

B. TECHNICAL APPENDIX 10.3: PLANNING POLICY & GUIDANCE

B.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- B.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ sets out the Government's planning policies for England and provides a framework within which the appropriate local council can produce local and neighbourhood plans; the NPPF is material consideration in making planning decisions. Those paragraphs of the NPPF of relevant to this LVIA are listed below:

Chapter 2 Achieving sustainable development

- B.1.2 In paragraph 7, the objective of sustainable development is summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- B.1.3 Achieving sustainable development is provided through the following three overarching objectives: economic; social; and, environmental. Of relevance to landscape and visual effects are (amongst others):
- b) **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - c) **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Chapter 3 Plan-making Strategic policies

- B.1.4 In paragraph 20, the NPPF requires local planning policies to set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of the development, and make sufficient provision for (amongst others):
- d) *"conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation".*

Chapter 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities

- B.1.5 In paragraph 96, the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:
- a) *"promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;*
 - b) *are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of well-designed,*

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (February 2025). *National Planning Policy Framework*

clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and

- c) enable and support healthy lives, through both promoting good health and preventing ill-health, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs and reduce health inequalities between the most and least deprived communities – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling”.*

Chapter 11 Making Effective Use of Land

- B.1.6 In paragraph 124, it states that *“planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”.*

Chapter 12 Achieving well-designed and beautiful places

- B.1.7 In paragraph 131, it states that *“the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process”.*
- B.1.8 In paragraph 135, it states that the *“planning policies and decisions should ensure that development:*
 - a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
 - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
 - d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
 - e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
 - f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience”.*

- g) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- h) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- i) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- j) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- k) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- l) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁵¹; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.*

B.1.9 In paragraph 137, the NPPF states that “*design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should, where applicable, provide sufficient information to demonstrate how their proposals will meet the design expectations set out in local and national policy, and should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement*”.

Chapter 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

B.1.10 Paragraph 164 of the NPPF states that “*new development should be planned for in ways that:*

- a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through incorporating green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems*”.

Chapter 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

B.1.11 In paragraph 187, it states that “*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*

- b) *recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
 - c) *maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
 - d) *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;*
 - e) *preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*
 - f) *remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate”.*
- B.1.12 Paragraph 188, states that *“plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework⁶⁵; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries”.*
- B.1.13 Paragraph 198, states that *“planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development”.*

Chapter 16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

- B.1.14 Paragraph 203, states that *“plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:*
- a) *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
 - b) *the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
 - c) *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*

- d) *opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place*”.
- B.1.15 Paragraph 210, states that in “*determining an application, local planning authorities should take account of:*
- a) *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
 - b) *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
 - c) *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*”.

B.2 Current Local Planning Policies

- B.2.1 The local plan for Wokingham Borough Council is a collection of planning documents, and the following documents contain policies related to landscape matters.
- B.2.2 The statutory development plan for Wokingham Borough is made up of a collection of local plan and neighbourhood development plan documents. Those documents relevant to the Site and planning application, consist of the following:
- Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework, Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (January 2010);
 - Wokingham Borough Development Plan, Adopted Management Development Delivery Local Plan (February 2014);
 - Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036 (Made Version April 2020);
 - Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs);
 - Village Design Statements; and
 - Supplementary guidance documents.

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

- B.2.3 The Core Strategy was adopted on 29 January 2010. It sets out development strategy, planning policies, and overall spatial vision for Wokingham up to 2026. The following planning policies are of relevance.

Policy CP1 - Sustainable Development

- B.2.4 The policy states that “*planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:*
- *Maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment; and*
 - *Provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes*”.

Policy CP3 - General Principles for development

- B.2.5 The policy states “*planning permission will be granted for proposals that:*

- a) *Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life;*
- b) *Provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;*
- c) *Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape or geological features or water courses;*
- d) *Maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species;*
- e) *Use the full potential of the site and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses;*
- f) *Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping;*
- g) *Provide for a framework of open space in secure community use achieving at least 4.65 ha/1,000 population provision together with recreational/sporting facilities in addition to private amenity space.*

Policy CP7 – Biodiversity

B.2.6 The Longmoor Bog SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and the Longmoor Bog LNR (Local Nature Reserve) are circa 230m to the south of the Site. There are also 12 non-statutory designations within 2km of the Site, predominantly woodland habitats. Policy CP7 states “development:

- a) *which may harm county designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire), whether directly or indirectly, or;*
- b) *which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly, or;*
- c) *that compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county, and local biodiversity action plans.....*

will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and:

- i) *mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or*
- ii) *appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided”.*

Policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

B.2.7 Thames Basin Heaths SPA (Special Protection Area) lies within 10km, the closest part of the SPA being within 3.5km to the south-west of the Site - therefore in accordance with Local Plan Policy CP8, Proposed Development of the Site will require the provision of SANG. Proposed

developments will have to provide new SANG at a minimum of 8ha per 1,000 new residents for any dwellings within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

Policy CP11 – Proposals outside Development limits (including countryside)

B.2.8 The Site is located within land designated countryside and therefore will need to accord with policy CP11, which 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:*

- *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*
- *It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.*

Policy CP18 – Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location

B.2.9 The Site is located adjacent to the northern boundary of Arborfield Green (previously referred to as Arborfield Garrison). Arborfield Green is a strategic development site (the regeneration of the former Arborfield Garrison), where Crest are the lead developer, with planning permission for circa 2,000 dwellings and associated infrastructure and facilities - including a district centre. It is currently under construction.

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

Policy CC02 - Development Limits

B.2.10 The policy states *“planning permission for proposals at the edge of settlements will only be granted where they can demonstrate that the development, including boundary treatments, is within development limits and respects the transition between the built up area and open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape”.*

Policy CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping

B.2.11 The Site's north western boundary is adjacent to Langley Common Road, where it becomes Barkham Road at the junction with School Road. This route is designated a 'Green Route' under policy CC03, where development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the following criteria within scheme proposals:

- a) *Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure network, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development;*
- b) *Promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors including public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways;*
- c) *Promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside;*
- d) *Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features;*
- e) *Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.*

- B.2.12 The policy highlights that development proposals which would result in the loss, fragmentation or isolation of areas of green infrastructure will not be acceptable.

Policy TB08 – Open Space, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development

- B.2.13 The policy highlights that proposals for residential development will need to demonstrate how they meet the standards for outdoor open space as set out below:

Open Space Type	Standards (ha per 1000 population)
Parks and public gardens	1.1
Natural/semi natural green space*	2.84
Amenity greenspace	0.98
Provision for children young people (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play; Local Equipped Areas of Play; Local Areas of Play)	0.25
Civic Space	0.01
Outdoor sports facilities	1.66
Allotments	0.52

- B.2.14 In line with the supporting text paragraph 4.49 (ii) to policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heath SPA of the Core Strategy, where Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG) also meets the definition of natural greenspace* it can also count towards this provision, i.e. at least 2.84ha/1,000 population of the SANG could also contribute towards the natural greenspace standard and vice versa.

Policy TB21 - Landscape Character

- B.2.15 The policy states in regard to landscape character:

- *Proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues; and*
- *Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.*

Policy TB23 – Biodiversity and Development

- B.2.16 The policy states “development proposals will only be granted where they comply with policy CP7 Biodiversity of the Core Strategy and also demonstrate how they:

- Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing;*
- Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation; and*

- 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."*

Policy TB24: Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas)

- B.2.17 The heritage designations of relevance to this LVIA are illustrated on **Figure 5: Planning Policy** and **Figure 6: Heritage Designations** at **Technical Appendix 10.4**. There are no statutory heritage designations covering any part of the Site. Listed Buildings in the immediate context of the Site include Barkham Square Farmhouse (Grade II) and associated parkland located directly adjacent to Site's eastern boundary. Further afield, approximately 350m east of the Site (in the village of Barkham), are the Church of St James and Church Cottage (both Grade II). The northern part of Barkham village (at the junction between Barkham Street and Barkham Road, which is approximately 350m north of the Site) includes several other Grade II listed buildings including Sparks Farmhouse, The Bull Public House and Barkham Manor.
- B.2.18 The policy states "*the Borough Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by:*
- a) *requiring works to or affecting heritage assets or their setting to demonstrate that the proposals would at least conserve and where possible enhance the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the building, Conservation Area, monument or park and garden including its setting and views.*
 - b) *supporting development proposals or other initiatives that will conserve and, where possible, enhance the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets, with particular support for initiatives that would improve any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition."*

Policy TB26 - Area of Special Character

- B.2.19 Barkham Street 'Area of Special Character' (see **Figure 5** at **Technical Appendix 10.4**) stretches from the original medieval centre of Barkham, marked by the church, a moated manor building that is still occupied and the village pond. It then extends along Barkham Street, passing Barkham Square, The Bull pub and Sparkes Farm, all of which are Grade II listed, towards Barkham Manor. Views along Barkham Street are channelled and enclosed by existing built form and vegetation, restricting views out to the surrounding landscape, including the Site. The policy highlights planning permission will only be granted for proposals to or affecting Areas of Special Character where they demonstrate that they retain and enhance the traditional, historic, local and special character of the area and its setting.

Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036 (Made Version April 2020):

- B.2.20 The Neighbourhood Plan referendum was held on 6th February 2020 and is part of the statutory development plan for Wokingham Borough. Decision makers are obliged to consider proposals for development in the neighbourhood against the neighbourhood plan.

Policy IRS1 – Preservation of Separation of Settlements

B.2.21 The Site is located adjacent to the northern boundary of Arborfield Green and its defined development limits (previously referred to as Arborfield Garrison). Policy IRS1 of the Neighbourhood Plan requires development proposals outside of development limits to comply with Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and:

- a) Preserve the character and appearance of the countryside; and*
- b) Not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements.*

Policy IRS2: Recognise, respect and preserve identity and rural setting of settlements

B.2.22 The policy requires development proposals to respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements with regards to:

- a) Scale and form of the development*
- b) Density of the development*
- c) Materials used in the development to reflect local character*
- d) Tree and hedgerow planting that reinforces and reflects local biodiversity in the parishes and*
- e) The distinctive character of the varied landscapes of the area and outstanding views.*

B.2.23 The policy highlights how planning applications should demonstrate how the design of new development complies with the guidance set out in the Village Design Statement for Barkham.

Policy IRS3: Protection and enhancement of the natural environment and green spaces

B.2.24 Development proposals should conserve and enhance the natural environment and green spaces of the area, specifically:

- a) Ensure that there no loss of biodiversity and normally provide a net gain. Where there is likely to be a loss of biodiversity, development will only be acceptable if mitigation measures can be put in place to ensure there is no net loss of biodiversity, through the creation of like-for-like habitats.*
- b) Take any opportunities to protect, enhance and extend wildlife corridors between existing open spaces and habitats as a means of mitigating the impacts of development on biodiversity.*
- c) Conserve the environment for nocturnal species, through the avoidance of lighting and mitigating the impact of external lighting likely to increase night time human presence.*
- d) Contain measures that will help to mitigate the impacts of, and adapt to, climate change.*

Policy IRS4: Protection and enhancement of the historic character of the area

B.2.25 This policy requires development proposals to demonstrate how they protect and enhance the historic and natural character of the area, specifically in relation to the Site and immediate context, the Barkham Street Area of Special Character and the local historic environment, including the setting of Listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments.

Policy AD3: High quality development with generous open space, properly landscaped

- B.2.26 This policy requires all new development to reflect the rural character and historic context within the area with all new development required to deliver good quality design.

B.3 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and Guidance

- B.3.1 Supplementary planning documents (SPD) build upon and provide additional guidance to help in interpretation of the Core Strategy policies. The Development Requirement SPD is of relevance to this LVIA.

Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide SPD (June 2012)

- B.3.2 The Design Guide SPD brings together a number of topics in relation to various aspects of future development within the Council and aims to bring forward well designed developments which complement and build upon the character of the immediate area. The following headings are of relevance to this LVIA.

Section 4.2 Character and Context

- *R1: Residential development should be designed to contribute positively towards the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area. This may be achieved through blending in with a strongly positive existing character, responding where relevant to the positive elements of its historic context or, where the site is large enough to allow for a distinctive identity to be created, by establishing a new character that relates well to the existing.*

Section 4.5 Creating Place

- *R12: Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.*

Section 4.6 Open Space and Landscape

- *R13: High quality public open space is required to be provided in association with residential development. it should be designed for safety and integrated into development proposals and well supervised by new or existing housing. Where a development proposal adjoins existing open space, new housing should create a frontage overlooking the space.*
- *R14: Development proposals should provide space for and include well designed hard and soft landscape to create a high quality setting for new housing that is appropriate to the character of the local area.*
- *Key considerations for providing high quality open space are:*
 - *Preserving or enhancing biodiversity and wildlife habitats.*
 - *Sensitivity to landscape character.*
 - *Retaining existing mature landscape, such as hedges and mature trees, where possible.*

Section 8 Rural and Settlement Edge

- *RD1: New development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character and biodiversity of the area.*
- *RD9: the location, siting and design of new development on the edge of settlements must be carefully designed to:*
 - *Create an edge to the built up area with a character that relates to the local pattern; and*

- *Incorporate soft landscape to soften the edge of settlements and to help integrate new housing into its rural setting.*

Wokingham Borough Council, Play Space Design Guide: Technical Note SPD (March 2018)

- B.3.3 The Play Space Design Guide SPD provides guidance on the amount of play provision required in new developments alongside the following adopted policies:
- WBC Core Strategy CP3: General Principles for Development
 - WBC Core Strategy Appendix 4 – Guidelines for the Provision of Public Open Space associated with Residential Development
 - WBC MDD DPD Policy TB08: Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards for Residential Development
- B.3.4 The play space standards outlined in the SPD are as follows:
- Dedicated Play Space – 0.25ha/1000 person
 - Informal Playable Space – 0.55ha/ 1000 person
- B.3.5 The SPD highlights how WBC would prefer new residential developments to deliver Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAP) of at least 1300sqm and Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP) of at least 600sqm to encourage the provision of larger high value play spaces that will appeal to a wider range of users.

Barkham Village Design Statement (August 2007)

- B.3.6 The Barkham Village Design Statement (VDS) has been produced by the people of the parish following an assessment of local character. It is intended for use in the development control process, to encourage sympathetic design criteria for any development in the village. The Barkham VDS is a means for local people to contribute to the planning process and to help manage change in their community.
- Barkham Village Design Statement provides guidance for development with regard to infilling, landscaping, form and architectural features in its 'Impact on surroundings' section, and stresses the importance of diversity (pages 14, 15 and 16).
 - Regarding density of development the Barkham VDS advises the need for development to 'blend with the rural environment' (page 15 point 7)
 - With regard to the mix of materials guidance, two different approaches are seen in the VDS; one for the established rural area, the other for Arborfield Garrison. (Page 17, point 14 and Page 15, point 7)
 - The need to retain and to care for trees is reflected in the VDS (page 18 point 19) while the need to 'Conserve Barkham's Greenery' is headlined (page 19).

B.4 Emerging Local Plan

- B.4.1 Work is underway on a new local plan – the Local Plan Update – which will put in place a new planning strategy for the period to 2040. Once adopted, it will replace the current Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans. Whilst these policies are not currently adopted, some weight will be attached to them in determining this planning application.
- B.4.2 The plan will be formally adopted by the council's Executive and Council after it's been examined.

Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023 – 2040 Proposed Submission Plan (Emerging)

Policy SS1: Sustainable development principles

- B.4.3 The policy states that “as appropriate to their nature, development proposals will be expected to:
- *Maintain, enhance or create a high quality and safe environment which contributes positively to the character and identity of the area;*
 - *Respond to climate hazards, incorporating appropriate adaptation and resilience measures;*
 - *Conserve and enhance the landscape character of the area, with particular attention paid toward significant landmarks and toward landscape attributes and features;*
 - *Conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the area, and deliver measurable net gain; and*
 - *Provide or contribute to the provision of social, physical, transport, and green and blue infrastructure to support communities.”*

Policy SS2: Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy

- B.4.4 Under the emerging Local Plan the western part of the Site is identified as a ‘modest settlement’ as an evolution and sustainable extension of existing planned developments at Arborfield Green (the former Arborfield Garrison).

Policy SS3: Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements

- B.4.5 Within major and modest settlements, development proposals in addition to those specifically identified as allocations or areas of change in this plan, will be supported in principle.

Policy SS11: Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location

- B.4.6 The Site is allocated under policy SS11 as part of Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location (SDL), as shown on the Policies Map, allocated for a sustainable, well designed, mixed-use development. The allocation identifies phased delivery of 600 dwellings on land to the north of Arborfield Studios, known as Barkham Square.

Policy C4: Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way

Green and Blue Infrastructure

- B.4.7 This policy highlights the importance of green and blue infrastructure within the borough and how it will be protected and enhanced for biodiversity, recreational, amenity, health, townscape and landscape value, and contribute towards mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- B.4.8 Development proposals should plan for a network of publicly accessible green and blue infrastructure from the outset as appropriate. The policy states “new development should:
- a) *Avoid the loss, fragmentation, isolation or other adverse impacts on networks of habitats and existing green and blue infrastructure, unless replacement provision can be provided which will improve the green and blue infrastructure network in terms of its quantity, quality and accessibility;*
 - b) *Provide opportunities for, or contribute towards, improvements and enhancements to the quality and quantity of the wider multi-functional green and blue infrastructure network and other open spaces (for example extending spaces and connections and/or better*

management), in particular by integrating existing green and blue infrastructure assets into the proposed development through high-quality design;

- c) Promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green and blue corridors, for people and wildlife by strengthening ecological networks and connecting settlements to the countryside via a network of Greenways, green routes, public open spaces, footpaths, riverside paths, bridleways and cycle routes. This includes connections to local services and facilities, public transport and green spaces; and*
- d) Provide clear arrangements for the long-term maintenance and management and/or enhancement of the green and blue infrastructure assets.*

Public Rights of Way

- B.4.9 The policy then outlines how development proposals must integrate with the Public Rights of Way network to promote connectivity and contribute towards the delivery of prioritised routes in the council's rights of way improvement plan where appropriate. New Public Rights of Way will be supported where they are designed to be safe, inclusive and inviting spaces.

Policy NE1: Biodiversity and geodiversity

- B.4.10 Development proposals should protect and enhance biodiversity and/or geodiversity features of conservation value and implement appropriate conservation management. The policy states "development will only be supported where it:

- a) Avoids fragmentation of existing habitats and provides coherent ecological connectivity and permeability that is integrated and linked to the wider green and blue infrastructure network, through the restoration, enhancement and connection of: linear features such as wildlife corridors; stepping stones; and any nature recovery networks (including links to habitats outside the borough);*
- b) Incorporates beneficial biodiversity and/or geodiversity conservation features and enhances existing features through design, layout and landscaping;*
- c) Provides or retains appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites, protected species, priority species or priority habitats or main rivers, which are informed by detailed site-based assessment;*
- d) Seeks to eradicate or control any invasive non-native species present on site; and*
- e) Is compatible with any national, regional, county, and local biodiversity action plans, Local Nature Recovery Strategy and/or other strategic conservation management plans for species or habitats.*

Policy NE2: Biodiversity Net Gain

- B.4.11 All development proposals should demonstrate a minimum biodiversity net gain of 10% (unless specified in another site allocation policy) calculated via the most up-to-date national biodiversity accounting metric and provide details of the long-term maintenance and management of the net gain.

Policy NE3: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

- B.4.12 Thames Basin Heaths SPA (Special Protection Area) lies within 10km, the closest part of the SPA being within 3.5km to the south-west of the Site - therefore in accordance with the emerging Local Plan Policy NE3, Proposed Development of the Site will require the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM). Proposed developments will have to provide new SANG at a minimum of 8ha per 1,000 new residents for any dwellings within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

Policy NE4: Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows

- B.4.13 Development proposals should protect and incorporate existing trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows and ensure they are well integrated within the public realm, in a suitably landscaped setting.
- B.4.14 Development proposals should ensure the existing pattern of fields, hedges and hedgerows, woodland, trees, watercourses, water bodies, underlying topography and other landscape features are retained and that the design of the scheme is integrated into the landscape.
- B.4.15 The natural capital of sites should be protected. Any trees, woodland, hedges or hedgerows that are damaged as a result of the construction process should be reported and replaced with indigenous tree species and native hedgerow species, by agreement with the council. The developer must bear all associated costs.

Policy NE5: Landscape and design

- B.4.16 Development proposals will be supported where they adopt a landscape led approach which protects and enhances the character and distinctiveness of landscapes using the most up-to-date landscape studies (including the Landscape Character Assessment and Design Guide and any successor document).
- B.4.17 Development proposals should be demonstrably informed by, and respond to, the distinctive characters set out in the Landscape Character Assessment and other relevant assessments, which provide an understanding of the valued characteristics, features and quality of local landscape character areas.
- B.4.18 Development proposals should be accompanied by a landscape and visual impact assessment. The level of information provided should be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and should be sufficient to allow an informed assessment of the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development.
- B.4.19 Landscape schemes should be set within an overall masterplan for the proposed development, and should:
- a) *Include a structural tree, hedge and shrub planting schedule;*
 - b) *Incorporate landscape spaces, public realm and green and blue infrastructure to achieve a sense of place, improve health and wellbeing and mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change;*
 - c) *Incorporate effective built form and landscape transitions for rural-urban transition areas; and*

- d) *Set out a long-term landscape establishment and management plan, which prescribes and protects planting and its sustainability.*

Policy NE6: Valued Landscapes

- B.4.20 The policy identifies areas within the Borough (on the policies map) which are regarded as 'Valued Landscapes'. In relation to the Site this includes the Barkham Brook corridor and associated ancient woodland within the Site. Beyond the Site the pastoral landscape to the immediate north of the Site and Barkham Hill are also designated Valued Landscapes. This area is defined on the policies maps as the Bearwood and Barkham 'Valued Landscape', which the policy states *"are designated as valued landscapes in recognition of their distinctive character to the borough's landscape"*.
- B.4.21 The policy states "development proposals located within or affecting a valued landscape should have particular regard to the following attributes:
- a) *Landscape quality (condition);*
 - b) *Scenic quality;*
 - c) *Rarity;*
 - d) *Representativeness;*
 - e) *Conservation interests;*
 - f) *Recreation value;*
 - g) *Perceptual aspects; and*
 - h) *Associations.*
- B.4.22 The policy also states *"development proposals affecting Valued Landscapes will only be supported where they protect, and where appropriate, integrate with and/or enhance the special features, characteristics and qualities of the landscape, unless the benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the harm"*.

Policy DH1: Place making and quality design

- B.4.23 This policy requires all new development to be of a high-quality design to endure over the lifetime of the development and create a strong sense of place. The policy states *"development proposal will be considered of high quality design where it achieves the following design principles (of relevance to landscape and visual):*
- *Respects and enhances the local, natural and historic character of the area, paying particular attention to siting, layout, urban grain, rhythm, density, height, scale, bulk, massing, proportion, enclosures, materials and detailing;*
 - *Retains, protects and integrates existing natural features including trees and hedgerows, water bodies, and landscape features;*
 - *Includes appropriate new landscaping and green infrastructure as an integral part of the proposal, maximising opportunities to deliver diverse ecosystems and biodiverse habitats*

and strengthens wildlife corridors in a manner consistent with achieving net biodiversity gain in accordance with Policy NE2;

- *Pay particular attention to ensuring new streets are tree-lined in a manner that enhances identity and the attractiveness of active travel routes;*
- *Where appropriate, incorporates SuDS that have been considered by the applicant early in the design process and that are well integrated into development layout, in accordance with Policy FD2;*
- *Delivers streets and public spaces that are attractive, particularly at the pedestrian level, incorporating features of visual interest (including public art) wherever possible. Streets and public spaces must be designed to be functionally inclusive with the ability to be managed for the long term; and*
- *Provides sufficient levels of high-quality, usable private and public amenity space which is clearly delineated through the incorporation of high-quality soft and hard boundary treatments.”*

Policy DH5: The historic environment

- B.4.24 The heritage designations of relevance to this LVIA are illustrated on **Figure 10.5: Planning Policy** and **Figure 10.6: Heritage Designations** at **Technical Appendix 10.4**. There are no statutory heritage designations covering any part of the Site.
- B.4.25 Barkham Street ‘Area of Special Character’ (see **Figure 10.5** at **Technical Appendix 10.4**) stretches from the original medieval centre of Barkham, marked by the church, a moated manor building that is still occupied and the village pond. Local Historic Parks and Gardens and Areas of Special Character are included on the Policies Map and are non-designated heritage assets. The policy states “*development proposals should demonstrate how the traditional, historical, local and special character of a building, area, park or garden and its setting has been preserved and enhanced. This will enable an assessment of the degree of harm to, or loss of, non-designated heritage assets, balanced against their significance, the positive contribution made by the development and the extent to which any harm can be justified or mitigated.*”