

PLANNING REF : 250735  
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Arborfield Village Hall  
: Eversley Road, Arborfield  
: RG2 9PQ  
SUBMITTED BY : Arborfield & Newland Parish Council  
DATE SUBMITTED : 23/04/2025

COMMENTS:

Addendum to objection to previous planning application 242421 to respond fully to new planning application 250735.  
Arborfield and Newland Parish Council strongly objects to planning application 250735.

This new application for 70 properties on fields behind The Coombes school is fundamentally no different to the previous application for 95 properties at the same site. Minor alterations to the layout and a small reduction in properties in no way mitigate the outstanding issues surrounding this speculative planning application. This is still a greenfield development outside the settlement of Arborfield Cross, an area of limited development, relying on small village facilities and offering nothing of benefit to the village and its surrounds.

The development document highlights the reasons for the previous application refusal and then states how these reasons have been addressed in the new document while simultaneously failing to offer any substantive information in response to the previous planning refusal. For example, eight of the reasons provided are the same repeated again and again without providing any firm commitment to what will be done to mitigate the issues previously forming the reason for refusal.

In the revised planning application both the plot of land for development and the number of houses has been reduced. However, this is disproportionate – the land area has reduced by 33% and the housing numbers by only 22.5% - resulting in more development on less land increasing the density of the houses. This is not in keeping with the surrounding settlement.

The Framework Travel Plan document does very little to demonstrate how this site would increase sustainable travel; in fact, it relies on already in-situ pathways to support the development and current facilities while offering nothing in addition to the village. The idea that being able to use Cole Lane to access facilities in the village and that it would save much if any travel time is farcical for anyone familiar with the area. The layout and position of the site will do nothing to encourage sustainable travel but instead forces the residents into using vehicles for even the smallest of journeys in the locality. The travel plan indicates that the residents will be able to walk to the Arborfield Green site but fails to recognize the distances involved and again residents will simply favour the use of a car over any journey made on foot or bicycle.

The Travel plan aims to 'raise awareness' and 'discourage' car use; these are an intangible set of aims while the developer does nothing to alleviate the problems they would be bringing to the location with the addition of 70 homes and their vehicles to the village. The entire travel plan relies on current provision and offers nothing in addition bar the employment of a travel plan coordinator to 'signpost' residents to information – measure that is very unlikely to address the issues of sustainability or active travel.

The

agricultural report from Croudace has several errors in it, it states the site is 5.5ha in size, the development plan only accounts for 3ha of good quality land. The report also goes on to state that this is a permanent pasture field and this is also incorrect as the land has been farmed as an arable field for many years. The field has been left fallow this year we suspect due to the pending planning application. The Parish Council finds it disappointing that the commissioned report is factually incorrect.

The visual impact assessment attached to this planning application does demonstrate very well the greenfield rural setting of this development and ably demonstrates how completely out of place a development of 70 properties would be in this location.

The development will increase the size of the village by 25% for which there will be no additional facilities from the development site. Travel from the development will be solely by car, increasing congestion on the country roads of the area and increasing the volume of traffic passing The Coombes School. Passing traffic on School Road has already been significantly reduced by a permanent Traffic

Regulation Order, closing School Road to through traffic, so the impact of additional vehicles will be considerable – a fact that this application fails to address.

The speed at which the new application has been submitted, after the previous application was refused, is a cynical attempt to bring an application in before the new local plan update has been finalized which will see much increased development within Arborfield and Newland Parish.

Planning application 242421 – School Road applicable to Planning application 250735

Arborfield and Newland Parish council strongly objects to this planning application for 95 properties off School Road. The application is a speculative proposed development out of keeping with the locality and development of a greenfield site outside the settlement boundary. The development offers nothing in the way of additional infrastructure or benefit to the local community and brings additional issues to the village locality with respect to traffic volumes and stresses on current services.

This planning application tries to circumvent through timing the implementation of the new Local Plan Update which is currently in process.

From the Planning Statement provided by Marron on behalf of Croudace:

7.11 The village of Arborfield Cross falls within the Plan Area for the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan which was made in April 2020. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land to meet its identified housing requirement. Therefore, for the same reasons that the Core Strategy and MDD are out of date, the Neighbourhood Plan is also out of date and the policies should be attributed limited weight.

It is worth noting that the developer misunderstands the nature of the Arborfield and Barkham neighbourhood plan. It does not go out of date and is suggested to be reviewed every 5 years to remain current. The planning statement document contradicts itself by showing the document adopted in April 2020 which would indicate the document is very much still live and within any suggested review period.

Therefore, the proposed development should hold much weight to the policies contained within the neighbourhood plan, which it fails to do.

Previous planning history of applications - There have been many planning applications along School Road which have been refused for similar reasons and include: Oakwood View (172165 - Jul 2017) for 70 dwellings, Langley Pond Farm (171186 - Apr 2017) for 18 dwellings,

Langley Pond Farm Stables (171597 - May 2017) for 3 dwellings, Land N & S of School Road (180596 - Apr 2018) for 120 dwellings and Suncot (210874 - Mar 2021) for 4 dwellings.

The proposed development fails to meet the policies of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan as detailed below:

IRS01 - Preservation of separation of settlements - this settlement decreases the separation between Arborfield Cross and Barkham Hill and begins a coalescence of the villages removing the rural nature of both villages.

IRS02 - Recognise, respect and preserve identity and rural nature of settlement - this proposed site fails to preserve the nature of the rural identity of the village by building on greenfields that define the rural nature of the village. It fails to respect the green fields around the village in its entirety as the proposed development sits on greenfields outside the settlement boundary

IRS03 - Protection and Enhancement of the natural environment and green spaces - such as the locally valued assets of The Coombes Woodland - this development would encroach on the locally recognised ancient woodland which has recently been bought by the local parishes to protect it for future generations of residents.

As with IRS02 the proposed development makes no consideration for the protection or enhancement of the natural environment as its intent is to take open green fields and develop them for housing. The development offers no enhancement to the natural environment and in many ways will harm the local environment with its size and scale of the development and relying solely on the use of cars to service the development further.

IRS04 -- Protection and enhancement of the historic character of the area - the proposed development makes no attempt to address this policy and the proposed 95 properties being out of keeping with the historic nature of the area.

TC2 - Properly planned and designed new facilities - the development fails to offer any new facilities for the local area of any kind.

AD1 - New development within development limits - the development fails to meet any of the criteria for this policy in that this is solely a green field development outside the settlement boundary of Arborfield Cross

GA1 - minimise additional traffic on unsuitable roads - the entry point to the proposed development brings traffic past the front of The Coombes Primary school, as school road was closed to reduce traffic volumes past the school which it did successfully, subsequently increasing traffic volumes on this stretch of road is counter to the aims of closing school road and reduces road and pedestrian safety on this stretch of road during school times.

GA3 - Public transport improvements and long-term viability - the proposed development shows no intent to improve public transport with the exception of mentioning bus stops in its planning statement. The village is served by a daytime bus route which links to Reading and to Wokingham, but buses are infrequent and poorly routed for most required services.

The proposed development fails to meet the Wokingham Borough Councils Core Planning Policies as shown below:

CP1 - Sustainable Development

7) Avoid areas of best and most versatile agricultural land - the land in question is well used agricultural land and farmed annually. This development site sits wholly on greenfield agricultural land outside the settlement boundary of Arborfield Cross.

11) Demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car in line with CP6 - the development relies solely on the use of cars, the local bus routes are poor and not directly linked with this site, which would push most residents to opt for the car as their primary source of transport. The addition of a connection to a PROW does not offer any inducement for residents to forego cars and use alternative forms of transport.

CP2 - Inclusive communities - the development fails to meet any of the core principle of inclusive communities and offers nothing to the local community bar some vague aspirations and in fact relies solely on the link to the local community infrastructure while adding or offering nothing of value in return.

CP3 - General Principle for development

a) Are of an

appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area - the massing of this site is completely at odds with the size of Arborfield Cross village.

Currently the village has circa 300 properties and the development proposes to add another 95 properties which would be a 30% increase in the size of the village and unsustainable for the facilities currently in the village.

h) Contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities; - the proposed development offers no additional facilities to the community but solely relies on those already in place to provide for the development.

CP6 - Managing Travel demand

a) Provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice; - the proposed development offers little in the way in terms of choice for residents. There is a bus service through the village, but this is limited to day time travel and not well connected with local towns and centres. The PROW are more for leisure use and shouldn't be considered as alternatives to car usage when proposing the development. This development relies solely on the use of cars to and from the site with alternative forms of transport given little thought.

c) Improve the existing infrastructure network, including road, rail and public transport, enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, - The development offers no improvements to the infrastructure network locally with only additions to facilities being for entry and exit to the site and altering the present network to add only benefit to the proposed development.

e) Mitigate any adverse effects upon the local and strategic transport network that arise from the development proposed;

f)

Enhance road safety; and

g) Do not cause highway problems or lead to traffic related environmental problems.

e/f/g can be taken

together and the important point to make is that the entry and exit point for this development moves traffic past the entrance to The Coombes Primary school, having an additional 100 cars moving past the entrance at busy times every day will have a dramatic effect on road safety outside the school and create a pinch point for traffic

congestion at peak times in the local network. School Road was closed to traffic for this very reason and has markedly improved safety around the school as a consequence. The development ignores completely this issue and goes to change the local road network to solely facilitate the development over the safety of the school entrance.

CP9 - Scale and location of development proposals.

3) The limited development locations of Arborfield Cross - The proposed development sits wholly outside the settlement boundary of Arborfield Cross but relies completely on the settlement to provide justification for its development. Arborfield Cross is designated as an area of

limited development due to the levels of facilities and services and this development would put an additional 95 properties to the village which only consists of 300 properties and increase of 30% and offering no improvement to services or facilities currently in place. The proposed development would create an unsustainable site relying solely on the facilities already in place.

CP11 - Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)

2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; - the development fails to meet this policy in all facets of the development. It is a greenfield development outside the settlement boundary, expanding the settlement away from its

original buildings towards Barkham Hill into the countryside.

CP18 - Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location

As note to CP18, this proposed development site outside the Arborfield Garrison SDL but as with many other previous refused applications tries to imply the use of the facilities and its location close to the SDL as part of the reasoning for planning approval.