below at Figure 2. It shows the following designations as relevant to the application Site:

- Arborfield Green SDL (purple horizontal lines)
- Modest Settlement area (blue outline)
- Valued Landscape Area - Bearwood and Barkham (orange diagonal lines)
- Countryside (green dots)
- 5km linear mitigation zone for Thames Basin Heaths SPA (not shown on the extract)

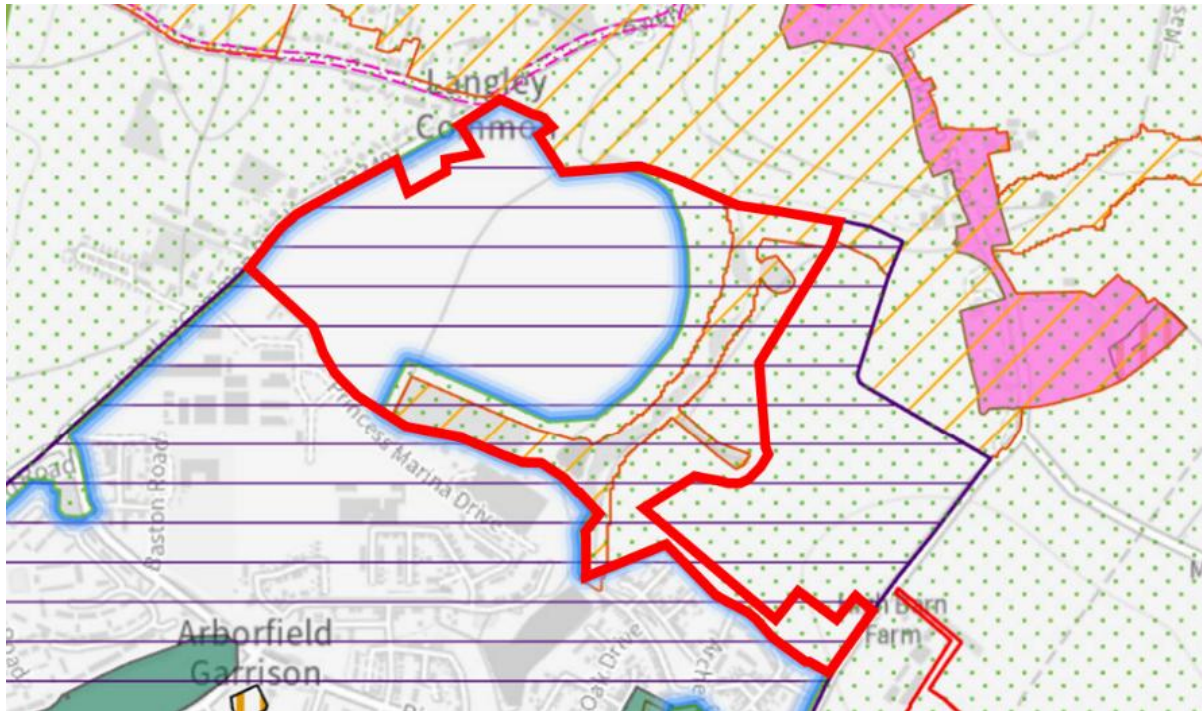


Figure 2: Emerging policies map extract overlaid with the application red line boundary

Flood Risk

2.16 The majority of the Site is located in Flood Zone 1, (i.e. having a very low risk of fluvial flooding), and is classified as having a very low risk of surface water flooding. Environment Agency data records parts of the Site, confined to the immediate vicinity of the Barkham Brook, as Flood Zone 2 and 3. All built development will be located outside of these areas – as they are identified from the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning (provided below).



Figure 3 - Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning.

Planning History

- 2.17 There is limited Planning History for the application Site itself. Beyond the Site demise, there is an extensive record of recent submissions – principally arising from the 2010 allocation of the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location, which resulted in Outline approval for both Arborfield Green and Hogswood Farm developments – which together deliver the 3,500 homes allocated as part of the Arborfield Garrison SDL.
- 2.18 The description of the planning application for Arborfield Green, which consented 2,000 of the 3,500 dwellings allocated at Arborfield Garrison, is repeated below:

O/2014/2280

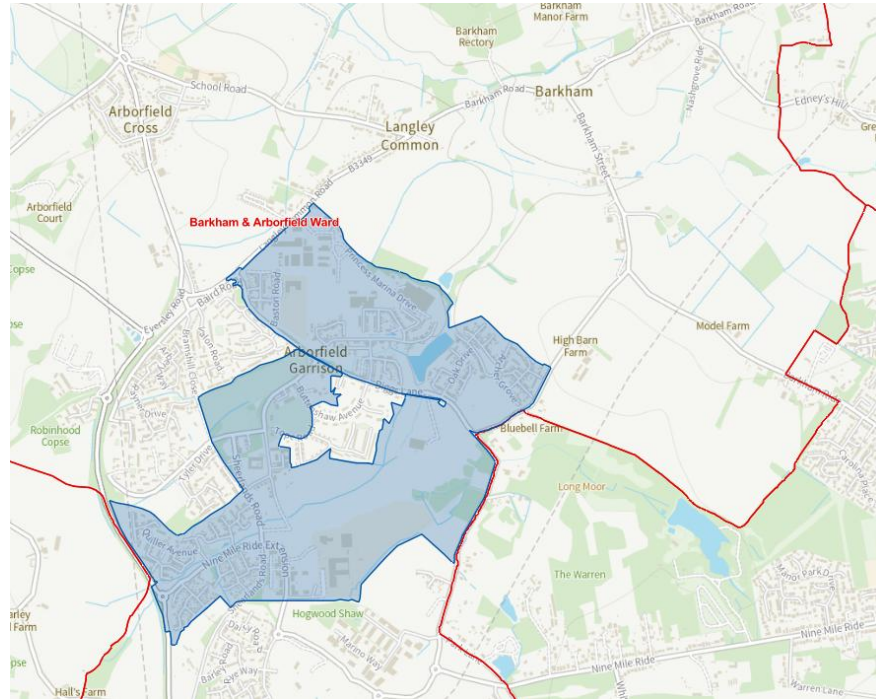
Arborfield Garrison & Adjoining Land Arborfield Reading RG2 9NW

OUTLINE PERMISSION FOR: Demolition of buildings and phased redevelopment of Arborfield Garrison and adjoining land for: Up to 2,000 new dwellings (including up to 80 units of extra care housing). District centre comprising a food store up to 4,000 sq m gross with up to a further 3,500 sq m (gross) floor space within Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, D1 and D2 (with residential above - Class C3)), and transport interchange, village square, car parking, servicing and drop off area. Up to a further 1,500 sq m (gross) floor space within Classes D1 and D2. Neighbourhood centre to provide up to 300 sq m (gross) floor space within Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, D1 and D2, with parking/servicing area. Secondary school for up to 1,500 pupils (Class D1) including sports pitches, flood-lit all-weather pitch, and indoor swimming pool and parking areas. Up to three-form primary school (Class D1) with sports pitch and parking areas. Associated phased provision of: car parking; public open space including sports pitches, informal/incidental open space, children's play areas including multi-use games area (MUGA), skate park, community gardens/allotments; landscaping/buffer areas; boundary treatments; new

roads, footpaths, cycleways and bridleways; sustainable urban drainage systems, including flood alleviation works. PART 2 - FULL PERMISSION FOR phased development of: Creation of two new areas of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGS) (In the north-eastern part of the application site ("Northern SANGS") and at West Court ("West Court SANGS") including car parking areas, path/walkways, fencing and associated landscaping; re-use of existing MoD gymnasium for sports/community uses/centre (Classes D1/D2; new roundabout junction to A327 Reading Road; junction improvements to Langley Common Road, Baird Road and Biggs Lane; junction improvements and new access at Biggs Lane/Princess Marina Drive; re-use and improvements to existing site accesses from Biggs Lane

APPROVED

02 April 2015



3 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Overview

- 3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Planning Authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 In this instance, the following Development Plan documents and policies of the Wokingham Development Plan are considered relevant:
- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010)
 - Managing Development Delivery (2014)
 - Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (2020)
 - Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (January 2023)

The Development Plan

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010)

- 3.3 The Core Strategy is the main planning document which guides development choices and decisions in Wokingham Borough Council. The Core Strategy 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. Policies relevant to this application include;
- **Policy CP1** – Sustainable development
 - **Policy CP2** - Inclusive communities
 - **Policy CP3** - General Principles for development
 - **Policy CP4** - Infrastructure Requirements
 - **Policy CP5** - Housing mix, density and affordability
 - **Policy CP6** - Managing Travel Demand
 - **Policy CP7** – Biodiversity
 - **Policy CP8** – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
 - **Policy CP10** - Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network
 - **Policy CP11** – Proposals Outside Development Limits
 - **Policy CP17** - Housing delivery
 - **Policy CP18** – Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location

Managing Development Delivery (2014)

3.4 The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan builds on the strategy set out in our Core Strategy and sets out more detailed policies for managing development. Policies relevant to this application 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 and Road Infrastructure
- **Policy CC09** – Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
- **Policy CC10** – Sustainable Drainage
- **Policy TB05** – Housing Mix
- **Policy TB06** – Development of Private Residential Gardens
- **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 TB10** – Traveller Sites
- **Policy TB12** – Employment Skills Plan
- **Policy TB21** – Landscape Character
- **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

Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (2020)

3.5 The Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (2019-2036) was adopted in April 2020. It is, therefore, the most recent component part of the Development Plan. Key policies relate to the

preservation of settlement separation, preservation of identity and rural setting of settlements and minimising traffic generation. The Neighbourhood Plan does not contain any allocations in order to meet its identified housing requirement

3.6 The identified policies of relevance are set out below;

- **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 AD3** – High Quality Development with Generous Open Space, Properly Landscaped

Supplementary Planning Documents / Guidance

3.7 Additional policies and guidance relevant to the application include;

- Affordable Housing SPD (July 2013)
- Design SPD (May 2012)
- Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD (October 2011)
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (adopted May 2010)
- Renewable Energy Requirement of South East Plan Policy NRM11 (May 2010)
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Mini Area Plan (2009)
- Highways Design Guide (November 2006)
- Landscape Character (April 2004)

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

3.8 Wokingham Borough Council approved their CIL Charging Schedule in February 2015 and it came into effect on 6th April 2015.

3.9 The adopted CIL Charging Schedule confirms the following chargeable rates as relevant to the development proposed at Barkham Square:

- Residential development at the Arborfield Strategic Development Location (excluding sheltered housing, extra care housing and residential institutions) - £365 per sq.m
- Sheltered Housing at the Arborfield Strategic Development Location - £365 per sq.m
- Residential Institutions and Extra Care Housing at the Arborfield Strategic Development Location - £100 per sq.m

3.10 As the application proposal is in Outline form with all matters reserved, it is not possible to determine a CIL liability at this stage.

- 3.11 In respect of the proposed Use Class C2/C3 elderly care accommodation, the relevant CIL rate will be determined during the consideration and determination of a future Reserved Matters application is submitted whereby the degree of care to be provided to future occupiers will be properly understood.
- 3.12 In summary, the CIL liability arising from the proposed development will be calculated at the Reserved Matters stage, which is anticipated to progress in phased form. Therefore, each phase of development that is brought forward will be subject to its own CIL liability based upon the adopted CIL rates, but subject to indexation at the point of determination.

Material Considerations

The National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 3.13 The 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 12th December 2024 and sets out the Government's planning policies, and how these are expected to be applied.
- 3.14 In addition to providing guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers in the compilation of Plans, the NPPF is also a material consideration in determining applications. A presumption in favour of sustainable development remains at the core of the Framework.
- 3.15 This Statement will not repeat in full all paragraphs within the Framework that are considered to be of relevance to the proposal, although headline paragraphs are set out below:

7. 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. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

11. Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For decision-taking this means:

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

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

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework

taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination

39. Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, 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

49. Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);

b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and

c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)

50. However, 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 of planning permission other than in the limited circumstances where both:

a) the development proposed is so substantial, or its cumulative effect would be so significant, that to grant permission would undermine the plan-making process by predetermining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development that are central to an emerging plan; and

b) the emerging plan is at an advanced stage but is not yet formally part of the development plan for the area

Emerging Development Plan

- 3.16 The Wokingham Local Plan Update: Proposed Submission Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination in Public on 28th February 2025. At the time of writing, Part 1 of the Examination commenced on 18th November 2025. Part 2 Hearing Sessions reconvened on 17th March 2026 and are programmed to conclude in June 2026.

- 3.17 Upon adoption, the Local Plan Update will set out the planning policies proposed to manage development across the Borough through to 2040 – including the strategic scale residential allocations. The Local Plan Update will replace the existing adopted Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Local Plans in full.
- 3.18 In the interim and having regard to para 49 of the NPPF, significant weight can be attributed to draft policy SS11 given the advanced stage of the plan preparation and the absence of substantive unresolved objections to the allocation of Barkham Square.
- 3.19 Notably, in accordance with the transitional arrangements set out at paragraph 237 of the NPPF (2024), WBC will be required to commence work on a new plan (under the revised plan-making system provided for under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) in order to address the shortfall in housing need – as the Local Plan Update caters for less than 80% of the latest Standard Method requirement.
- 3.20 The proposed Spatial Strategy is consistent with the prior 2021 Revised Growth Consultation, with the proposed retention of the allocations (although subject to some modification) of Loddon Valley/Hall Farm and the extension to the South Wokingham SDL.
- 3.21 The Local Plan Update identifies additional development opportunities at Arborfield Green (amongst other identifies sites) in order to meet the Council’s housing need through to 2040, (notwithstanding the matter raised above in relation to NPPF paragraph 237).
- 3.22 The opportunity at Arborfield Green is encompassed of the intensification of development within the existing SDL (as defined by the Core Strategy), principally, of the currently undeveloped parcels in the northern part of the existing SDL, (hereafter referred to as ‘The Studios Site’), alongside the extension of the SDL to incorporate land at Barkham Square.

Policy SS11

- 3.23 Policy SS11 specifically concerns the ‘Arborfield Green SDL’ – which is allocated for a ‘sustainable, well-designed, mixed-use development’ incorporating Barkham Square as an extension to the SDL, along with a re-commitment, (via intensification of development,) to the Studios Site.
- 3.24 Map D2 of the Policies Map, (as repeated below – with the application Site demise overlaid in red), clarifies the extent of the expanded SDL (in purple) with a separate defined settlement area identified (in blue):

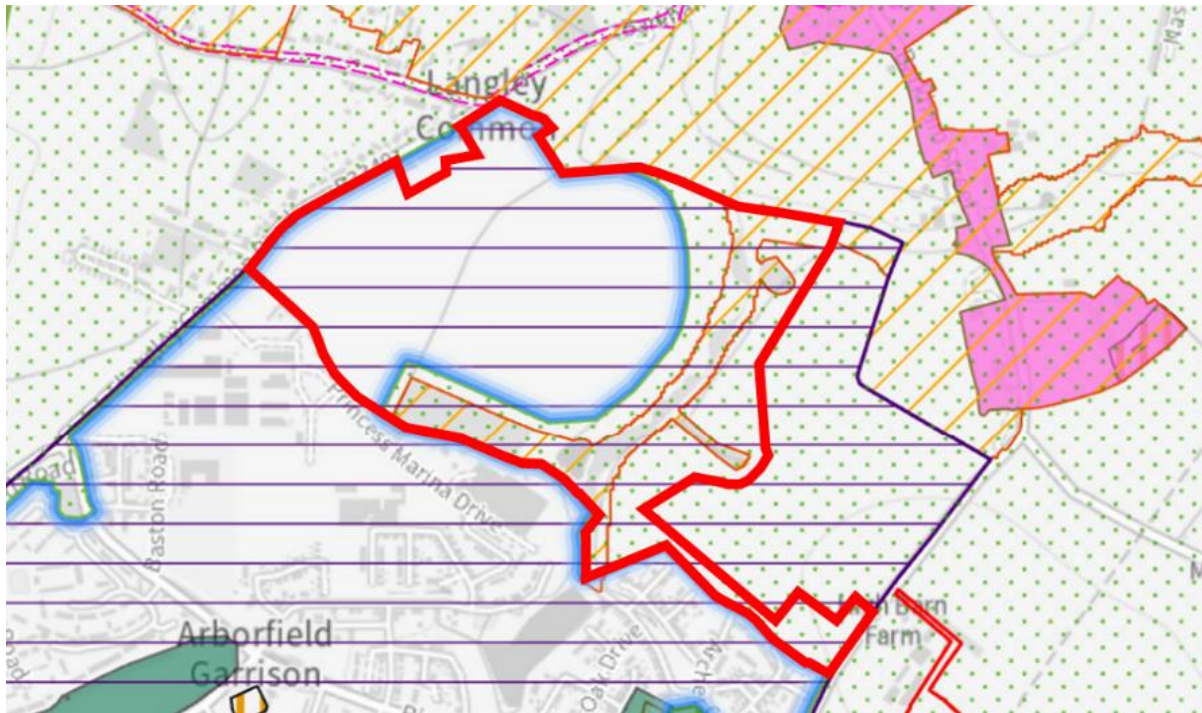


Figure 4 – Local Plan Update – Policy SD11 Policies Map Draft Extract

3.25 Paragraph 5.102 of the supporting text to draft Policy SS11 notes that:

A defined settlement area has been defined on the Policies Map which reflect areas where building is anticipated based on the concept plan. The council recognises that these areas are indicative and that masterplanning will establish where building will occur in more detail. The Policies Map will be updated in the future once there is greater certainty.

3.26 The breakdown of the draft Policy SS11 allocation particulars is set out below:

- ‘Around 3,047’ dwellings, comprised of:
 - 2,137 dwellings through completions, extant planning permission and resolutions to grant;
 - 300 dwellings at the Studios Site
 - 600 dwellings at Barkham Square
 - 10 dwellings at Westwood Yard
- 40% affordable housing
- 25 No. self-custom build plots,
- 5 No. gypsy traveller pitches and
- Specialist accommodation, including for older persons.
- A requirement for 6,000m² of employment floorspace
- Two Local Centres and a District Centre
- A two-form entry primary school with potential for expansion to three-form in the future

- On-site provision of SANG to mitigate impacts upon the Thames Basin SPA

3.27 Consideration of the application proposals' compliance with draft Policy SS11 is detailed within Section 6 of this Statement.

3.28 Beyond the specifics of draft Policy SS11 considered above, the following policies within the draft Local Plan Update are of relevance to this proposal.

Strategic Policy

- **Policy SS1:** Sustainable development principles
- **Policy SS2:** Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy
- **Policy SS10:** Meeting our housing needs
- **Policy SS11:** Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location
- **Policy SS15:** Securing Infrastructure
- **Policy SS17:** Transport improvements

Development Management Policies

- **Policy CE1:** Design principles for efficient buildings
- **Policy CE3:** Environmental standards for residential development
- **Policy CE4:** Supporting a circular economy
- **Policy CE5:** Embodied carbon
- **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 C7:** Digital infrastructure and communications technology
- **Policy C8:** Utilities
- **Policy ER4:** Employment and skills plans
- **Policy H1:** Housing mix, density and standards
- **Policy H2:** Presumption against residential losses
- **Policy H3:** Affordable housing
- **Policy H6:** Self-build and custom housebuilding
- **Policy H7:** Specialist accommodation

- **Policy H9:** Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show people provision
- **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 DH1:** Place making and quality design
- **Policy DH2:** Safeguarding amenity
- **Policy DH5:** The historic environment
- **Policy DH6:** Archaeology
- **Policy HC1:** Promoting healthy communities
- **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:** Contaminated land and water
- **Policy HC10:** Odour, fumes, and dust

4 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Overview

4.1 Barkham Square provides an opportunity to create a high-quality, sustainable development that will serve as an extension to existing SDL of Arborfield Green, located to the south of the site. The Proposed Development aims to secure outline permission for its delivery.

4.2 The formal description of development is as follows:

Outline application (with all matters reserved except for access) for residential development (Use Class C3) plus elderly care dwellings (Class C2/C3), associated open space, allotments, green and blue infrastructure including the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and associated highways and other infrastructure works.

4.3 The general arrangement of the Proposed Development is as detailed on the suite of proposed parameter plans which illustrates how the following provisions will be provided:

- Up to 660 C3 dwellings
- Elderly care dwellings (Use Class C2/C3)
- 0.65 Ha of allotments
- 0.41 Ha Play areas (inclusive of LEAP, NEAP, LLAP and LAP)
- 13.23 Ha Sustainable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG)

4.4 In the event that planning permission is granted, it is anticipated that the development will come forward on a phased basis, in similar terms to the delivery of the Arborfield Garrison SDL. As such, it is expected that the conditions attached to any future permission will be phrased to allow for phased construction.

Reserved Matters

4.5 The application seeks outline planning permission with all matters reserved except access. Full details of the following access points are included for consideration:

- Primary vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from Langley Common Road (the main access).
- Car park access from Commonfield Lane, which will primarily serve the allotments and SANG country park.

Design Principles

4.6 The illustrative Masterplan has been guided by the following principles;

- The existing Ancient Woodland blocks, mature trees, hedgerows, brook and pond network will be conserved and enhanced.
- Create a new vehicular gateway entrance into the development from Langley Common Road.

- Provide new landscape screening in key locations to help minimise visual impact from Barkham Street 'Area of Special Character' and adjacent properties, and provide an attractive setting for new development.
- A network of focal points, connected by a new green spine at the heart of the development, providing safe and accessible hubs with opportunities to learn, play and grow food.
- Create safe active travel streets with new and improved pedestrian and cycle links that connect to the wider movement network
- Define residential parcels with varied but cohesive characters that respond to their location and specific nature of the site

4.7 The proposed development is based upon the identification of parameters to ensure there is sufficient flexibility for the scheme to evolve as development proceeds.

4.8 The following parameter plans are submitted for formal consideration as part of the planning application:

- BMD.23.0016.DR.P005.J Parameter Plan - Land Use
- BMD.23.0016.DR.P006.K Parameter Plan - Green Infrastructure
- BMD.23.0016.DR.P007.J Parameter Plan - Access & Movement
- BMD.23.0016.DR.P008.I Parameter Plan - Building Heights

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

4.9 The application is inclusive of general arrangement and planting details for the proposed on-site SANG, alongside a SANG Maintenance Plan and SANG Funding Plan.

4.10 The SANG extends to an area of 12.23 Ha. The proposed SANG covers an area that is principally to the east of Barkham Brook. The area west of the SANG and east of the residential development edge includes the siting of the attenuation basins which form the principal component of the site's drainage strategy. This area will form part of the site's open space provision but does not form part of the formal SANG arrangement. The edge of the residential parcels relative to the open space will be delineated by native hedgerows – as detailed on the SANG Illustrative Layout.

4.11 The circular walking route extends to 2.3km and runs north/south along the eastern boundary of the attenuation basins and to the west of Barkham Brook, before crossing the watercourse to an extensive and varied route to the east. At the SANG's eastern boundary, there are a range of pedestrian connection options so that the circular route is conveniently accessed by all future residents of the development.

4.12 The development of the circular route has sought to minimise crossings of Barkham Brook. Where a crossing is required, (limited to the southern and northern extent of the SANG), it is anticipated that timber-decked bridge will provide users with convenient, safe and dry access, so that the SANG remains an attractive and suitable alternative recreational route.

- 4.13 The SANG will also include wayfinding detail at various locations, along with dog waste and litter bins to ensure that the space is appropriately protected. It is envisaged that this detail will be secured via appropriately drafted conditions.
- 4.14 The car park, which is accessed from Commonfield Lane will provide a further convenient point of connection for those visitors who wish to access the SANG via a vehicle. This car park will also service the proposed allotments. Vehicles required to maintain that part of the SANG east of Barkham Brook will access from this direction also, thereby negating the need for any vehicular bridges over the Brook.
- 4.15 The SANG will be inclusive of a range of habitats and features of recreational value, including:
- Existing woodland, including Ancient Woodland – which will be supplemented as a result of the proposed development
 - Shrub planting
 - Wetlands associated with Barkham Brook
 - Amenity grassland to the margins of the footpaths

Access

- 4.16 The access arrangements to the proposed development, which are submitted for consideration, are comprehensively detailed within the accompanying Transport Assessment prepared by iTransport, but can be summarised as follows as demonstrated in Figure 5 overleaf:
- The main access to the site is proposed from a new four-arm roundabout on Langley Common Road. A separate vehicle access is proposed from Commonfield Lane to access the allotments and SANG carpark.
 - A secondary emergency vehicle access is also proposed from Langley Common Road to the north of the main roundabout access. Vehicle access will not be permitted between the site and Arborfield Green to encourage journeys between the sites to be undertaken by active modes.
 - The proposed roundabout will also create a speed remediation feature on Langley Common Road, providing a break in the long straight section, encouraging lower vehicle speeds and a realistic opportunity to reduce the speed limit.
- 4.17 Figure 6 overleaf summarises the proposed access strategy whilst Figure 7 details the proposed full detail of the proposed roundabout at Langley Common Road.

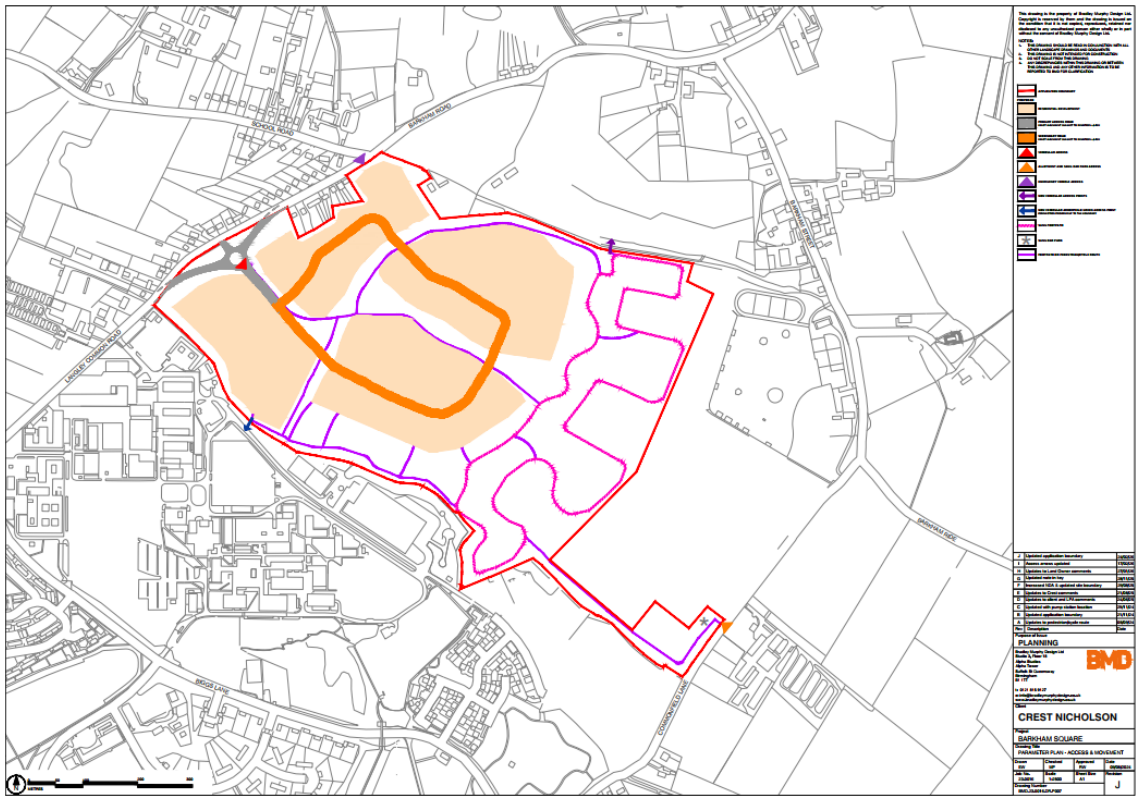


Figure 5: Proposed Access Strategy

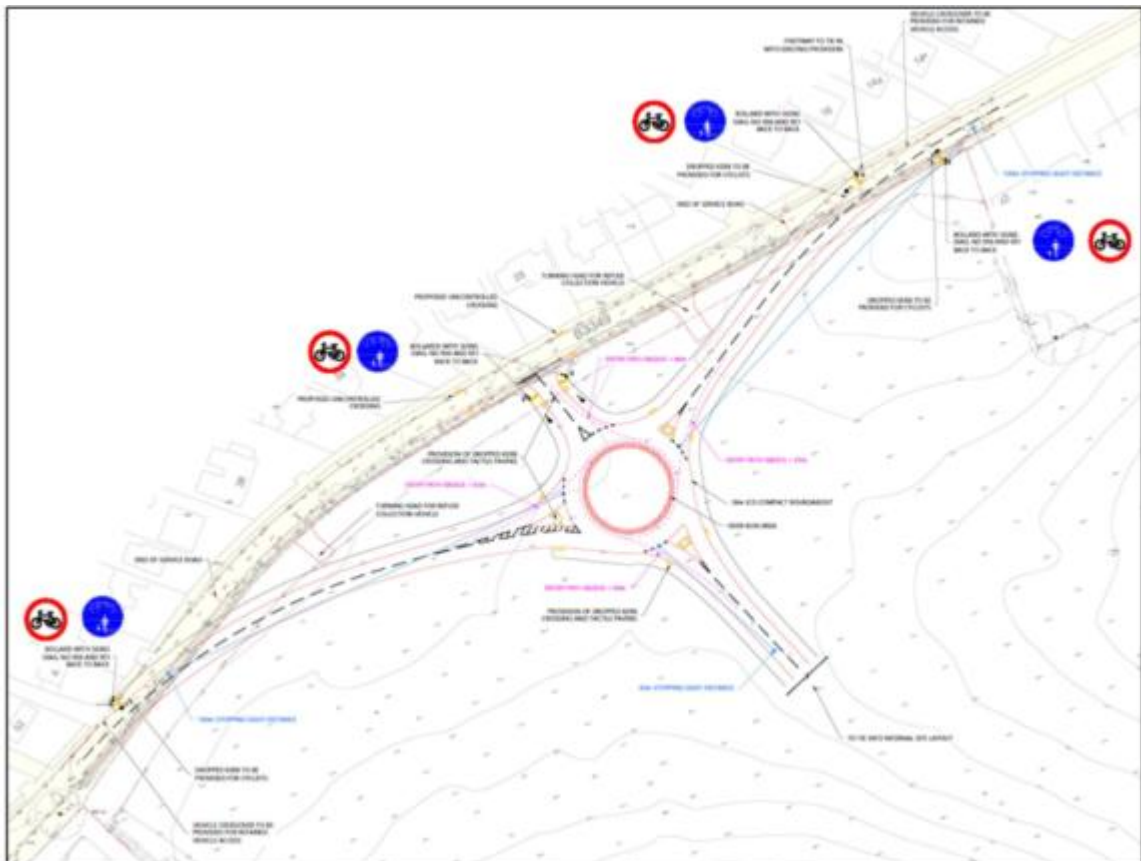


Figure 6: Proposed Langley Common Road – Principal Site Access

Parking (Vehicle and Cycle)

- 4.18 The specific details of all vehicular and cycle parking are not formally prescribed at this Outline stage and will be subject to consideration through the approval of Reserved Matters. Nevertheless, the design and level of provision will accord with the LPA's adopted standards. The accompanying Transport Assessment sets out the full extent of the adopted standards through Section 2.4 – via Tables 2.1 – 2.5.

Sustainable Drainage

- 4.19 After consideration of the SuDs hierarchy, the most viable SuDS option for the development Site is that of a combination of larger storage and conveyance features, which are provided in the form of swales and detention basins. These elements will work in coordination with permeable paving, smaller scale rainwater harvesting and bio-retention features, which are to be located across the Site, acting as source control features in accordance with WBC's requirements. The detailed design of these features will come forward at the Reserved Matters stage but will be consistent and guided by the overarching SuDs principles submitted for consideration as part of this Outline application.

Sustainability

- 4.20 The site lies in an accessible location and is capable of being integrated with existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, facilitating healthy, low carbon transport to local facilities. Crest is committed to delivering new homes that minimise carbon emissions in line with the Future Homes Standard 2025, reducing carbon emissions by 70- 80% compared to current standards. This will be considered in detail at the Reserved Matters, having regard to the building regulations in place at that time.
- 4.21 It is anticipated that the proposed homes will include
- Low carbon heating and hot water systems, such as air source heat pumps or ground source heat pumps.
 - Solar Panels
 - Improved insulation levels, enhanced airtightness and thermal bridge reduction.
 - Electric vehicle charging points, or the necessary cabling to allow them to be installed in future.
 - Energy efficient ventilation, without compromising the building's air tightness.
- 4.22 Crest Nicholson is the first UK house builder to have its net-zero targets validated by the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi). The SBTi helps businesses align their targets in reducing emissions with latest climate science, and is focused on enabling companies to halve emissions before 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050. The validation of these targets demonstrates Crest's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

5 KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

Background

- 5.1 The Wokingham Core Strategy (2010) allocated 'Arborfield Garrison' Strategic Development location (SDL) (Policy CP18) as a site for sustainable, well-designed mixed-use development for around 3,500 dwellings, new employment, appropriate retail facilities and transport, social and physical infrastructure.
- 5.2 Several phases of new development have been completed within the allocation. The secondary school (Bohunt School) and one of two planned primary schools (Farley Hill Primary School) are open. The Nine Mile Ride Extension is open and runs through the development, linking with the A327 (Eversly Road). Other improvements include the completion of a new highway bridge at Barkham Bridge to accommodate two-way traffic flow.
- 5.3 As the delivery of the SDL progressed, a wide range of infrastructure projects have been delivered, or have been permitted, which alongside active travel and public transport connections to nearby settlements have helped to provide some self-sufficiency and containment.
- 5.4 Upon reviewing the original vision, additional development opportunities have been identified by WBC. These include extending the Arborfield Garrison SDL to include land to the north, known as Barkham Square (the Site). A planning application for Arborfield Green to the south of the Site has been approved, and is in the process of being completed, as aforementioned. The proposed development at Barkham Square will be a continuation of this development, subject to policy criteria set out within the draft Local Plan.
- 5.5 Through the preparation of the Local Plan Update, the WBC undertook a full review of sites and commissioned a number of studies to inform future allocations, including (but not limited to) a Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment, Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment, and Strategic Transport Modelling.
- 5.6 The emerging Local Plan has taken forward the enlarged SDL area, known as Arborfield Green, which is inclusive of the application Site. The emerging Local Plan was submitted for examination in February 2025 and Part 1 of the Examination in Public commenced on 18th November 2025.

Strategic Policy and Development Limits

- 5.7 The adopted Local Plan Policies Map shows the application Site in the open countryside, outside any development limits or Strategic Development Locations (SDL). As a result, there would typically be a conflict with Policy CP11 and CC02, which seek to direct development to the areas mentioned above.
- 5.8 In this context, it is accepted that a conflict arises with the provisions of the Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted on 22nd April 2020. Neighbourhood Plan policy IRS1 explains that in respect of development proposals outside of existing settlement boundaries, the

only allowable exceptions are those as set out within Core Strategy Policy CP11 (as considered above) in addition to the two further tests imposed by the Neighbourhood Plan itself:

- 1. Preserve the character and appearance of the countryside; and
- 2. Not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements.

5.9 For full clarity, CP11 states:

In order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where:

1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and

2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and

3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or

4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;

5) In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must: i) ii) Bring about environmental improvements; or not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building

6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;

7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9

5.10 It is evident that the proposed development does not comply with the seven referenced exceptions within CP11, nor the further two criteria established by the adopted Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, it is accepted that a conflict in these terms arises.

5.11 In considering the identified Neighbourhood Plan conflict, paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework states:

In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply:

a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and

b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement (see paragraphs 67-68).

5.12 The Neighbourhood Plan was formally adopted on 22nd April 2020, so the five year 'grace' period set out within paragraph 14(a) has now lapsed. In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan does not contain any policies or allocations which seek to meet its identified housing requirement over its defined plan period.

5.13 On such a basis, it is considered that whilst conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan may be attributed a degree of weight in the planning balance, this should only be minimal and as such, it cannot be a determinative factor in isolation, noting the absence of conflict with paragraph 14.

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5.14 Furthermore, and most pertinently, as discussed above and in Chapter 3, the emerging Local Plan seeks to extend the Arborfield Garrison SDL to include the application Site. The new and enlarged SDL – referred to as Arborfield Green – is identified in policy SS2 as an area for growth. Arborfield Green is the subject of draft policy SS11, which sets out various development aspirations for the area, including 600 dwellings on land at Barkham Square.

5.15 The emerging Local Plan is currently pending the commencement of Part 2 of the examination. In accordance with paragraph 49 of the Framework, Local Planning Authorities may give weight to relevant policies within emerging plans according to:

a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);

b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and

c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)

5.16 In the context of paragraph 49 of the Framework:

- A) – the Local Plan Update is capable of, and indeed should, be afforded moderate weight in the planning balance in consideration of its progression to Examination in Public in relation to strategic matters. It is considered that the weight to be afforded to the emerging plan should increase as the Examination in Public process continues to progress.
- B) – In respect of the Barkham Square component of the wider proposed Arborfield Green SDL, there are no significant unresolved objections to Policy SS11 and therefore the designation of

Barkham Square as a suitable allocation within the boundaries of the wider SDL should be afforded great weight within the planning balance.

- C) – The policies within the emerging Plan are generally considered to be consistent with the Framework. In terms of housing delivery, the emerging Plan seeks to positively identify sufficient allocations to meet the Council's housing requirement (as prescribed via the existing transitional arrangements at paragraph 234 of the Framework).

5.17 Paragraph 50 of the Framework progresses to consider the matter of prematurity in relation to emerging Local Plans and development proposals. Paragraph 50 states

However, 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 of planning permission other than in the limited circumstances where both:

a) the development proposed is so substantial, or its cumulative effect would be so significant, that to grant permission would undermine the plan-making process by predetermining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development that are central to an emerging plan; and

b) the emerging plan is at an advanced stage but is not yet formally part of the development plan for the area.

5.18 In this context, firstly (and as described further within Section 6 of this Statement), the merits of the proposed development are not considered to be contingent upon the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Whilst the Council's position in terms of current housing land supply position is considered material in the overall planning balance, the proposal does not rely upon the application of the 'titled balance' to justify the merits of the case.

5.19 Secondly, the proposed development is not considered to be 'so substantial' that to grant permission would undermine the plan-making process. The proposal comprises an extension to an existing Strategic Development Location, defined within the adopted Local Plan, which already provides a great degree of the infrastructure that would support the development proposed via this application.

5.20 Thirdly, whilst the emerging plan is at an advanced stage in accordance with the Local Plan Regulations (2012), the emerging plan itself seeks to plan positively deliver the development that is proposed via this application.

5.21 As such, in this instance, it is not considered that sufficient grounds can be demonstrated to seek to resist the proposed development on the grounds of prematurity. This conclusion is reached simply on the basis that criteria a and b within paragraph 50 of the Framework are not both engaged.

Draft Policy SS11

- 5.22 The various aspirations and requirements of policy SS11, including affordable housing delivery, sustainable design, landscaping, masterplanning, drainage and flood alleviation, BNG, SANG, transport improvements etc are addressed later in this chapter under the relevant topic headings. A summary table of compliance with policy SS11 is also included at Appendix A, which demonstrates that all policy tests, aspirations and requirements are considered to have been suitably addressed via the development prescribed within this application.
- 5.23 In respect of proposed housing numbers, it is evident that draft policy SS11 is framed as delivery 'around 3,047' dwellings across the Plan period. In this context, it is considered that the provision of up to 660 No. dwellings at Barkham Square is acceptable in principle, as policy SS11 does not impose an upper limit on the number of dwellings to be delivered, either within the SDL as a whole, or with respect to the additional opportunity provided at Barkham Square.
- 5.24 Taking into account the direction of emerging policy and the advanced stage of the new Local Plan, and given that the current proposal satisfies the requirements of policy SS11 in full, it is considered that the principle of new development at the application Site is acceptable.

Housing Land Supply

- 5.25 The Council's most recent Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement was published on 31st July 2025. The Statement confirms that the total deliverable housing supply for the period of 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2030 is 2.5 years.
- 5.26 This figure is derived from a local housing need figure of 1,316 dwellings per annum plus a 5% buffer. This equates to 1,382 dwellings per annum, totalling a requirement of 6,909 in the aforementioned five-year period. The Council is required to utilise the most recent Local Housing Need figures to calculate their land supply position, as the strategic policies of the Development Plan are in excess of five years old.
- 5.27 The Council detail that their total deliverable housing supply for this period extends to 3,414 dwellings – which results in the provision of a 2.5-year supply.
- 5.28 The Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement confirms that the presumption in favour of sustainable development enshrined within paragraph 11d of the National Planning Policy Framework is therefore engaged. This is considered further within the overall planning balance exercise within Section 6 of this Statement.

Housing Delivery Test

- 5.29 The Housing Delivery Test: 2023 Measurement was published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 12th December 2024.
- 5.30 The Housing Delivery Test figures set out that Wokingham delivered 865 No. dwellings in the 2022-2023 period against a requirement of 781 No. dwellings. As such, the Housing Delivery Test does not impose any consequences upon the LPA as the level of delivery exceeds the delivery requirement for the assessed period.

Loss of Agricultural Land

- 5.31 Policy CP1 (point 7) promotes development that avoids impacting on the Borough's best and most versatile agricultural land. Draft policy SS1 within the Local Plan Update consultation expands to require that the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land is avoided, except in exceptional circumstances.
- 5.32 This application is supported by an Agricultural Land Assessment prepared by Reading Agricultural Consultants. The assessment explains that the proposed development would involve the loss of 31.6 Ha of best and most versatile agricultural land within Grade 2 and Subgrade 3a – as illustrated below by Figure 7, as extracted from the Assessment.

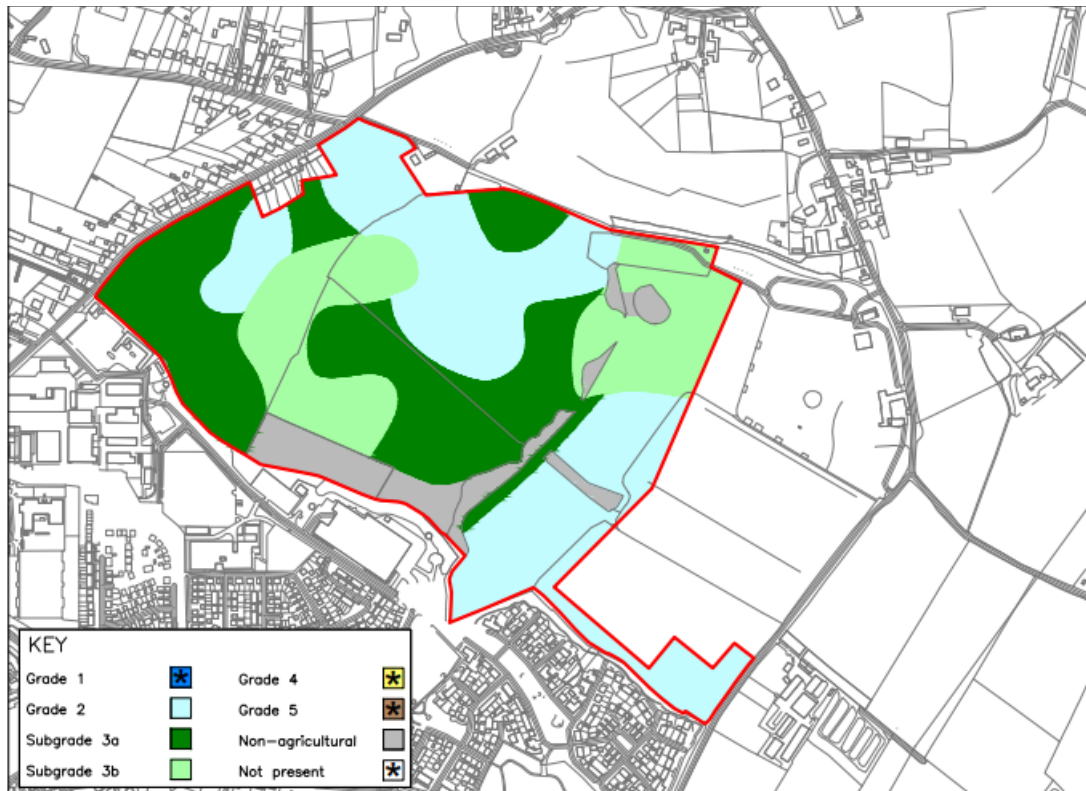


Figure 7 – Agricultural Land Classification

- 5.33 The Assessment refers to paragraph 187(b) of the Framework, which explains that planning policies and decisions should recognise the economic and other benefits of best and most versatile agricultural land.
- 5.34 The Assessment explains that the economic benefits of the identified best and most versatile land are very limited, as the site is only utilised for occasional sheep grazing. The Assessment further quantifies that in the event that the development area was farmed commercially rather than occasionally for sheep grazing, the gross margin (output less variable costs of feed, veterinary and medicine) would be less than £15,000 per annum. As such, the economic benefits associated with the BMV land in the area proposed for development are very limited.
- 5.35 In the context of the requirements of adopted policy CP1 and emerging policy SS1, it is considered that the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land is appropriately justified, particularly

in the context of the application site's express allocation within the Local Plan Update as part of the extended Arborfield Green SDL.

New Housing

- 5.36 Policy CP17 sets out the Borough's housing target of 13,230 dwellings to be delivered between April 2006 and March 2026. Policy SS10 of the emerging Local Plan identifies a need for 12,763 additional dwellings to be delivered over the plan period (April 2023 to March 2040), an average of 751 dwellings per annum. Emerging policy SS11 sets out an aspiration for "around 3,047 dwellings" to be delivered in the Arborfield Green SDL area, including 600 dwellings on the land at Barkham Square, (the application Site).
- 5.37 The above is set against the backdrop of the Council's most recent Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement (published on 30th January 2025), which found that a 1.7 year supply was deliverable in the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2029, and recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, which will increase the borough's housing target from 748 homes per year to 1,336 homes per year.
- 5.38 Like many areas in the south east, Wokingham faces significant housing pressures, with high prices reflecting high demand. The provision of up to 660 dwellings at Barkham Square will help boost supply, meet housing targets and fulfil policy objectives. In doing so, it will help ensure Wokingham remains an attractive, thriving place for residents and businesses.
- 5.39 Taking the above into account, it is considered that the principle of new housing is acceptable at the application Site.

Elderly Care Housing

- 5.40 The Core Strategy (paragraph 2.41) recognises the need for extra care housing in the Borough and sets out a requirement for 800 units to be provided during a ten-year period. Adopted policy TB09 further promotes elderly care accommodation.
- 5.41 Paragraph 9.79 of the emerging Local Plan, which draws on data from the Local Housing Need Assessment (LHNA), identifies an indicative need to plan for around 925 housing places over the period 2021-2040, to be provided through a mix of sheltered and elderly care housing and domiciliary care, to accommodate people with specific requirements, such as the older population and vulnerable people, including people with disabilities.
- 5.42 Policy H7 of the emerging Local Plan offers general support for elderly care housing. It states that strategic scale development will be required to include an appropriate onsite provision of specialist accommodation as part of a mixed community.
- 5.43 Policy SS11, which concerns the Arborfield Green SDL, lists "specialist accommodation, including accommodation for older persons," as a stated aspiration, which is in line with the approach set out in policy H7 and referenced above.
- 5.44 As a result, the proposed elderly care element of the proposal is considered acceptable in principle.

Conclusion

5.45 In summary, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable because:

- The application Site is allocated as part of the enlarged Arborfield Green SDL in the emerging Local Plan (Policy SS11), which is at an advanced stage of preparation and should be attributed considerable weight. The proposed development – and the content of this application – addresses the requirements of policy SS11 in full.
- The loss of Grade 4 agricultural land (poor quality) does not conflict with policy CP1. Notwithstanding, the application site has been allocated for development in the emerging Local Plan under Policy SS11.
- Wokingham is facing significant housing pressures, and both adopted and emerging policy promotes new housing in suitable locations. Policy SS11 sets out a direct aspiration to deliver new housing on the application Site. As such, the proposal for up to 660 new homes is considered acceptable in principle, and will help boost housing supply, meet housing targets and fulfil policy objectives.
- Both adopted and emerging policy support the delivery of elderly care housing in principle. In particular, policy SS11 sets out an explicit requirement to deliver elderly care housing as part of the Arborfield Green SDL. As a result, the proposed elderly care element of the proposal is considered acceptable in principle.

5.46 For the reasons identified above, all proposed uses are considered acceptable in principle.

Masterplanning & Design

Adopted Planning Policy

5.47 Policy CP1 (point 10) promotes development that is attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable.

5.48 Policy CP3 supports development that:

- a) is appropriate in terms of scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character, together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users.
- b) provides a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;
- e) uses the full potential of a site
- f) contributes to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings, including the use of appropriate landscaping;
- h) Contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities

Emerging Planning Policy

- 5.49 Emerging Policy DH1 carries forward similar requirements regarding placemaking and high-quality design into the new Local Plan.
- 5.50 The supporting text to Policy H1 explains that development density should have clear regard to the characteristics of the surrounding area. It further explains that the mix and density of developments should take into consideration place-making aspects such as character and setting, access to walking, cycling and public transport, high quality design and environmental and neighbour impacts, as set out in Policy DH1.
- 5.51 Policy SS11 sets out various development principles, place-shaping principles and masterplanning principles for the Arborfield Green SDL. These sit alongside the draft proposals map, which identifies the Modest Development area within the SDL – effectively the developable area where new buildings should be located.

Assessment

- 5.52 Figure 23 of the Masterplan Framework Document shows the proposed approach to density for the Site. This generally involves locating higher density development towards the centre of the Site and around the main internal site roads, transitioning to lower densities near the more sensitive eastern and northern edges, beyond which lies open countryside and / or important landscape features, including Barkham Church and Manor ASC (north), Barkham Brook corridor (east), and Bearwood and Barkham Valued Landscape (north and east).
- 5.53 Proposed building heights are indicated on the accompanying parameter plan, an extract from which is included below:

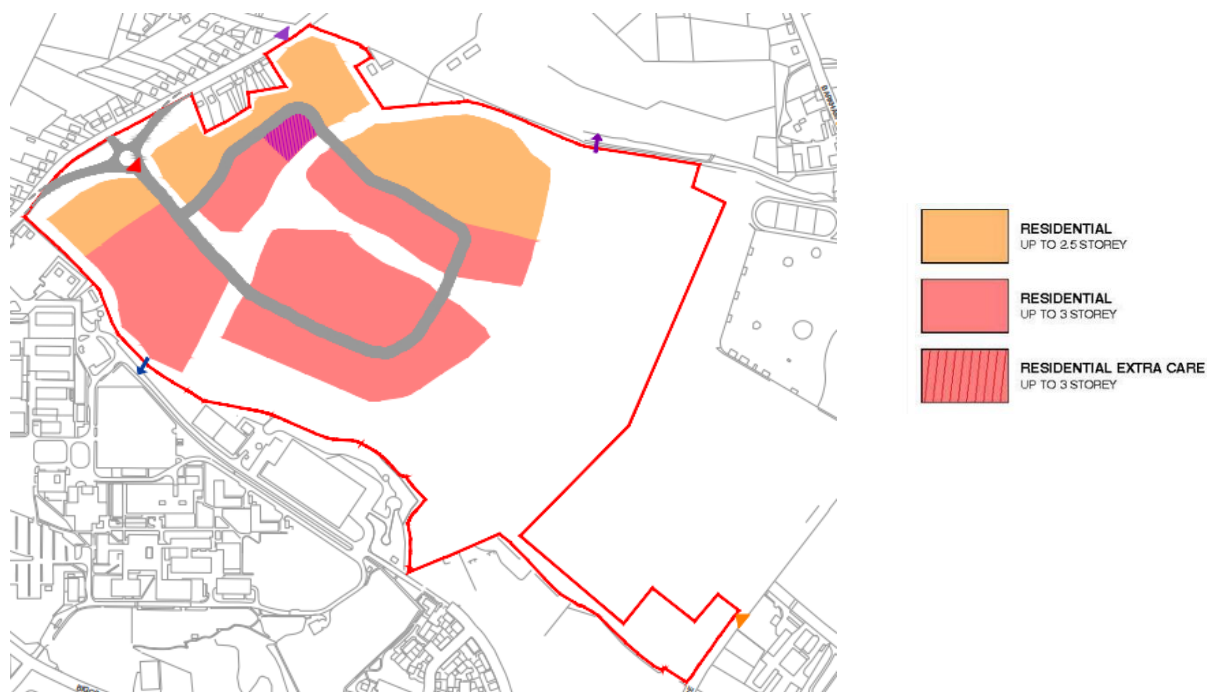


Figure 8: Proposed building heights

5.54 Buildings of up to 2.5 storeys are proposed along the western and northern edges of the Site, with buildings of up to 3 storeys elsewhere. The Architect has sought to create 5 x distinct character areas (as referenced below at Figure 7) within the development, including:

- Langley Gateway – Mix of 2 and 2.5 storey detached and semi-detached houses at medium density. Incorporates the site entrance with new planting to soften the development edge.
- Community Greenway – Mix of 2-3 storey buildings at a higher density. Loops around the core of the development. Includes predominantly terraced and semi-detached buildings, but also apartments and the elderly care facility.
- Kidgem Copse – Mix of larger 2 – 2.5 storey detached and semi-detached dwellings at the northern edge. Medium to low density. Private driveways and natural front gardens. Houses set back from the boundary with supplementary boundary planting.
- Parkland View – Mix of 2-3 storey detached, semi-detached and terraced housing at the centre of the site. Buildings fronting green corridor and play space for surveillance. Medium density.
- Arborfield Rise – detached and semi-detached housing located along the southern boundary, closest to Arborfield Green. Medium to low density.

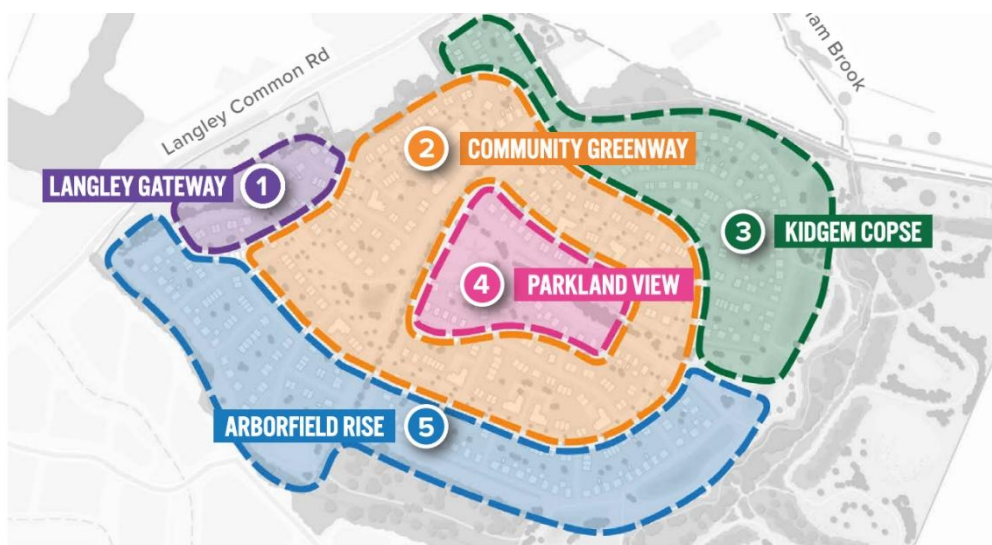


Figure 9: Proposed character areas

5.55 In summary, the parameter plans and accompanying design documents demonstrate the potential of the proposed development to deliver a mix and balance of densities within the Site. The final details will evidently be determined through the assessment and determination of future Reserved Matters applications.

Housing Mix and Tenure including Affordable Housing

Adopted Planning Policy

5.56 Policy CP2 promotes development that helps to deliver inclusive communities, including for older people, children, young people, families, and those with special needs.

- 5.57 Policy CP5 requires residential development to provide a mix of tenures, including a proportion of affordable housing. For developments on greenfield sites within the SDLs, the requirement within the adopted Development Plan is for 35% of homes to be affordable.
- 5.58 Policy CP5 sets out the minimum percentages of affordable housing sought on different residential schemes. Outside identified development locations, 40% will be sought on residential development of 5 or more dwellings.
- 5.59 Policy TB05 requires residential developments to 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. It states that, typically, 10-20% of all dwellings must be built to Lifetime Homes Standards.

Emerging Planning Policy

- 5.60 Policy H1 states that the mix of housing provided should reflect and respond to the identified housing needs and demands as set out in the Council's most up to date evidence of housing need. It sets out the following accessibility requirements, which should be met unless in exceptional circumstances:
- Dwellings will be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations, unless built in line with M4(3) (see below).
 - Development proposals for 20 or more new build dwellings will be required to deliver at least 5% of the new housing as wheelchair accessible and adaptable in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations.
 - Development proposals for specialist accommodation for older people (including elderly care housing) will be required to deliver at least 25% of all new housing as wheelchair accessible and adaptable in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations.
- 5.61 Policy SS11, which concerns the Arborfield Green SDL, (of which the application Site is a part), requires that 40% affordable housing is provided with new residential development. This is reflected in the content of policy H3, which provides further detail on the size and type of housing required. In summary, it requires that:
- The size, tenure and type of accommodation reflects need.
 - Onsite provision is the priority, to be distributed to create mixed balanced communities. Offsite provision will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances.
 - First Homes should provide 25% of the affordable housing proposed where it is demonstrated that a discount of 50% makes the homes affordable. Where this level of discount does not make First Homes affordable, another form of affordable ownership product should be delivered.
- 5.62 The affordable housing threshold within the emerging Local Plan Update therefore sets an expectation for 40% delivery within the Arborfield Green SDL. This standard is engaged by draft Policy SS11 (Arborfield Green SDL) and H3 (Affordable Housing).

Assessment

- 5.63 The Proposed Development responds positively to national, strategic, and local policy requirements for the provision of affordable housing. In doing so, it demonstrates compliance with the NPPF, the Local Plan, and the Barkham and Arborfield Neighbourhood Development Plans, as well as relevant supplementary guidance and evidence.
- 5.64 Paragraphs 66 to 72 of the NPPF (2024) set out the national requirement for planning policies and decisions to ensure that sufficient land is made available to meet the identified need for affordable housing. The Proposed Development aligns with these national objectives by providing a proportion of affordable homes as part of a well-integrated and inclusive masterplan.
- 5.65 Policy CP5 of the Local Plan requires the provision of affordable housing on strategic sites delivering more than 10 dwellings, unless viability evidence demonstrates otherwise. The Proposed Development commits to meeting affordable housing requirements, subject to final tenure mix and dwelling typologies to be agreed at Reserved Matters stage.
- 5.66 Furthermore, draft Policy SS11 confirms the Site's allocation as part of the Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location of the strategic growth planned for Paddock Wood and east Capel, where infrastructure delivery and housing mix—including affordable housing—are central tenets of the policy framework.
- 5.67 As the proposed development forms part of wider strategic residential delivery, the provision of affordable housing will be phased in accordance the delivery programme for the site and it is anticipated that affordable homes will be delivered consistently throughout the development lifecycle rather than backloaded toward later phases.

Landscape & Visual Impact

Adopted Planning Policy

- 5.68 Policy CC03 seeks to protect and enhance the Borough's green infrastructure, trees and landscaping, and to encourage accessibility and new linkages to the network.
- 5.69 Policy TB21 states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, and shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.
- 5.70 Policy TB26 seeks to retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the designated Areas of Special Character and their settings.
- 5.71 The application Site is not located within an Area of Special Character, though may potentially be visible from the Barkham Church and Manor ASC, which is located circa 200m to the east of the Site boundary, as shown below on Figure 8:

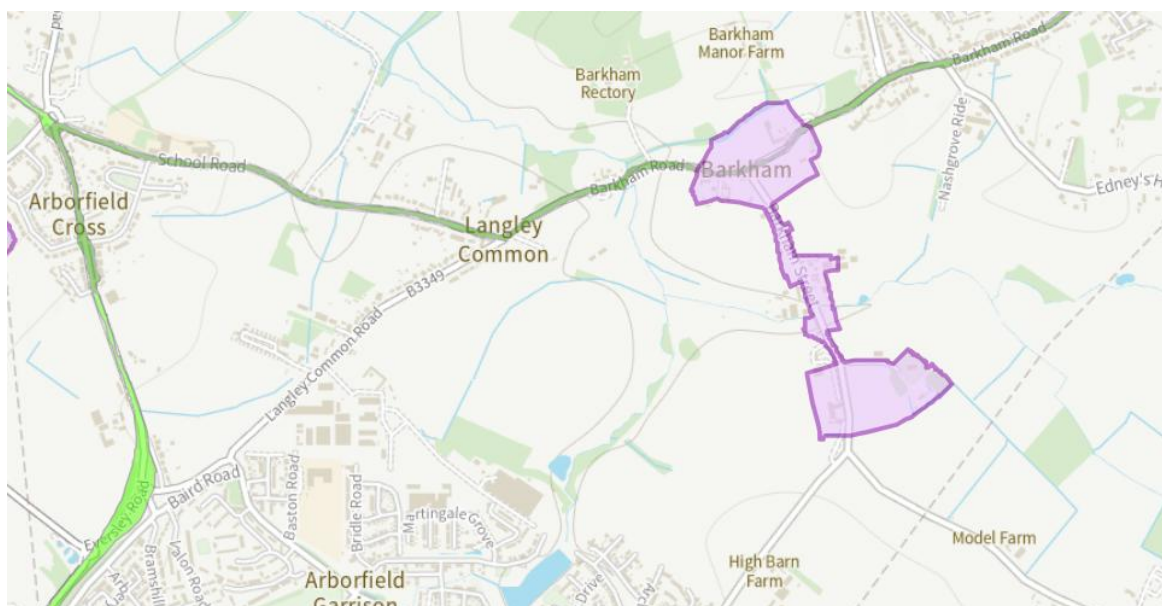


Figure 9: Extract from the adopted Policies Map showing the Barkham Church and Manor ASC

- 5.72 In addition, there are various policies in the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan that seek to protect the rural setting and identity of existing settlements, the natural environment and existing green space, as well as promoting the inclusion of generous open space and high quality landscaping in new developments. These include policies IRS1, IRS2, IRS3 and AD3.

Emerging Planning Policy

- 5.73 Policy NE5 takes forward a similar approach to adopted policy, namely requiring that development should protect and enhance landscape character, and incorporate a high quality of landscape design.
- 5.74 Policy NE6 identifies and seeks to protect the character of various Valued Landscapes. As shown on the draft Policies Map, the Bearwood and Barkham Valued Landscape is located adjacent to the northern edge of the application site. A smaller portion of the Valued Landscape area - which broadly follows the Barkham Brook corridor – also runs through the application Site.

Assessment

- 5.75 The Site is located within Landscape Character Area J2 “Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farm Clay.” It is predominantly agricultural land, with an undulating topography, but also features a shallow wooded valley and a strong wooded context provided by the mature hedgerows and in-field trees.
- 5.76 The site is visible from adjacent residential properties, public rights of way, public open spaces and the immediate road network, with views ranging from indirect / filtered to direct / open, depending on the location, topography and presence / absence of screening. The Visual Context Plan at chapter 3.6 of the Masterplan Framework Document shows the relationship between the site and its surroundings in terms of landscape, views and receptors.
- 5.77 The proposed design incorporates the following measures to reduce landscape impact and create a high-quality environment for future residents:

- New buildings are located within the defined Modest Settlement area, as shown on the emerging policies map. This is the location in which the Council is promoting new housing development.
- The new buildings are set back from the Site boundaries, and new boundary planting is proposed to supplement existing trees and vegetation. This will enhance screening and reduce visibility from nearby receptors.
- The Barkham Brook corridor will remain undeveloped and a suitable buffer zone will separate it from the proposed housing.
- Land to the east of Barkham Brook will be changed from agricultural use to a publicly accessible country park
- The above measures, (watercourse buffer and country park,) ensure the new housing is separated from Barkham Village and the associated Barkham Church and Manor ASC by a buffer of natural, undeveloped landscape.
- The masterplan includes various open, natural and landscaped areas within the Site, as well as sizeable private gardens, to help create a verdant environment for future residents and reduce the “urban” appearance of the development.

5.78 The area of the Site closest to the neighbouring ASC will be used for open space, landscaping & SANG, thus creating a buffer between the new buildings and the ASC.

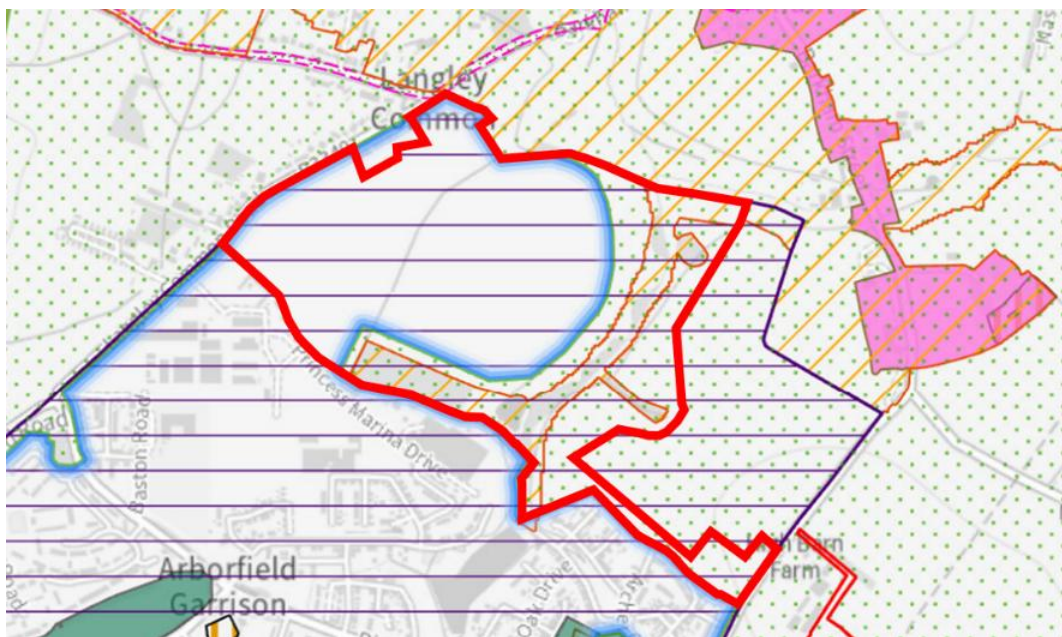


Figure 10 Extract from the Local Plan Update Policies Map showing the Barkham Church and Manor ASC relative to Policy SS11

5.79 The accompanying Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (see Section 10 of the Environmental Statement and Technical Appendices 10.1 – 10.9) prepared by BMD, identifies the following conclusions:

- Landscape and visual effects have been assessed following three stages: during construction; immediately on completion (Year 0); and during operation after establishment of landscape mitigation (Year 15) as well as for an alternative assessment scenario based on reduced numbers of proposed residential units.
- Effects on landscape character would be considered as Minor Adverse (not significant) during construction and immediately on completion for areas directly adjacent to and up to 500m of the Site, with all other landscape effects considered Neutral in the long term.
- Effects on the landscape character of the Site are considered Temporary Minor-Moderate Adverse during construction, reducing to Short Term Minor Adverse on completion and improving to Long Term Minor Beneficial on establishment of the Green Infrastructure Framework / landscape mitigation.
- Visual effects at the construction stage and on completion (Year 0) have been assessed to be Temporary and Short Term Moderate - Major Adverse to residents that directly abut the Site on Langley Common Road and at Field House. All other landscape and visual effects during construction would be insignificant, with most effects being Negligible or Minor.
- Visual effects during operation, following establishment of landscape mitigation (Year 15) have been assessed to be Long Term Moderate Adverse to residents that directly abut the Site on Langley Common Road and at Field House, with all other Long Term visual effects considered to be insignificant / most being Negligible

Green Infrastructure, Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities

Adopted Planning Policy

- 5.80 Policy TB08 sets out standards for the provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities, and states that these should be provided onsite.
- 5.81 Policy CP3 g) supports development that provides for a framework of open space, in secure community use, achieving at least 4.65ha/1,000 population provision, together with recreational/sporting facilities in addition to private amenity space.

Emerging Planning Policy

- 5.82 Policy HC4 requires development creating net additional dwellings to provide or contribute to the provision of open space, sport, recreation and play facilities. It sets out standards with which development must comply, requires provision onsite where feasible, and requires that details for long term maintenance be provided.

Assessment

- 5.83 As shown on the proposed masterplan, the proposed design includes the following green infrastructure:
- A community green

- 2 x landscaped play areas
- Green corridors running between the development parcels
- Large SANG community park to occupy the eastern portion of the site.
- Allotments located in the southeastern corner of the site, accessed via Commonfield Lane

5.84 Altogether, over 50% of the application site is proposed as public open space.

5.85 The green corridors and SANG have been designed to join up with the existing green infrastructure network in the nearby area, including The Coombes Wooded Hills, Barkham Brook, Arborfield Linear Park and Finchampstead Forest, which will strengthen biodiversity connections and promote the safe movement of wildlife.

5.86 In terms of blue infrastructure, the design seeks to retain and enhance the Barkham Brook corridor and existing pond adjacent, as well as providing new attenuation basins to help manage with surface water, as well as enhancing visual amenity and biodiversity.

5.87 The open space requirements of the development as prescribed from relevant planning policies are detailed on the Open Space Parameter Plan and are policy compliant in their provision.

5.88 Play space is assessed at chapter 5.7 of the Masterplan Framework Document. It confirms that a full suite of LAP, LEAP, LLAP and NEAP facilities are provided to meet local requirements. These are located primarily within two formal play areas at either end of the central green corridor that runs north-west / south-east through the development. It has been agreed with WBC that the requirement for sports provision can be met via a contribution to off-site facilities.

5.89 In summary, it is considered that the open space provision is compliant with both adopted and emerging policy requirements and it is particularly noted that the overall provision is in excess of the referenced requirements.

Blue Infrastructure

5.90 Emerging policy FD3 seeks to conserve and enhance the function, character, setting, biodiversity and historical significance of rivers and water courses. It sets out various considerations for development near watercourses, including:

- a) Design should respect the riverside setting and views.
- b) Public access and leisure / tourism activities should be retained and enhanced where possible.
- c) River banks and associated vegetation and trees should be protected and enhanced.
- d) A suitable undeveloped buffer zone should be provided between the river and new development.
- e) Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives, and guidance set out in the Thames River Basin Management Plan or any local catchment management plans should be addressed.

Assessment

- 5.91 It is considered that the proposed development has evidenced that the illustrative layout has been informed and guided by the existing blue infrastructure within the site and will ultimately result in an improvement to the setting of the existing riverside, through the provision of additional strategic planting, which will be managed in its function as SANG. A buffer between the Barkham Brook and the built development edge will be provided – with Section 7 within the Masterplan Framework Document detailing a distance of circa 60m between the Brook and the built development edge/rook ed
- 5.92 The accompanying Arboricultural Impact Assessment further confirms that no trees of value will be removed as a result of the proposed development.
- 5.93 In summary, it is considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of emerging policy FD3.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

Adopted Planning Policy

- 5.94 Policy CP8 requires that any development likely to have significant effects on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA must demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects can be provided.

Emerging Planning Policy

- 5.95 Emerging Policy NE3 carries forward similar protection. It also identifies the following key requirements:
- Within the 400m-5km and 5km-7km zone, development proposals for a net increase in dwellings will be supported which secure the SANG and SAMM standards.
 - Within the 400m – 5km zone (in which the application site is located) a minimum of 8 hectares of SANG land (after discounting to account for current access and capacity) will be provided per 1,000 new occupants.
 - Development proposals for a net increase of more than 50 dwellings are expected to provide their own bespoke SANG.
 - A developer contribution will be required towards the SAMM Project for each net additional dwelling.
- 5.96 Emerging Policy SS11, which concerns the Arborfield Green SDL, requires that new development provides a *“solution to avoid and mitigate the impact of development upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area through provision of sufficient Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) (subject to monitoring of the quality and quantity standards).”*

Assessment

- 5.97 In this case, the site is located within the 400m – 5km zone, as shown on Figure 10 below.

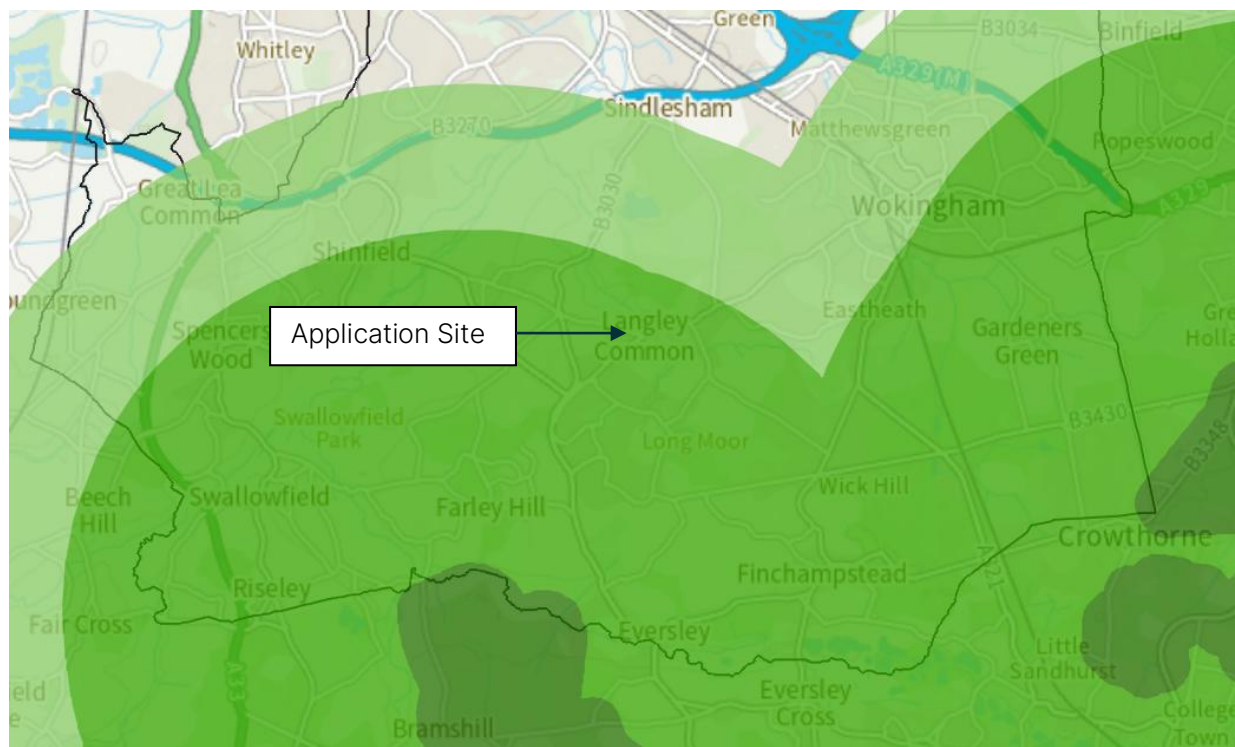


Figure 11: Policies Map extract showing the site within the 5km Linear Mitigation Zone

- 5.98 The proposed development incorporates 13.23 Ha of SANG. In relation to the requirement within the draft Arborfield Green SDL policy (SS11) to provide an appropriate solution to avoid and mitigate the impact of development upon the SPA – it is considered that the proposed SANG extent and design is acceptable in these terms. The proposed SANG is inclusive of a 2.3km circular walking route and a suitably sized car park, accessible from Commonfield Lane.
- 5.99 As discussed elsewhere in this statement, the SANG area will be enhanced to deliver biodiversity gains and will connect to the network of green infrastructure nearby, effectively becoming an extension of Arborfield Green Linear Park.
- 5.100 This application is accompanied by a SANG Management Plan, (including funding and cost details) that has been prepared by RPS. The Management Plan sets out two principal aims, which are repeated below:
- 1. Provide a convenient, accessible, enjoyable and satisfying recreation experience in a natural environment, so that new and existing residents in the area, who would otherwise travel to other local recreational sites, opt to visit Barkham Square SANG as an alternative, therefore relieving pressure on similar local sensitive sites; and
 - 2. Protect and enhance, through conservation management, the naturalness, biodiversity, and local character of the Barkham Square SANG area, to increase its likely effectiveness as a SANG and in accordance with the spirit of the National Planning Policy Framework and local BAP targets.

5.101 Beyond the principal aims, there are five further key specific objectives, which are also repeated below:

- 1. To deliver and maintain an accessible greenspace resource in fulfilment of criteria set out in the Joint Strategic Partnership Board's 'Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework' and Natural England's 'Guidelines for the Creation of SANG';
- 2. To create new semi-natural habitats to achieve biodiversity gains and produce a diverse, naturalistic and attractive landscape;
- 3. To maintain and enhance existing habitats, including Kidgham Copse Ancient Woodland, to achieve biodiversity gains and produce a diverse, naturalistic and attractive landscape;
- 4. To manage for both amenity value and biodiversity benefit; and
- 5. To provide opportunities for public engagement and involvement in the management of the SANG

5.102 The Management Plan extends to outline how the proposed SANG responds to these objectives, as repeated below:

Objective 1

- The SANG will be seen as connecting between the existing linear park at Arborfield Green to Commonfield Lane and an existing PRoW into Barkham Village. The routes are immersed in semi-natural habitat types such as: coppiced hazel, woodland habitats, parkland trees, native hedgerow along with meadow grassland. This subsequently creates a naturalistic, ecologically rich diverse landscape that will be easily accessible to the residents of the new development and the wider community.
- Encourage informal recreational opportunities within the newly designated Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace:
 - A footpath network will comprise of a circular walk through the landscape retaining a semi-natural feel.
 - Select strategic thresholds to strengthen connectivity between Barkham Village and the new development, existing public right of way and the wider residents.
 - Safe footpaths will be established by maintaining clear and open connections through the natural green space.

Objective 2

- The following new habitats are proposed for delivery within the Barkham Square SANG:
 - native woodland & tree planting;
 - hazel coppice;
 - native shrub planting;

- species rich hedgerow planting; and
- meadow grasslands.
- Creation of these habitats will contribute to the achievement of the relevant Natural England SANG principles set out in Section 2 above.

Objective 3

- The following elements of habitat restoration work are proposed:
 - Ongoing diversification and enhancement of grassland habitats through active conservation management.
 - Ongoing diversification and enhancement of Kidgham Copse Ancient Woodland and scrub through implementation of traditional management techniques.
 - Recreate part of the extent of the former Kidgham Copse Ancient Woodland within the SANG.
 - Remaining grassland within the SANG will be enhanced to become species-rich glades within the new blocks of woodland and scrub.
- Restoration of these habitats will contribute to the achievement of the relevant SANG principles which will in turn benefit fauna using these habitats.
- Maximising the wildlife value can be achieved by the long-term management of the site

Objective 4

- Ongoing management will be undertaken to promote both the amenity and biodiversity importance of the SANG, including such actions as the upkeep of site furniture and infrastructure

Objective 5

- It is the intention of the applicant to pass the SANG (and other Green Infrastructure within the application site) to a Management Company for ongoing management following the initial implementation and establishment period. Ongoing management will include site wardens and public engagement – in accordance with Natural England’s SANG principles.
- Site wardens can engage with local residents using such established techniques as running voluntary work parties to undertake management and monitoring tasks; arranging guided walks; and supervising activities for children.

SANG Maintenance

5.103 The accompanying SANG Management Plan is inclusive of a detailed proposed maintenance schedule, (see Appendix A of the Management Plan) relative to each identified objective and a further Monthly Maintenance Schedule (Appendix B of the Management Plan). It is anticipated that

adherence to the management arrangements detailed within this document will be secured through appropriately drafted planning conditions.

Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)

5.104 The applicant is also amenable to a contribution towards the SAMM, which can be secured through an obligation within a Section 106 agreement. It is noted that the level of contributions are calculated on a per bedroom basis, and dependent on the zone within which the development falls. From 1 May 2025 the level of SAMM payments are calculated as follows:

- 1 bedroom: £582.00
- 2 bedroom: £810.00
- 3 bedroom: £1,077.00
- 4 bedroom: £1,267.00
- 5 bedroom: £1,447.00

5.105 It is anticipated that the requisite contributions will be paid upon the commencement of a phase of development that has first been subject to the approval of Reserved Matters for that phase.

Summary

5.106 Taking the above into account, it is considered that the proposed development meets the requirements of adopted policy CP8 and emerging policies NE3 and SS11 and will not have an adverse impact on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. It is considered that the level of detail provided in respect of the proposed SANG is of sufficient detail that both the LPA and Natural England will be able to determine that the proposed SANG is both an effective and attractive form of mitigation that would also satisfy Natural England's published SANG guidance.

5.107 In respect of SAMM, Crest is amenable to the provision of a commuted sum, (with the exact sum be determined post-approval of Reserved Matters) via a Section 106 obligation. This contribution will assist with wardening and education across the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area.

Infrastructure

Adopted Planning Policy

5.108 Policy CP4 states that 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.

Emerging Planning Policy

5.109 Policy SS15 carries forward a similar requirement into the emerging Local Plan for local and strategic infrastructure.

- 5.110 Policy C7 requires that developers consider and, where required / feasible, incorporate full fibre broadband and mobile telecommunications infrastructure.
- 5.111 Policy C8 requires developers to demonstrate that there is sufficient capacity for electricity, water supply and wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure, on and off site, to service the development, and that agreement has been or will be sought from the appropriate utility / service providers.
- 5.112 Policy HC1 promotes measures to promote healthy communities. It requires that residential development proposals of 10 dwellings or more must include a Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

Assessment

- 5.113 A Health Impact Assessment has been prepared by Rapleys and is provided in standalone form. The Assessment explains that the key health benefits arising from the proposed development include:
- Provision of safe and accessible walking and cycling routes, supporting active travel.
 - Delivery of high-quality public open space, including a 13.23ha SANG, allotments and play areas.
 - Opportunities for physical activity and social interaction through green corridors and community spaces.
 - Integration of energy-efficient homes with good ventilation, insulation, and low-carbon heating systems.
 - Use of sustainable design and construction techniques to minimise environmental impacts
 - Implementation of SuDS to manage surface water and reduce flood risk.
 - Enhancement of biodiversity through habitat creation and retention of ancient woodland and hedgerows.
 - Improvements to local connectivity..
 - Long-term management of open spaces to ensure continued quality and accessibility.
- 5.114 In addition to the health and wellbeing benefits, the development will contribute to wider social and economic objectives, including:
- Supporting housing delivery in line with local and national targets
 - Providing a mix of housing types to meet identified needs
 - Creating inclusive, well-connected neighbourhoods
 - Supporting the local economy through construction and long-term population growth
- 5.115 Overall, the proposed development is expected to make a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of new residents, existing communities, and the wider Wokingham Borough. It aligns

with the aims of Policy HC1 and the broader vision of the Local Plan Update to create sustainable, healthy and inclusive places.

Emerging Planning Policy

- 5.116 Policy H1 requires residential development to meet the latest nationally described space standard for minimum internal space. Policy DH2 seeks to protect the amenity of new and existing residents.

Assessment

- 5.117 The broad locations of residential parcels are detailed within the parameter plans and the Masterplan Framework Document which are provided in support of this application.
- 5.118 The general heights for the proposed buildings across the site are detailed on the Building Heights Parameter Plan (ref:BMD.23.0016.DR.P008.I) and further illustrated within the Masterplan Framework Document. This provision allows for a high-level assessment of the impact of the proposals on neighbouring properties outside the site, which will be subject to detailed consideration at the Reserved Matters stage.
- 5.119 There are relatively few existing residences within, or immediately adjacent to, the application site and therefore it is considered that no residential amenity impacts will arise as a result of the proposed development.
- 5.120 In terms of the amenity of future residents, the C3 dwelling houses will all accord with the nationally described space standards, as required through emerging Policy H1. This is a matter for detailed consideration via the approval of reserved matters, in the event that Outline permission is granted.

Heritage & Conservation

Adopted Planning Policy

- 5.121 Policy TB24 seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment – including archaeological remains, preferably in situ. Where this is not possible, the policy requires applicants to provide for excavation, recording and archiving of the remains.
- 5.122 Policy IRS4 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Character of the Area of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan is generally consistent with TB24 in setting out that:

1. Development proposals will need to demonstrate how they protect or enhance the historic and natural character of the area, specifically:

a) Arborfield Cross Conservation Area

b) Chamberlain's Farm Area of Special Character

c) The Barkham Street Area of Special Character

d) The local historic environment, including the setting of Listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments and other historically significant buildings

2. Locally valued heritage assets have been identified in the plan as follows (see Map K) and development proposals should protect and enhance them where possible:

a) The historic chestnut avenue in Arborfield, linking The Old Rectory to the remains of the old church.

b) The lime grove at Nashgrove Ride in Barkham.

c) Carters Hill

d) The granary in Barkham Street

Emerging Planning Policy

5.123 Policy DH5 seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment whilst Policy DH6 seeks to protect archaeological remains.

Assessment

5.124 The accompanying Heritage Statement by IcenI assesses the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the following listed buildings and their settings. In each instance, the Statement finds that no harm will be caused.

- Barkham Manor (Grade II) – the distance from the site, presence of screening, and lack of historic association, means no harm will be caused to the significance of Barkham Manor.
- Sparks Farm (Grade II) – the lack of historic association with the site, the generous rear space and the degree of screening ensures no impact on historic significance.
- The Bull (Grade II) – the lack of historic association with the site, the generous rear space and the degree of screening means there would not be any harm to historic significance.
- Barkham Square (Grade II) - the retention of a generous buffer zone, the enhancement of green infrastructure, and the sensitive placement of development maintain the key contributory elements of the asset's setting.
- Church of St James (Grade II), Church Cottage (Grade II) including scheduled monument – the distance from the site together with the presence of screening will ensure no harm to the historic significance of the assets.
- Langley Pond Farmhouse (Grade II) - the clear separation provided by existing boundary treatments and roadways, along with screening, ensure that Langley Pond Farmhouse retains its legibility as a 16th-century former farmhouse, free from any perceptual or physical encroachment by the proposed development.

5.125 IcenI's Heritage Statement further explains that the setting of the Arborfield Cross Conservation Area would be preserved – particularly those elements which illustrate its historic development and rural context. This conclusion would result in 'no harm' for the purposes of assessment relevant to paragraph 208 of the NPPF and the aforementioned policies with respect to the historic environment within the adopted Development Plan.

- 5.126 In addition, the '*locally valued heritage assets*' referenced within Neighbourhood Plan Policy IRS4 (2) will not be subject to any harm arising from the proposed development.
- 5.127 The Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (DBA) by RPS reaches the following conclusions:
- The site is not subject to any national or local archaeological designations.
 - There is found to be a high potential for evidence of prehistoric burnt mounds of low significance, a moderate potential for the remains of Bronze Age occupation/activity of low/medium significance and a moderate potential for Iron Age and Roman field ditches and enclosures of low significance. A potential is also identified for Medieval and Post-Medieval field boundaries of low/negligible significance. A low archaeological potential is identified for all other periods.
 - A geophysical survey of the site, carried out in 2024 has not identified features of archaeological interest that are likely to be greater of low, local interest only and primarily relate to the historical cultivation of the site.
 - The proposed development has the potential to impact below ground archaeological remains of local/regional significance through landscaping and excavations for foundations, services and attenuation
 - An archaeological trial trench evaluation will be required prior to development, focussed within the areas of proposed impact, with further works depending upon the results of evaluation. The scope and timing of such works should be discussed with the archaeological advisor in due course.
 - The development will have no impact on the two nearby Scheduled Monuments, which are 500m and 600m away respectively. There is no intervisibility between the monument and the application site.
- 5.128 The applicant is committed to undertaking the recommended trial trench evaluation (and any subsequent work), and to ensure the construction phase is carried out with all suitable archaeological precautions and mitigation measures in place. These matters can be controlled by suitably worded planning conditions. On this basis, there are not considered to be any archaeological reasons to withhold planning permission.
- 5.129 Overall, the proposed development is considered to comply with heritage policy and can be undertaken in such a way as to prevent harm to heritage assets.

Ecology & Biodiversity

Adopted Planning Policy

- 5.130 Policy CP1 promotes sustainable development. Where ecology is concerned:
- Point 1 seeks to ensure that development maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment.

- Point 2 seeks to minimise the emission of pollutants.
- Point 3 seeks to limit any adverse effects on water quality (including ground water).

5.131 Policy CP3 supports development that avoids a harmful impact on important ecological features, water courses, fauna and flora, including protected species.

5.132 Policy CP7 seeks to protect designated ecological sites and important habitats and species. It states that proposals that would harm such elements will only be allowed under certain strict conditions, and where mitigation / compensation measures are also included.

5.133 Policy TB23 states that planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with policy CP7 and also demonstrate how they:

a) Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing

b) Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation

c) Ensure that all existing and new developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network.

5.134 Policy IRS3 of the Neighbourhood Plan generally requires the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and green spaces within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Policy IRS3 sets out that development proposals should ensure that there is no loss of biodiversity and should normally provide a net gain, whilst also taking opportunities to protect, enhance and extend wildlife corridors between existing open spaces and habitat corridors as a means of mitigating the impacts arising from development on biodiversity.

Emerging Planning Policy

5.135 Policy NE1 seeks to protect and enhance the borough's biodiversity and geodiversity and sets out various criteria against which applications will be assessed.

5.136 Policy NE2 requires that new development delivers a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in line with national policy / legislation. It requires delivery of the gain on site in the first instance, or through biodiversity off setting where appropriate.

Assessment

5.137 The Ecology chapter of the Environmental Statement identifies the following important ecological receptors:

Important Ecological Receptor	Value
Thames Basin Heaths SPA	Very high (international)
Longmoor Bog SSSI	High (national)
Longmoor Bog LNR	Medium (regional)
Various LWS listed in Table X.5	Medium (regional)
Ancient woodland	High (national)
Woodlands	Medium (regional)
Hedgerows	Medium (regional)
Barkham Brook	Medium (regional)
Pond 1	Medium (regional)
Breeding birds	Medium (regional)
Bats	Medium (regional)

5.138 The chapter also identifies and summaries the species survey information (see Technical Appendices 8.1 – 8.11) that has been provided as part of the application submission, which is set out below:

- No bat roosts were observed during the surveys of the building on-site and all trees with the potential to support bat roosts within the site will be retained. As such, there will be no loss of roosting habitat as a result of the proposed development.
- No signs of dormice were recorded during the survey, indicating likely absence of the species on Site.
- Four adult and two juvenile grass snakes were recorded on site, with the overall count of six means that the Site is estimated to have a good population of grass snake. One adult slow worm was also recorded during the surveys, indicating an estimated low population size of slow worm. As the Site only supports two reptile species it does not qualify as a Key Reptile Site.
- No invertebrate species identified during the assemblage surveys that were of particular interest or conservation concern. Therefore, they are not considered to present a constraint to development and are not considered further in proposal's impact assessment.
- A Great Crested Newt egg was located on aquatic vegetation within one of the 19 assessed ponds within a 500m radius of the application site. As a result, further population estimate surveys were completed, which did not find further evidence of Great Crested Newts. As a consequence, it has been assessed that the present population is very small. The project will enter into a District Level License for the Berkshire area, whereby any potential impacts or effects to the species will be resolved through the licensing project.

- A walkover survey to identify presence/likely absence of riparian mammals on the Project site was undertaken and no evidence to the presence of riparian mammals was found.
- All eDNA samples taken from the watercourse within the Project site boundary were negative for white-clawed crayfish eDNA. During the walkover survey no evidence of burrows were detected, and the habitat was considered unsuitable for white-clawed crayfish due to heavy trampling by cattle and sub-optimal bank profiles
- There is potential for hedgehogs to be using areas of rough grass and scrub around the boundaries of the Site. Hedgehog are listed in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act and they have experienced a dramatic population decline in recent years. Therefore, hedgehogs are considered within the proposal's mitigation strategy.

Impacts

5.139 The ES Chapter concludes the following in respect of construction effects:

- No significant effects in EIA terms arising through construction on statutory designated sites, subject to the provision of appropriate measures to be secured within a Construction Environmental Management Plan;
- No impacts of ecological significance on non-statutory designated sites;
- No impacts of ecological significance on habitats (Ancient Woodland, non-ancient woodland, Barkham Brook, Pond P1 and hedgerows) arising from construction impacts;
- The impact of construction on breeding birds (medium (regional) value), largely as a result of habitat loss, is expected to be medium adverse, which will be a slight adverse effect in the medium-term and not significant in EIA terms;
- The impacts of construction, primarily as a result of low value grassland, on bats (of medium (medium (regional) value) is expected to be low adverse, which will be of negligible adverse effect in the medium term and not significant in EIA terms.

5.140 The ES Chapter concludes the following in respect of operational effects:

- The impact of operation on statutory designated sites (of high – very high (national – international) value) is expected to be to be negligible, which will be minor adverse in the long-term, and not significant EIA terms;
- The impact of operation on non-statutory designated sites (LWSs) of medium (regional) value is expected to be negligible, which will have a negligible effect in the long-term and will be not significant in EIA terms;
- The impact of operation on Ancient Woodland of high (national) value is expected to be low positive, which will have a slight positive effect in the long-term and will be not significant in EIA terms;

- The impact of operation on non-ancient woodland and hedgerows (of medium (regional) value) is expected to be low positive, which will be a negligible effect in the long-term and not significant in EIA terms;
- The operational phase is expected to result in a long-term low positive impact on watercourses and waterbodies (of medium (regional) value), which will have a negligible effect in the long-term and is not significant in EIA terms;
- The impact of operation on breeding birds (medium (regional) value) is expected to be medium positive, the effect of which will be of slight positive significance in the long-term and not significant in EIA terms;
- The impact of operation on bats (medium (regional) value) is expected to be medium positive, which will be slight positive in the long-term, which is not significant in EIA terms;
- The impact of operation on reptiles, amphibians and hedgehogs is expected to be low positive, which will have a negligible – slight positive effect in the long-term and be not significant in EIA terms.

5.141 The ES Chapter concludes that no additional mitigation measures, beyond those detailed, are considered to be necessary and that in overall terms, when the mitigation proposed is included, the proposed development would have an overall minor positive long-term impact on biodiversity. It is considered that the means of mitigation, as detailed from paragraph 1.169 of the Ecological ES Chapter are capable of being secured through the imposition of appropriately drafted planning conditions.

Biodiversity Net Gain

5.142 The accompanying Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment prepared by RPS explains that the development proposals will deliver a net gain of 25.66% for habitats, 15.95% for hedgerows and 18.40% for watercourses. The breakdown of this gain is as set out below:

- The total habitat units post-development delivered by the proposals is 126.06 units which is 25.74 units more than the baseline of 100.32 units.
- The total hedgerow units post-development delivered by the proposals is 39.88 units which is 5.49 units more than the baseline of 34.39 units.
- The total watercourse units post-development delivered by the proposals is 11.14 units which is 1.73 units more than the baseline of 9.41 units.

5.143 The submitted metric calculator further confirms that the trading rules have also been satisfied.

5.144 It is considered that the substantive biodiversity net gain, across habitats, hedgerows and watercourses should be afforded significant weight in the planning balance. In the event that planning permission is granted, the consent will be subject to the imposition of the statutory biodiversity net gain condition, requiring the submission and approval of a Gain Plan prior to the commencement of development.

Arboriculture

- 5.145 Policy CP7 and CC03 seek to protect valuable trees and promote new tree planting. Emerging policy NE4 seeks to protect existing trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows, while maximising opportunities for new tree planting.
- 5.146 SJA Trees has prepared an Arboricultural Impact Assessment to support this application. Their assessment considers that the arboricultural impact of the proposed development is negligible.
- 5.147 The proposed development will not result in the removal of any ancient, veteran, notable or mature trees, no Category 'A' or 'B' trees and further, no trees that are considered to be of high landscape or biodiversity value.
- 5.148 The proposed removal of sections of three groups of trees will represent only a very minor alteration to the overall arboricultural character of the Site and will not have a significant adverse impact on the arboricultural character and appearance of the local landscape.
- 5.149 The incursions into the existing Ancient Woodland buffer zones are considered to be negligible in extent and can be constructed in such a way that will not require the removal of existing trees or harm existing ground conditions. As a consequence, the proposals will not result in any loss of irreplaceable habitat.
- 5.150 On the basis of the above, it is considered that the proposed development is appropriate and acceptable with respect to policies CP7, CC03 and emerging policy NE4.

Transport & Accessibility

Adopted Local Plan Policy

- 5.151 Policy CP1 (point 11) promotes development that reduces the need to travel, particularly by private car. Policy CP6 supports development that provides sustainable travel options, reduces travel distances, improves the existing infrastructure network for relevant travel modes, provides appropriate vehicle parking, mitigates against potential adverse travel impacts, improves road safety, and prevents highway or traffic related environmental problems.
- 5.152 Policy CP10 identifies the areas where strategic improvement to the borough's transport network is sought, and how this will be funded. Policy CC07 requires that new development meets the Council's parking standards and retains an appropriate level of off-street parking. Parking standards are set out in Appendix 2 of the MDD.

Emerging Local Plan Policy

- 5.153 Policy C1 requires that development prioritises travel by active means and public transport, supports the uptake of electric vehicles and contributes to an integrated transport system.
- 5.154 Policy C2 requires applicant's to fully assess the transport impacts of development and provide appropriate mitigation where necessary. Policy C3 promotes active travel and sets out key considerations for walking, wheeling and cycling.

5.155 Policy C5 requires the provision of parking, cycle parking and electrical vehicle charging to meet adopted standards. It requires that residential development of 10 dwellings or more be supported by Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy. Policy SS17 of the emerging Local Plan sets out the Council's ambitions to improve active travel, public transport and the road network.

Assessment

5.156 As mentioned within Section 4 of this Statement, this application seeks outline planning permission with all matters reserved except access. As such, full details of the following are provided with the application.

- Primary vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from Langley Common Road (the main access).
- Car park access from Commonfield Lane, which will primarily serve the allotments and SANG country park.

5.157 Please refer to proposed plan refs: ITL11337-GA-001 Rev C (Langley Common Roundabout) and ITL11337-GA-002 Rev A (Commonfield Lane) prepared by iTransport which form part of the full detail element of the application.

5.158 The accompanying Transport Statement, prepared by iTransport, concludes that:

- The Site is well located to enable most journeys to be undertaken by sustainable modes with a range of facilities and services located within comfortable walking and cycling distance, most located within Arborfield Green.
- Public transport services are also easily accessible, with the Leopard 3 bus route to be delivered as part of Arborfield Green, including bus stops within a short walk of the Site.
- A review of key local walking and cycling routes has identified that the Site benefits from good links to both on and off-street walking and cycling networks. The access strategy for the development integrates with these existing routes and offers permeability through the Site.
- Whilst most of the existing routes are of good quality and suitable for the journey purpose, or will be once fully built, the review identified opportunities to improve crossing provision across Barkham Road between PROW BARK7 and School Road, which the applicant is amenable to support as part of this application.
- A new roundabout from Langley Common Road will form the principal means of access to the Site, with a separate access from Commonfield Lane provided to service the allotments and the SANG. A secondary access, for emergency vehicle access, is also proposed from Langley Common Road to the north of the principal means of access.
- Based on the extent of the proposed development (up to 660 No. dwellings plus elderly care accommodation), the proposal has the potential to generate the following transport movements:
 - Up to 393 two-way vehicle movements in the morning peak hour;

- Around 326 two-way vehicle movements in the evening peak hour; and
- Some 2,806 across a 12-hour day.
- The proposed development has been modelled using the WBC strategic model and individual junction modelling has also been undertaken. The results of these assessments have demonstrated the development does not result in a 'severe' impact on the local highway network – indeed, the impacts associated with the proposal would fall far short of such a threshold.

5.159 In summary, the Transport Assessment considers that the proposed development of Barkham Square will:

- Encourage opportunities to promote travel by sustainable transport modes.
- Provide both safe and suitable access to the site for all users.
- The proposed indicative site layout appropriately reflects current national guidance with further detail to be provided for consideration and assessment at the reserved matters stage.
- The proposal will ultimately be acceptable in planning terms as it does not give rise to unacceptable impacts upon highway safety – as confirmed through the undertaking of assessment via both the strategic and local highway modelling.

5.160 Overall, Crest contend that the proposed development is in accordance with Policy CP1, CP10 and emerging policies C1, C2, C5 and SS17.

Flood Risk and Drainage

Adopted Planning Policy

- 5.161 Policy CP1 (point 9) supports development that avoids increasing (and where possible reduces) flood risk from all sources. Policy CP1 (point 4) seeks to ensure that development is supported by adequate drainage systems.
- 5.162 Policy CC09 explains the sequential approach and identifies the level of information required in support of applications in flood risk areas.
- 5.163 Policy CC10 requires that development addresses surface water flood risk and sets out the relevant drainage details to be provided with planning applications.

Emerging Planning Policy

- 5.164 Policy FD1 seeks to ensure that development takes account of flood risk from all sources and complies with national policy. It sets out when an FRA, Sequential Test and Exception Test will be required to support planning applications.
- 5.165 The supporting text to Policy FD1 explains that sites that are allocated within the Local Plan Update do not need to apply the sequential test again, but may need to reapply the exceptions test if relevant aspects of the proposal have changed since this was undertaken at the plan making stage, or if more recent information about existing or potential flood risk has become available

- 5.166 Policy FD2 states that development proposals must ensure surface water arising, including the impact of climate, change, is managed in a sustainable manner. It states that development on greenfield sites will be expected to achieve greenfield run-off rates and requires residential developments of over 10 dwellings to incorporate SuDS as an intrinsic part of the design. Guidance on how SuDS should be incorporated is also provided.

Assessment

- 5.167 In line with the sequential approach, all residential parcels (as identified on the Land Use Parameter Plans) are to be located within Flood Zone 1, as indicated on the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning. The fluvial flood risk to the site is considered to be 'low' as the modelling has demonstrated the developable areas are not considered to be at risk – as addressed within the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment.
- 5.168 The portion of the Site that is located within Flood Zones 2 & 3 – associated with Barkham Brook – will remain undeveloped of more vulnerable uses. This arrangement can be appropriately secured through condition.
- 5.169 Whilst small elements of the residential parcels are potentially subject to surface water flooding in accordance with the EA's Flood Map for Planning, these areas are all capable of being addressed through the detailed consideration of layout and landscaping at the reserved matters stage. Nevertheless, as the supporting text to Policy FD1 confirms, as the site comprises part of a proposed allocation as part of the Arborfield Green SDL, it is considered that there should not be a requirement to undertake a sequential test exercise in this instance.
- 5.170 This position is supported further by the evidence base to support the Local Plan Update is inclusive of a Sequential Test and Exception Test exercise (September 2024), prepared by WBC. In respect of the Sequential Test, it states:

The Proposed Submission LPU proposes built development on the western part of the site only with no built development east of Barkham Brook. The eastern half will deliver SANG / open space.

Having considered the advice within the SFRA, the following development guidelines are proposed in the LPU in relation to the site:

- Residential development to be contained on the western side of the Barkham Brook within defined development limits only and development to avoid FZ2 and area of potential reservoir flood risk.*
- That surface water corridors are left free of development.*

The implementation of the above guidelines ensures that a sequential approach has been taken by reducing the developable area to avoid the areas at flood risk.

The development passes the sequential test for allocation for residential use, because there is a need to identify a sufficient supply of dwellings to meet needs. This proposed allocation supports the need to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites. It also helps ensure development can come forward which broadly conforms with the existing spatial strategy of focussing the majority of growth at strategic development locations that are supported by appropriate infrastructure.

Only a small part of the site is at risk of fluvial flooding (6% of the site is within Flood Zone 2, 2% within Flood Zones 3a and 3b, and 0% of the site is within Flood Zone 3 higher central climate change) and a sequential approach to development can be undertaken as demonstrated above.

5.171 In respect of the Exception Test, it states:

The site has been demonstrated to pass the exception test for allocation for residential use as it offers wider sustainability benefits and is capable of being made safe for its lifetime. This conclusion has been informed by engagement with the LLFA. Further consultation with the LLFA will be undertaken as proposals develop.

5.172 As set out in the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment by Ardent Consulting Engineers, hydraulic model data obtained from the Environment Agency confirms the development will not be located within the 100 year + climate change flood extent for the central or higher central allowances.

5.173 The FRA includes a review of potential SuDS measures. It concludes that the most viable option, having considered the hierarchy, is a combination of swales and detention basins, working in conjunction with permeable paving and smaller scale rainwater harvesting and bio-retention features.

5.174 These elements have been factored into the design and are shown on the Preliminary Drainage Strategy Drawing (ref. 2303262-ACE-XX-XX-DR-C-0301) by Ardent. The proposals are to discharge the development at the 1 in 1-year Greenfield runoff rate for all storms up to and including the 1 in 100- year storm event with an allowance of 40% for climate change. This therefore equates to a maximum discharge rate of 68.1 l/s from the development site. This will be provided through outfalls into the Barkham Brook to the south of the proposed development parcels.

5.175 It is anticipated that the maintenance of SuDS measures will be carried out, as required by best practice, by a management company. The management regime will accord with the best practices and the CIRIA Manual C75. It is anticipated that conditions attached to any subsequent approval of Reserved Matters will include a requirement to submit for approval a detailed management and maintenance schedule for the SuDS features, within each phase of development.

5.176 Taking the above into account, it is clear that the proposed development can be carried out without creating or contributing to any harmful flood risk. The sequential approach has been followed, as all residential elements of the Site will be located in Flood Zone 1, and SuDS measures

are included to meet the required greenfield run-off rates. As such, the proposal is found to comply with adopted and emerging flood risk policy, along with the content of the NPPF.

Energy & Sustainability

Adopted Local Plan Policy

- 5.177 Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy promotes sustainable development. In particular:
- Point 5 seeks to minimise the consumption and use of resources.
 - Point 6 promotes the use of facilities for recycling of water and waste to help reduce per capita water consumption.
 - Point 12 requires that development contributes towards the goal of reaching zero-carbon developments as soon as possible by:
 - a) Including appropriate on-site renewable energy features; and
 - b) Minimising energy and water consumption by measures including the use of appropriate layout and orientation, building form, design and construction, and design to take account of microclimate so as to minimise carbon dioxide emissions through giving careful consideration to how all aspects of development form.
- 5.178 Policy CC04 states that planning permission will only be granted for proposals that seek to deliver high quality sustainably designed and constructed developments. In particular, it requires that no more than 110L per person per day (including 5L allowance for external use) of water will be used by the development as modelled, and that all development must incorporate suitable waste management facilities, including on-site recycling.
- 5.179 Policy CC05 requires that new development delivers at least a 10% reduction in carbon emissions over Part L of the Building Regulations through the use of on-site renewables.

Emerging Local Plan Policy

- 5.180 Policy CE1 of the emerging Local Plan sets out design principles for efficient buildings and requires applicants to consider a building's orientation, form, fabric, heat supply, and use of renewables. The aim being that new development is heated and powered by renewable means (no fossil fuels).
- 5.181 Policy CE3 sets out environmental standards for residential development, focussing on energy and water usage.
- 5.182 Policy CE4 requires the submission of a Circular Economy Strategy (as part of the Energy and Sustainability Statement) for developments over 10 dwellings.
- 5.183 Policy CE5 seeks to reduce embodied carbon. It requires the submission of a Whole-Life Carbon Assessment for developments over 50 dwellings.

Assessment

5.184 Full details of the energy and sustainability proposals will be set out at Reserved Matters stage and will be designed to ensure compliance with Building Regulations and relevant local and national planning policy.

5.185 At this stage, as detailed within the Energy and Sustainability Statement prepared by Aether, it is anticipated that the development will include:

- Low carbon heating and hot water systems such as air source heat pumps or ground source heat pumps.
- Improved insulation levels, enhanced airtightness and thermal bridge reduction.
- Solar panels
- Electric vehicle charging points, or the necessary cabling to allow them to be installed in future.
- Energy efficient ventilation, without compromising the building's air tightness.

Environmental Health

5.186 There are various adopted and emerging policies that seek to prevent harmful impacts arising from pollution, including:

- Noise - policy CC06 and emerging policy HC8.
- Environmental impacts, including health and safety risks, public amenity, land quality, air and water quality - emerging policy HC5.
- Air pollution and air quality - emerging policy HC6.
- Light pollution - emerging policy HC7.
- Land contamination – emerging policy HC9.
- Odour, fumes, and dust – emerging policy HC10.

5.187 Each of the above are assessed within the accompanying Environmental Statement and accompanying reports. A summary of the relevant findings is included below:

Noise

5.188 Create Consulting has undertaken a Noise Impact Assessment in order to support this application. The NIA explains that the majority of the Site is subject to relatively low noise levels and it is not anticipated that any dedicated methods of mitigation will be required as a result of the proposed development in order to avoid adverse impacts. The only anticipated exception to this is for dwellings in proximity to Langley Common Road, which will require the provision of mitigation measures to ensure suitable internal and external acoustic levels can be achieved given their proximity to the road.

5.189 The NIA is also inclusive of an indicative Construction Noise Assessment which includes recommendations in respect of mitigation through the construction phase of the proposed

development. The NIA explains that a detailed Construction Noise Assessment should be undertaken once a construction method statement is available – the detail of which can be appropriately secured through a requirement to submit and secure approval of a Construction Environmental Management Plan prior to the commencement of development.

- 5.190 On the basis of the above, it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable in respect of acoustic matters as it complies with the requirements of both policy CC06 and emerging policy HC8.

Air Quality

- 5.191 Create Consulting has undertaken an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) in order to support this application. The AQA explains that during the construction phase there is the potential for air quality impacts as a result of fugitive dust emissions from the Site.
- 5.192 The AQA explains that in assuming good practice dust control measures are implemented (which can be secured via suitably drafted conditions), the residual significance of potential air quality impacts from dust generated by earthworks, construction and track out activities is predicted to be negligible. On such a basis, these impacts can be considered as not significant.
- 5.193 A further quantitative assessment of potential construction and operational phase impacts has been carried out using dispersion modelling software. This assessment has been undertaken in order to predict changes in NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations that arise from traffic generation associated with the proposed development.
- 5.194 The modelled results further detail that the predicted annual mean NO₂, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5} concentrations at all human and ecological receptor locations were below the relevant AQO and CLe thresholds at the point of completion. The Assessment determines that these concentrations will not give rise to significant residual effects on both human and ecological receptors.
- 5.195 The AQA includes commentary in respect of best practice measures which could be incorporated within the development in order to reduce impacts arising from the proposal. The AQA explains that such potential measures could include the following:
- At least 1 Electric Vehicle charging point per 10 dwellings – This shall be based on the best technology available at the time of planning approval;
 - Travel Plan including mechanisms for discouraging high emission vehicle use and encouraging the uptake of low emission fuels and technologies;
 - A Welcome Pack available to all residents online and as a booklet, containing information and incentives to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes; and
 - Car club provision within the Development or support given to local car club/Electric vehicle car clubs.
- 5.196 The AQA explains that if the above measures are implemented, this will further reduce potential air quality impacts arising from the proposed development.

- 5.197 In accordance with existing building regulations, electric vehicle charging points will be provided as part of the development. A Travel Plan has been prepared as part of the wider application package which is inclusive of proposed measures to reduce reliance on the private vehicle and also extends to provide explanatory detail in respect of alternative and sustainable means of transport.
- 5.198 In summary, the application proposal is considered to comply with adopted policy HC5 and emerging policy HC6.

Light

- 5.199 As the proposal is in Outline only, a formal lighting strategy has not been provided at this stage. However, it is anticipated that the lighting strategy for the development will ensure that the SANG, areas of Public Open Space and site boundary hedgerows and scrub are to be unlit to enable the continued movement and foraging of bats across the site and wider landscape.
- 5.200 It is anticipated that lighting strategies relating to each phase of development will be provided at the requisite Reserved Matters stage or will be secured through the imposition of suitably worded conditions further to any grant of Reserved Matters.
- 5.201 Detail in respect of site-lighting through the construction phase is capable of being secured through appropriately drafted planning conditions – potentially via the Construction Environmental Management Plan. It is expected that this lighting detail will be consistent with published Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK (Bat Conservation Trust and the Institute of Lighting Professionals 2018).

Land Contamination

- 5.202 The accompanying Phase 1 Desk Study by GRM concludes that the risk from both ground contamination and ground gas is very low. It recommends that a ground investigation be carried out prior to development commencing, and a scope for this work is identified in chapter 6 of the report. The applicant would be amenable to a suitably worded pre-commencement condition to secure this work.

6 THE PLANNING BALANCE

Overview

- 6.1 Section 38 (6) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 The Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy (2010), Managing Development Delivery (2014) and the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (2015).
- 6.3 Material considerations in this instance include the emerging Wokingham Local Plan Update (2023 – 2040), whereby the site falls within the expanded boundary of the Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location, as defined by draft Policy SS11 of the Wokingham Local Plan Update (2023 – 2040).
- 6.4 The Local Plan Update is currently subject to Examination in Public, with Part 1 of the Hearings concluded on 21st November 2025, further to the Plan's submission pursuant to Regulation 22 in February 2025. As per paragraph 5.16 of this Statement, it is considered that moderate weight can be afforded to the emerging Local Plan in consideration of its current progression relative to the Local Plan Regulations (2012) and this weight may be greater as the Plan continues to progress through the Examination in Public process.
- 6.5 The Council's current housing land supply position is also a material consideration of substance, as the adopted position (on 31st March 2025) is 2.5 years inclusive of a 5% buffer. This figure is derived from a deliverable supply of 3,453 dwellings against a housing need of 6,909 dwellings.

Assessment

- 6.6 It is not disputed that, by reference to the settlement boundaries established by the provisions of the adopted Development Plan, the proposed development falls outside of the defined boundaries, whereby, by definition, residential development is acceptable in principle.
- 6.7 As a result, a conflict arises with policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and CC02 of the Managing Development Delivery Plan, which seek to direct development to areas within established settlement boundaries.
- 6.8 It is also noted that a conflict arises with the provisions of the Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (April 2020). Policy IRS1 explains that, in respect of development proposals outside of existing settlement boundaries, the only allowable exceptions are those as set out within Core Strategy Policy CP11, as supplemented by two further tests which require the preservation of the character and appearance of the countryside and to ensure that proposals do not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements
- 6.9 As addressed within paragraph 5.8 – 5.12 of this Statement, the Neighbourhood Plan was formally adopted on 22nd April 2020. Therefore, the five year 'grace' period set out within paragraph 14(a) has lapsed. Furthermore, the Neighbourhood Plan does not contain any policies or allocations which seek to meet its identified housing requirement over its defined plan period.

- 6.10 In acknowledgement of the aforementioned conflict, it is considered that conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan should only be attributed a minor degree of weight in the planning balance, and that the conflict in itself cannot be a determinative factor, noting the absence of conflict with paragraph 14 of the Framework. This position is further supported by the recent High Court judgement of *Edith Weston Parish Council v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government & Anor (Re Application for Planning Statutory Review)* [2025] EWHC 2908 (Admin).
- 6.11 In respect of the conflict with CP11 and CC02, it is considered that this should also be afforded minimal weight, in consideration of the dated nature of both the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Plan, and the aforementioned housing supply position. This 'in principle' conflict is considered to be substantially addressed by the prospective allocation of Barkham Square within the wider Arborfield Green SDL under the draft Local Plan Update (2023 – 2040).
- 6.12 Policy CC01 of the Managing Development Delivery Plan repeats the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as enshrined at paragraph 11 of the Framework. It explains that for decision takers this means:
- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
 - d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.*
- 6.13 Footnote 8 of the NPPF confirms that housing policies are out-of-date where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a 5-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.
- 6.14 Wokingham Borough Council is unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land and therefore the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged. The application package has outlined that there are not any policies within the Framework that protect areas or

assets of particular importance to the extent that they extend to provide a clear reason, or reasons, for refusing the development hereby proposed.

- 6.15 As such, the 'tilted balance' is engaged, and planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would both significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 6.16 As set out in Chapter 5 of this Statement, it is considered that the proposed development complies almost entirely with adopted Development Plan policy, save for:
- The identified conflict with adopted spatial development strategies within the Core Strategy, Managing Development Delivery Plan and the Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan; and;
 - The loss of 36.6 Ha of best and most versatile agricultural land, although this loss is significantly tempered by both the very limited economic benefits associated with the agricultural land and the site's prospective allocation for residential development via the Local Plan Update.
- 6.17 It is considered that the spatial conflict with policies CP11 and CC02 should be afforded minimal weight, in consideration of the dated nature of both Development Plan documents and the absence of a five-year deliverable supply of housing land.
- 6.18 It is further contended that the identified conflict with the adopted Neighbourhood Plan should also only be afforded minimal weight, having first identified that the proposed development does not conflict with paragraph 14 of the Framework.
- 6.19 The loss of best and most versatile agricultural land should be afforded minimal weight, as the loss is significantly tempered by both the very limited economic benefits associated with the agricultural land (relative to the test at paragraph 187(b) of the Framework and the site's prospective allocation for residential development via the Local Plan Update.
- 6.20 Set against this conclusion in respect of harm, the proposed development will deliver the following substantive benefits:
- Up to 660 No. new residential dwellings including affordable housing in an authority with an undisputed housing supply issue, whereby the identified deliverable supply is half of the five-year requirement, in a location that is proposed for allocation via the emerging Local Plan Update (2023 – 2040);
 - Dedicated elderly-care provision (C2/C3) in consideration of the adopted Local Plan's requirement to deliver 800 bedspaces per annum, which is uplifted to 925 per annum within the Local Plan Update;
 - Delivery of substantial green infrastructure, including dedicated Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), supported by a robust Management Plan, which will co-ordinate with existing SANG provision across the Strategic Development Location;
 - Biodiversity Net Gain in excess of the 10% requirement in respect of habitat, hedgerows and watercourses; &

- Economic benefits associated with construction, substantial Community Infrastructure Levy contributions, Council Tax receipts and an increase in net-spend within the immediate area.

- 6.21 It is contended that the weight to be afforded to market, affordable and elderly-care housing should be substantial. In respect of green infrastructure delivery, it is considered that this should be afforded significant weight, whilst biodiversity net-gain and the economic benefits associated with the proposed development should be afforded moderate weight.
- 6.22 As such, it is considered that the acceptability of the proposed development is not contingent upon the application of the 'tilted balance'. Indeed, if the proposal is considered in the context of a 'flat balance' – it is considered that the logical conclusion is one that supports the development hereby proposed.
- 6.23 Nevertheless, it is evident that the 'tilted balance' is indeed engaged in this instance. In consideration of the identified benefits, particularly so in respect of market and affordable housing delivery, it is considered that the identified harms do not *significantly and demonstrably* outweigh the benefits of the proposed development.
- 6.24 On this basis, it is considered that there is a very strong case for granting planning permission, as in engaging the statutory Section 38(6) test, notwithstanding the primacy of the Development Plan, the strength of relevant material considerations in this case are such that they outweigh the conflict identified with the Development Plan.

7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Rapleys, on behalf of Crest Nicholson. It has set out the context for Crest's Outline planning application for the development of land north of the existing Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location, commonly known as Barkham Square.
- 7.2 This Statement has been provided to rigorously assess the proposed development against the policies within the adopted Development Plan, and relevant material planning considerations.
- 7.3 The proposed development comprises of the delivery of up to 660 No. C3 residential dwellings, plus elderly care accommodation (C2/C3) and associated works. The formal description of development is as follows:

Outline application (with all matters reserved except for access) for residential development (Use Class C3), plus elderly care dwellings (Use Class C2/C3), associated open space, allotments, green and blue infrastructure including the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and other associated works.

- 7.4 The application is supported by a range of technical and non-technical reports and information, including an Environmental Statement, that identifies potential impacts and appropriate mitigation – the full suite of information that comprises the application package is confirmed at paragraph 1.28 of this Statement.
- 7.5 Section 38 (6) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.6 The Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy (2010), Managing Development Delivery (2014) and the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (2015). Material considerations in this instance include the emerging Wokingham Local Plan Update (2023 – 2040), whereby the site falls within the expanded boundary of the Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location, as defined by draft Policy SS11 of the Wokingham Local Plan Update (2023 – 2040). The site's prospective allocation within the Local Plan Update is considered to comprise a significant material consideration in the assessment of this application.
- 7.7 The Local Plan Update is currently subject to Examination in Public, with Part 1 of the Hearings concluded on 21st November 2025, further to the Plan's submission pursuant to Regulation 22 in February 2025.
- 7.8 Whilst Crest does not seek to rely on WBC being unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land, the current position of only being able to demonstrate a 2.5-year supply, is also considered to comprise a substantial material consideration to be weighed in the overall planning balance.
- 7.9 Indeed, the effect of the Council's housing supply position is that the presumption in favour of sustainable development via paragraph 11d of the Framework is engaged. In this case, it is

considered that there are no specific policies within the Framework that provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed.

- 7.10 As a consequence, the 'tilted balance' is engaged via paragraph 11d(ii), which requires the decision maker to grant permission for the development proposed unless the adverse impacts of doing so would both significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development.
- 7.11 As this Planning Statement has identified, with respect to the provisions of the adopted Development Plan, it is considered that conflict only arises in respect to spatial strategy and settlement boundary matters (including at the Neighbourhood Plan level), whereby the proposed development site falls outside of a defined Strategic Development Location or settlement boundary. However, it is considered that this conflict should only be afforded minimal weight in the planning balance.
- 7.12 Beyond the specifics of the Site's draft allocation relative to the adopted spatial strategy, this Planning Statement, along with the wider suite of professional documentation, has sought to evidence compliance with relevant policies, within both the adopted Development Plan and the emerging Plan.
- 7.13 In conclusion, when the proposal is assessed against both the content of the Development Plan and all relevant material considerations, including the provisions of the emerging Local Plan Update, it is contended that the strength of all relevant material considerations is as such that the identified conflict with the adopted spatial strategy is clearly outweighed.
- 7.14 Having reached such a conclusion, NPPF para 11d advises that the application should therefore be granted permission without delay.

APPENDIX 1: Policy SS11 Assessment

Policy Text / Requirement	Application Response
1. The area identified as Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location (SDL), as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated for a sustainable, well designed, mixed-use development. 2. The development will be delivered in accordance with the development, place shaping and delivery principles set out below.	The proposed development is exclusively within the boundaries of the increased extent of the Strategic Development Location as established via the draft Policies Map supporting Policy SS11.
Development principles 3. Phased delivery of a) Around 3,047 dwellings comprising: i. 2,137 dwellings through completions, extant planning permissions, resolutions to grant planning permission;	The extent of the proposed Strategic Development Location allocation is inclusive of 'built-in' flexibility in respect of dwelling numbers to be delivered, with the policy expressly referencing that 'around 3,047 dwellings' will be delivered, will deliver up to 660 dwellings within the Barkham Square element of the wider Strategic Development Location
ii. 300 dwellings by optimising development density at land currently occupied by Arborfield Studios;	Not applicable to this application.
iii. 600 dwellings on land to the north of Arborfield Studios, known as Barkham Square; and	The Outline application proposes up to 660 dwellings (excluding elderly care) within the Barkham Square element of the wider Strategic Development

	Location. This level of proposed delivery is considered to be acceptable in the context of the SDL's overall housing figure being expressed in 'around' terms.
iv. 10 dwellings at Westwood Yard, Sheerlands Road.	Not applicable to this application.
and including: i. 40% affordable homes in accordance with Policy H3;	The Outline application is inclusive of affordable housing provision in compliance with the requirements of relevant planning policies.
ii. 25 self and custom build service plots;	To be discussed during application determination with the Local Planning Authority. Capable of resolution through an obligation within the Section 106 Agreement.
iii. 5 Gypsy and Traveller pitches ⁵ [Footnote 5 reads: Requirement only applies to the area without planning permission at September 2024, optimisation of Arborfield Studios, Barkham Square and Westward Yard, Sheerlands Road.]	This requirement is expressed from the Strategic Development Location as a whole and is not specific to Barkham Square. This Outline application does not propose any gypsy and traveller pitches.
iv. Specialist accommodation, including accommodation for older persons.	Specialist accommodation for older persons is provided as part of this application (Use Class C2/C3).
b) Around 6,000m ² of employment floorspace.	Delivered elsewhere in Arborfield Green.
c) One 2-form entry primary school (including appropriate onsite early years provision) with potential to expand to 3-form entry in the future.	Delivered elsewhere in Arborfield Green.

The school should include space for the integrated teaching of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.	
d) A district centre providing a range of services and facilities in a location central to the planned housing, to include retail, leisure, employment, cultural, and health uses.	Delivered elsewhere in Arborfield Green.
e) Two local centres providing day to day retail and other local community uses.	Delivered elsewhere in Arborfield Green.
f) A solution to avoid and mitigate the impact of development upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area through provision of sufficient Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) (subject to monitoring of the quality and quantity standards).	The proposed SANG extends to 13.23 Ha and is considered to meet the requirements of Policy S11, NE3 and Natural England's published guidance. The application is inclusive of a SANG Management Plan which can be secured through an appropriately drafted planning condition.
4. The siting, layout, form, design and landscaping should: a) Protect and retain the physical, visual and perceived separation of the defined settlements of Arborfield Cross, Barkham Hill and Finchampstead North;	The siting, layout, form and landscaping of the proposed development are as such that the physical, visual and perceived separation of the settlements of Arborfield Cross, Barkham Hill and Finchampstead North will be appropriately protected.

b) Achieve climate resilient neighbourhoods through the application of adaptation and mitigation methods, including embedding passive design principles and energy demand reduction measures in the sustainable design and construction of buildings and homes;	At the outline stage, the proposed energy strategy is structured around the recognised hierarchy of Be Lean, Be Clean, Be Green and Be Seen, establishing a robust and future-ready framework. The primary focus is on reducing energy demand through a fabric-first design approach. Measures include optimised building form and orientation, high-performance insulation, enhanced airtightness, minimised thermal bridging and integrated shading strategies. Together, these interventions help reduce baseline energy demand and operational carbon emissions while improving thermal comfort and resilience to overheating. The development is proposed as an all-electric, fossil fuel-free scheme in line with the Future Homes Standard. A suite of low-carbon heating and energy technologies has been reviewed for suitability, feasibility and policy compliance. At this stage, air source heat pumps are anticipated to be the primary heating solution, offering a highly efficient and practical approach aligned with Crest Nicholson's delivery model. However, the strategy retains flexibility to consider complementary or alternative options, such as ground source heat pumps or other low-carbon systems, subject to further technical assessment at Reserved Matters stage. In relation to on-site renewable energy generation, the development is required to achieve at least a 10% reduction in regulated carbon emissions in accordance with Policy CC05. A range of renewable technologies has been assessed, with roof-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) systems anticipated as the principal solution at this stage, due to their strong feasibility, efficiency and compatibility with residential roofscapes. Other technologies, including solar
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	thermal, may be considered where appropriate as part of a balanced and site-responsive approach.
c) Incorporate measures to conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings, through appropriate design and the provision of sufficient space; and	The Heritage Statement prepared by Icení demonstrates that the proposed development will appropriately preserve all identified heritage assets within the vicinity of the proposed development site.
d) Locate new buildings outside areas of flood risk, with development planned for sequentially, by placing the most vulnerable development in the lowest areas of flood risk.	The Land Use Parameter Plan and the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment confirm that all areas of the site that are intended to be developed will be located outside areas of flood risk.
e) Draw on the recreational and ecological opportunities of watercourses.	The proposed SANG is focussed around the Barkham Brook – with the 2.3km circular walk navigating the full extent of the Brook as it sits within the red line demise.
Delivery principles 5. The delivery of the SDL must be supported by a comprehensive masterplan and package of infrastructure to support a thriving and healthy community, including the following:	Addressed below.
Masterplanning 6. To ensure that development comes forward in a strategic, coordinated and comprehensive manner, delivery should be led by a masterplan that demonstrates how the principles established in this policy, supporting guidance in Appendix A, the Arborfield Garrison SDL SPD and permitted development have been considered to ensure high quality development with a distinctive character. The masterplan must provide:	A comprehensive masterplan is provided as part of this Outline application which is further supported by the Masterplan Framework Document and the range of proposed parameter plans – inclusive of Open Space, SANG, Access, Land Use and Building Heights.

a) A coordinated and comprehensive approach to development, which demonstrates how the proposed development will integrate with the planned and permitted development within the SDL;	The Masterplan Framework Document and Parameter Plans detail how the proposed development will integrate with both planned and permitted development within the SDL.
b) A strategy for the quantum and distribution of land uses, access points, design and layout principles (including a design code), which draws on a detailed understanding of the area's characteristics, opportunities and constraints; and	The submitted Parameter Plans clearly demonstrate the proposed land uses, access points, and layout principles. The Masterplan Framework Document provides a detailed assessment and understanding of the area's characteristics, constraints and opportunities. The document explains how the proposed development will integrate with the prevailing character. The Masterplan Framework Document will act as a strategic document; to be secured through condition, whereby future Reserved Matters applications will be required to demonstrate adherence to the principles of the proposed development as detailed within the document.
c) A strategy for the timely delivery of facilities and infrastructure necessary to support the delivery of the SDL.	The delivery of Barkham Square is not contingent upon the delivery of any specific facilities or infrastructure to support the delivery of the SDL other than the means of access to the site and the provision of adequate SANG. The proposed SANG will be delivered prior to first occupation of the development – which can be controlled via a suitable planning condition. The provision of appropriate facilities to support the SANG (such as parking, wayfinding and furniture) will also be delivered prior to first use – with further detail in these terms to be secured through planning condition.

Drainage and flood alleviation 7. Development proposals should devise and implement a comprehensive drainage and flood alleviation strategy that: a) Provides high quality sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) that are integrated into the wider landscape and green and blue infrastructure strategy, including mitigation at source and makes a positive contribution to attractive open spaces, and improvements to biodiversity and water quality; and b) Establishes clear and robust arrangements for future maintenance.	A sustainable drainage system has been designed to incorporate detention basins along with the proposals for wider SuDS features upon development of the Masterplan. Storm water attenuation is provided for all storms up to and including the 1 in 100-year critical event (including a 40% allowance for climate change) and has been shown to be compliant with the National Standard for SuDS Policy Requirement. The maintenance of all SuDS components will be in accord with the best practices and the CIRIA Manual C753. The responsibility will lie with a Management Company appointed by the developer. It is anticipated that in the event that Outline permission is granted, the requirement to submit a Maintenance Manual and Schedule for approval prior to first occupation will be secured via an appropriately drafted condition.
Biodiversity 8. Development proposals should devise and implement a comprehensive ecological strategy that: a) Achieves a measurable biodiversity net gain of at least 10% as calculated using the latest statutory metric; and	The submitted Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment confirms that the proposed development is capable of delivering at least a 10% enhancement through on-site provision.

b) Provide measures to avoid and mitigate the impact of development on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. This will include the provision of sufficient and accessible Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace within the SDL (as set out in Policy NE3).	The proposed SANG extends to 13.23 Ha and is considered to meet the requirements of Policy S11, NE3 and Natural England's published guidance. The application is inclusive of a SANG Management Plan which can be secured through an appropriately drafted planning condition.
Transport 9. Development proposals should devise and implement a sustainable transport and movement strategy that has been informed by a detailed Transport Assessment and provides: a) Improvements to the quality and frequency of public transport services, such as corridor routes to Bracknell, Reading, Winnersh and Wokingham;	Public transport services are also accessible, with the final Leopard 3 bus route to be delivered as part of Arborfield Green including bus stops within a short walk of the site. It is noted that Leopard 3 may not be routed along Princess Marina Drive in line with the planned service. However, there are alternative opportunities to route services along Langley Common Road corridor. This service offers access to several key local destinations including Reading and Wokingham town centres and railway station facilitating longer distance journeys by rail. A review of key local walking and cycling routes has identified that the site benefits from good links to both on and off-street walking and cycling networks. The access strategy for the development integrates with these existing routes and offers permeability through the site. Whilst most of the existing routes are of good quality and suitable for the journey purpose, or will be once fully built, the review identified opportunities to improve crossing provision across Barkham Road between PROW BARK7 and School Road, which the applicant is supportive of
b) New and improved connections for cyclists and pedestrian both through and beyond the SDL to communities, facilities, services and local employment opportunities, including those in the Arborfield SDL, Finchampstead North and Crowthorne. Connections should be safe, suitable and convenient;	'New and improved connections for cyclists and pedestrians though the SDL are detailed upon the Illustrative Masterplan. This extends to the provision of a connection to the site's northern boundary. The Transport Assessment highlights that whilst most of the existing routes are of good quality and suitable for the journey purpose, or will be once fully

	built, the review identified opportunities to improve crossing provision across Barkham Road between PROW BARK7 and School Road, which the applicant is supportive of
c) Prioritisation of cycle and pedestrian movements through the SDL to maximise connectivity and accessibility to the district centre and planned education provision;	As per (b)
d) Prioritisation of pedestrian movements to maximise connectivity to SANG, including Hazebrouck Meadows;	As per (b)
e) Highway improvements along the Barkham Road, the A327 (to both the M3 and Reading) and routes towards Bracknell and Wokingham; and	The Transport Assessment highlights (see 8.5.13 – 8.5.23) potential improvement works to Barkham Road/Bearwood Road. It is proposed that a queue responsive signal head be implemented on the Barkham Road eastbound approach to the roundabout. This would respond to queueing on the Bearwood Road arm via loops installed approximately 50m from the roundabout entry. When queueing extends beyond 50m, the signal on Barkham Road East will be triggered, stopping all vehicles conflicting with Bearwood Road at the roundabout and essentially permitting unrestricted priority flow.
f) Improvements to the management of general traffic, including the consideration of traffic calming measures.	As per (e) above.

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