

Our ref: 784-B079688

Wokingham Borough Council – Planning Department
Civic Offices
Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1BN

20 May 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

Application to determine if Prior Approval is required for the demolition of buildings in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) – Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B

Redundant buildings at Arborfield Sewage Treatment Works (STW)

The application is made on behalf of Thames Water Utilities Ltd who are the Statutory Sewerage Undertaker for Wokingham Borough in relation to Arborfield Sewage Treatment Works in Arborfield, Wokingham.

The Site

The Site is located immediate to the north of Wood Lane, east of Cole Lane, and c.3 km to the south of Reading. It is specifically located between Arborfield Cross and Barkham. Arborfield Cross is c.750 m to the south-west, while Barkham lies c.1.3 km to the east. The UK grid reference is SU 76863 67427 (Easting 476863, Northing 167427) and its approximate post code is RG2 9JE.

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GP-TEM-003-08

The Site comprises an operational STW covering an area of c.2.44 hectares (5.93 acres). It can be accessed from the south-west through Wood Lane. It is predominantly flat with a topography of 54m above ordnance datum (AOD).

The STW infrastructure currently includes inlet works and inlet screens, primary settlement tanks, biological filter tanks, chambers, disused sludge drying beds, chemical dosing plant, sludge holding tanks, sludge pumping station, humus tanks, storm overflow pipework, storm holding tank, storm return pumping station, wash water returns pumping station and access gate.

The Site is generally bordered by vegetation and open fields beyond. Barkham Brook forms the south-eastern boundary of the Site.

The Site is located c.60.3 m to the east of Hazeltons woodland copse, and c.320 m to the west of The Coombes woodlands, both of which are deciduous Ancient and Semi-natural Woodland habitats.

There are no National Landscapes within 10km from the Site, which the closest being Chilterns located 11 km to the north and east.

No Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Ramsar sites were identified within 2 km of the Site. The Site lies within the Longmoor Bog Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ), which is located c.1.82 km to the south-east.

There are no Historic Statutory sites in close proximity to the Site, including Schedule Monument, World Heritage Sites and Listed buildings. The closest one is the Langleypond Farmhouse Grade II Listed Building (ref: 1118117) located c.450 m to the south of the Site. Additionally, there are two Conservation Areas within 2km of the Site. Arborfield Cross Conservation Area is located c.600m to the west, while Sindlesham Conservation Area lies c.1.7km to the north.

Based on current flood risk data, the Site is mostly located within Flood Zone 1, which has less than 0.1% (1 in 1,000) annual probability of river or sea flooding. However, the southern boundary of the Site, adjacent to the Barkham Brook, is identified as being within Flood Zone 2 (medium risk of flooding) and 3 (high risk of flooding). In addition, there are some areas to the south, east and centre of the Site with a probability of surface water flooding from low to high risk.

The site is not on or within 250 m of a source protection zone (SPZ).

The site is within Barkham Brook Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).

The nearest residential properties are c.200 m north from the Site. Other receptors within 500 m from the Site include residential properties off School Road, farms, shops, agricultural buildings, and The Coombes primary school c.460 m to the south-west of the Site.

The proposal

The proposal is to demolish two redundant buildings at Arborfield STW; a redundant single storey brick sludge pumping station building, and a disused single storey brick R&D building.

The demolition of these buildings and associated redundant structures (see Demolition Plan, drawing ref. M100.01-JB-ARBOS1ZZ-100-DR-CE-9004) is required to enable future infrastructure upgrades required at Arborfield STW to increase and improve the treatment capability of the Site. A description of the buildings is set out below.

Sludge Pumping Station

The existing Sludge Pumping Station is an old single storey industrial red brick structure that overlies a buried reinforced concrete sludge pump room. The building is flat roofed with single glazed windows and wooden double access doors. The concrete access steps, handrail and adjacent manhole shall also be demolished and removed. The building dimensions are: L = 8.5m, W = 6m, H = 3.5m.



Figure 1 – Photograph of Sludge Pumphouse Building to be demolished



Figure 2 – Photograph of Disused Sludge Pumphouse Building Access

R&D Workshop

The existing R&D Workshop is an old single storey industrial red brick structure that overlies a partially buried reinforced concrete workshop area. The building is flat roofed with single glazed windows and wooden and roller shutter access doors. The internal handrail,

and disused equipment and shelving shall all be removed prior to the demolition works. The building dimensions are: L = 12.5m, W = 8.5m, H = 3.5m.



Figure 3 – Photograph of R&D Workshop to be demolished



Figure 4 – Internal photograph of R&D Workshop to be demolished

Further information regarding the buildings proposed to be demolished and the proposed methodology is provided within the accompanying Demolition Statement (Glanua, April 2026).

Works are expected to commence in July 2026 and be completed within 4 weeks.

Requirement for prior approval

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (the Order), schedule 2, part 11, class B identifies that the demolition of a building is permitted development providing that the proposal does not fall under the 'Development not permitted' section of the Order, and that the conditions outlined in the Order are complied with.

The proposed demolitions do not fall under the exceptions listed under class B and this application for prior approval is made in compliance with the listed conditions. As required by condition (b) (iv) a Site Notice Statement (a copy of which is included with this submission) has also been erected at the Site and will remain in place for not less than 21 days in the period of 28 days beginning with the date on which this application is submitted.

As the proposed demolition of all associated plant and structures does not meet the definition for development under the Town and Country Planning act 1990, Section 55, then these demolition works are permitted without the need for planning permission or prior approval, and this Prior Approval application relates solely to the two buildings referred to.

Environmental considerations

Asbestos

A Demolition Asbestos Survey was undertaken by Tetra Tech/RPS (November 2025) which includes inspection of both buildings to be demolished and provides recommendations for asbestos management before demolition works commence, in compliance with the relevant regulations.

Trees

An Arboricultural Constraints Report is provided in support of this Prior Approval application (Mott Macdonald, November 2025) following a Tree Survey completed in October 2025 to assess the quality and value of the principal trees within or adjacent to the Site. The Tree Constraints Plan at Appendix C of the Report shows the locations of any trees/tree groups along with approximate canopy extents and root protection areas. Based on the findings of the Arboricultural Constraints Report, no tree removal is required to facilitate demolition of

the two buildings, and no trees including root protection zones will be impacted by the demolition of these buildings.

Ecology

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) is provided in support of this Prior Approval application (Mott Macdonald, November 2025). The PEA covers the full extent of the STW and includes a survey of the two buildings proposed for demolition, to assess bat roosting suitability. The PEA refers to the R&D building as B2/TN5 and concludes that the building has moderate suitability for roosting bats and therefore a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) will be required to inform further surveys.

An Ecological Technical Note (Maydencroft, March 2026) is also provided which follows a survey of the Sludge Pumphouse Building to be demolished. This report concludes that the building is considered to be of low suitability for roosting bats, as only a number of small suitable features were identified. In terms of further surveys, the report says that the Sludge Pumphouse Building should be subject to one emergence survey, as per best practice guidance for buildings with low suitability for roosting bats. The report concludes that the additional surveys to be carried out for both buildings to be demolished will determine the mitigation required prior to demolition. Additional surveys are therefore scheduled to be carried out in May and June 2026 to determine the presence or absence of bats from the buildings to be demolished.

As set out in the PEA, if any bat roosts are found, a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence may be required prior to commencement of any works likely to impact any roosts. EPSM licences would need to be informed by valid survey data, with bat survey data generally lasting up to a year from completion of survey. Once granted, any mitigation specified in the licence application would need to be undertaken prior to works commencing and specified methodologies followed during construction.

Demolition of buildings will be carried out in accordance with the mitigation recommendations of the site-wide PEA and follow-up surveys, and it is therefore considered that the proposed demolitions are not likely to have an adverse impact on any protected species or other ecological features.

Environmental Impact Assessment

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening request for wider demolition works at the STW is being progressed alongside this Prior Approval. Whilst a screening opinion has not yet been received, the proposed demolitions are not considered to trigger the requirement for EIA.

Submission

The application is supported by the following documents and drawings:

- Site Location Plan
- Existing Block Plan (drawing number: ARBOS1ZZ-SPL-001)
- Demolition Plan (drawing number: 100.01-JB-ARBOS1ZZ-100-DR-CE-9004)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Mott Macdonald, November 2025)
- Ecological Technical Note (Maydencroft, March 2026)
- Arboricultural Constraints Report (Mott Macdonald, November 2025)
- Demolition Asbestos Survey Report (Tetra Tech/RPS – November 2025)
- Demolition Method Statement (Glanua, April 2026)
- A Site Notice Statement; this notice will be displayed for 21 days in the 28-day period starting on the date the application is submitted.

Conclusion

We trust this submission contains sufficient information to enable the local authority to determine if prior approval is required for the proposed demolition of two buildings at the Site.

We look forward to receiving acknowledgment of this submission. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,



Sophie Bridges MRTPI

Principal Planner

Tetra Tech