

Agenda Item 70.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
172209	31/01/2018 (PPA)	Arborfield	Arborfield

Applicant	Wokingham Borough Council C/O WSP		
Site Address	Swallowfield Road, Arborfield, Wokingham	Postcode	n/a
Proposal	Full application for the construction of a 2.3 KM Arborfield Cross Relief Road (including shared use pathway) linking A327 Reading Road in the north and A327 Eversley Road in the south east. The proposal includes two new roundabout junctions link to the existing road network along the A327, a new staggered priority junction at Swallowfield Road and a new shared-use (non-motorised user) bridge where Arborfield Footpath 17 intersects the proposed relief road.		

Type	Full
PS Category	6
Officer	Nick Chancellor
Reason for determination by committee	Major application

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on January 10 th , 2018
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place Based Services

SUMMARY

The site lies in open countryside, bisecting Swallowfield Road and between the settlements of Shinfield and Arborfield. The application is for the construction of a 2.3km Arborfield Cross Relief Road (including shared use pathway) linking A327 Reading Road in the north and A327 Eversley Road in the south east.

The proposal is known as the Arborfield Cross Relief Road (ACRR) and has been submitted by Wokingham Borough Council for consideration by the Local Planning Authority. The land is currently in multiple, private ownership and is not currently controlled by the Council. Issues of land ownership fall outside of the planning process and do not therefore form part of the assessment of this application.

The proposal has been screened in accordance with Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations and has been identified as EIA Development. The application is informed by an EIA Scoping Opinion and, accordingly, is supported by an Environmental Statement (ES).

The ACRR is an essential piece of infrastructure that is required to mitigate the impact the effect of planned housing growth on the A327. The requirement for a relief road is identified in the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy, Strategic Development Location SPDs, Infrastructure Contributions SPD and subsequent planning permissions.

A route options appraisal process has been previously undertaken. Following a public consultation process in 2013, a preferred route for progression was recommended. In 2014/15, further refinement exercises were undertaken to examine options within the preferred route alignment. The outcome of these investigations was presented to WBC's Executive in March 2015 and forms the basis for the current application.

The application is submitted in full and includes details of the access, appearance,

landscaping, layout and scale. This report is based on an assessment of the application against relevant policies in the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy, Managing Development Delivery DPD, other relevant policy and EIA regulations.

PLANNING STATUS

- Countryside
- Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location SPD
- South of M4 Strategic Development Location SPD
- Sand and gravel extraction
- Ancient woodland within 500m of the site (Pound Copse, Long Copse)
- Listed Buildings – various within relatively close proximity, beyond site boundary
- Archaeological sites – known evidence of prehistoric activity in vicinity
- Local Wildlife Sites – Pound Copse and Spring Copse within close proximity
- Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area 5km zone
- Public Rights of Way – site intersected by ARBO17 & ARBO 22.
- Adjacent to high pressure gas pipeline
- Green route enhancement area (A327)

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions and informatives:

Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
2. Approved details
This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered in the table below. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Drawing Number	Drawing Title	Received
C1922-100 rev. B	Site Plan	31.08.2017
PLANNING_LOC_001 rev A	Highways Alignment Location Plan	19.07.2017
PLANNING_GA_010 rev A	General Arrangement - Sheet 1 of 6	19.07.2017
PLANNING_GA_011 rev A	General Arrangement - Sheet 2 of 6	19.07.2017
PLANNING_GA_012 rev A	General Arrangement - Sheet 3 of 6	19.07.2017
PLANNING_GA_013 rev A	General Arrangement - Sheet 4 of 6	19.07.2017
PLANNING_GA_014 rev A	General Arrangement - Sheet 5 of 6	19.07.2017
PLANNING_GA_015 rev A	General Arrangement - Sheet 6 of 6	19.07.2017
ACRR/STR/105 rev C	Green Bridge Outline General Arrangement	19.07.2017

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

Detailed highway design

3. Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the construction of roads and footways, including levels, widths, construction materials, depths of construction, surface water drainage, road signage and lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority

Reason: To ensure that roads and footpaths are constructed to a standard that would be suitable for adoption as publicly maintainable highway, in the interests of providing a functional, accessible, safe and high-quality development. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6

Construction Environmental Plan

4. Construction work in each phase of the development hereby permitted shall not begin until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which will detail the measures to be implemented to protect site workers, site users, ecology and the environment arising from the construction of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road, has been submitted for that phase to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be implemented thereafter in accordance with the approved CEMP. Each phase CEMP shall include the following matters:
 - i) a construction travel protocol or Green Travel plan for the construction phase including details of parking and turning for vehicles of site personnel, operatives and visitors;
 - ii) Loading and unloading of plant and materials;
 - iii) Piling techniques;
 - iv) Storage of plant and materials;
 - v) Programme of works (including measures for traffic management and operating hours);
 - vi) Provision of boundary hoarding and lighting;
 - vii) Protection of important trees, hedgerows and other natural features;
 - viii) Relevant ecological mitigation measures for dormouse, bats, badger, amphibians, reptiles, breeding birds, and invertebrates
 - ix) Details of proposed means of dust suppression, fume mitigation and noise mitigation. The CEMP shall include a noise management plan that sets out how construction noise will be minimised to protect residential amenity. Particular attention should be given to protecting dwellings that are likely to be exposed to high levels of construction noise as identified in the application noise and vibration report
 - x) Details of measures to prevent mud from vehicles leaving the site during construction;
 - xi) Details of any site construction office, compound and ancillary facility buildings. These facilities shall be sited away from woodland areas;
 - xii) Lighting on site during construction;
 - xiii) Measures to ensure no on site fires during construction;
 - xiv) Monitoring and review of the CEMP;
 - xv) Implementation of the CEMP through an environmental management system;
 - xvi) Details of the temporary surface water management measures to be provided during the construction phase;

- xvii) Details of the excavation of materials and the subsurface construction methodology;
- xviii) Details of the haul routes to be used to access the development; and
- xix) Appointment of a Construction Liaison Officer.

Reason: To ensure the protection of site workers, site users, neighbouring residents, ecology and the environment for the duration of works.

Hours of operation

5. No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to commencement of construction of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road, shall take place other than between the hours of 0730 and 1830 hours Monday to Friday and 0730 to 1400 hours on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays, unless prior approval, in writing, is given by local planning authority. Such prior approval shall only be granted for works which, in the opinion of the local planning authority, cannot be undertaken during the above hours for reasons of public safety; and /or would cause excessive traffic congestion to the travelling public

Reason: To protect the occupiers of neighbouring properties from noise and disturbance outside the permitted hours during the construction period. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

Environmental and Traffic Management Improvements

6. The road hereby approved shall not be opened for public use until a design for environmental and traffic management improvements within Arborfield is submitted to and approved in writing is given by the Local Planning Authority. Once approved, this scheme shall be implemented in full no later than two years from the date of the road opening for public use, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To maintain the highway network within Arborfield village for local use. Relevant policy: Core Strategy CP18.

Flooding and Drainage

7. No development shall take place until full details of the drainage system for the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include:
- i) Results of intrusive ground investigation demonstrating seasonal high groundwater levels for the site and infiltration rates in accordance with BRE365.
 - ii) Demonstration that the base of SuDS features are at least 1m above seasonal groundwater level.
 - iii) Full calculations demonstrating the performance of soakaways or capacity of attenuation features to cater for 1 in 100 year flood event with a 40% allowance for climate change and runoff controlled at Greenfield rates, or preferably better.
 - iv) A drainage strategy plan for the proposed development, including swale, basin and outfall details with invert levels and cross sections.
 - v) A maintenance management plan for the SuDS features throughout the lifetime of the development, as well as who will be responsible for the maintenance.

Reason: To prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off. Relevant

policy: NPPF Section 10 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10.

Landscaping

8. Prior to the commencement of the development, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include, as appropriate, proposed site levels or contours, means of enclosure, other vehicle and pedestrian access, hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and structure (e.g. furniture, signs, lighting, external services, etc). Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable.

Soft landscaping details shall also include locations for retained or restored wildlife habitat, and quantified ecological compensation measures (demonstrating that the rate is sufficient to replace anticipated losses).

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants that, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3, CP7 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

Acoustic Barrier

9. Prior to commencement of development, further details of any acoustic barrier that is proposed to be constructed as part of this scheme shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing. The scheme shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To safeguard the setting of designated heritage assets and in the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies, CC03, TB21 & TB24.

Retention of trees and shrubs

10. No trees, shrubs or hedges within the site which are shown as being retained on the approved plans shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site, which are of amenity value to the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

11. Protection of trees

- a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until a scheme which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority (the Approved Scheme); the tree protection measures approved shall be implemented in complete accordance with the Approved Scheme for the duration of the development (including, unless otherwise provided by the Approved Scheme) demolition, all site preparation work, tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery.
- b) No development (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence until the local planning authority has been provided (by way of a written notice) with a period of no less than 7 working days to inspect the implementation of the measures identified in the Approved Scheme on-site.
- c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.
- d) The fencing or other works, which are part of the Approved Scheme, shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

Landscape Management

12. Prior to the commencement of the development a landscape management plan, detailing long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules, including for all ongoing ecological mitigation and compensation measures, for all landscape areas, other than privately owned, domestic gardens, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved

Reason: In order to ensure that provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3, CP7 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

Lighting

13. Prior to commencement of the development, a “lighting design strategy for biodiversity” for light sensitive species shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:

- a) Identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their resting places or along important routes used to access key area of their territory, for example for foraging; and
- b) Show how and where external lighting will be installed so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

Reason: To maintain favourable conservation status of the site for protected species and species of principal importance. Relevant policy: Core Strategy Policy CP7.

Archaeology

14. No development shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological mitigation in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The mitigation strategy will provide for:

- i. A programme of site investigation and recording
- ii. A programme of post investigation assessment, analysis, publication, dissemination and archiving. This part of the condition shall not be discharged until these elements of the programme have been fulfilled in accordance with the programme set out in the WSI

Reason: The site lies in an area of archaeological potential as identified by archaeological evaluation. Further work is required to ensure that any archaeological remains within the site are adequately investigated and recorded or preserved in situ in the interest of protecting the archaeological heritage of the borough.

Informatives:

1. For the avoidance of doubt, the definitive application red line site boundary is as specified by plan number C1922-100 rev. B “Site Plan”, received by the Local Planning Authority on 31.08.2017.
2. The northern junction with the A327 (Reading Road) has been fully assessed by the Local Planning Authority as a 3-arm roundabout and as a 4-arm roundabout; both

options are shown within plans hereby approved. This planning permission allows the developer to implement either option.

3. The installation of a green bridge within this scheme offers a unique learning experience (for the broader benefit of highway design) and an opportunity for the local authority to enhance its reputation for innovation to secure ecological benefit. The developer is strongly encouraged to consider implementing a pre and post construction monitoring programme to assess efficacy of this feature as a bat commuting route. Please contact the WBC Ecology Officer duncan.smith@wokingham.gov.uk for further information or clarification.
4. The developer is encouraged to explore opportunities for the de-culverting of the watercourse running adjacent to the A327 at the northern roundabout junction. The results of the culvert CCTV survey indicates that the culverts have failed, which increases flood risk during heavy rainfall events. This also offers an opportunity to incorporate the watercourse in to the site drainage in a more sustainable way and one, which would require less maintenance to ensure passage of water.
5. This development may require an Environmental Permit from the Environment Agency under the terms of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2016 for any proposed works or structures, in, under, over or within 8 metres of the top of the bank of designated 'main rivers'. This was formerly called a Flood Defence Consent. Some activities are also now excluded or exempt. An environmental permit is in addition to and a separate process from obtaining planning permission. Further details and guidance are available on the GOV.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits#>
6. The applicant is advised to apply to Environmental Health for 'prior consent' under s.61 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in relation to the control of construction site noise
7. Adequate precautions shall be taken during the construction period to prevent the deposit of mud and similar debris on adjacent highways. For further information contact the Highway Authority on tel.: 0118 9746000
8. Any works/ events carried out by or on behalf of the developer affecting either a public highway or a prospectively maintainable highway (as defined under s.87 New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA)), shall be co-ordinated and licensed as required under NRSWA and the Traffic Management Act 2004 in order to minimise disruption to both pedestrian and vehicular users of the highway.

Any such works or events, and particularly those involving the connection of any utility to the site must be co-ordinated by the developer in liaison with the Borough's Street Works team (0118 974 6302). This must take place AT LEAST three months in advance of the intended works to ensure effective co-ordination with other works so as to minimise disruption.

9. There is a high pressure gas pipeline in the vicinity of the works. Method statements must be agreed before works commence. The proposals require the exact location of this pipeline and other Southern Gas Networks (SGN) assets to be located before any work commences, either by electronic detection or by hand

excavated trial holes as specified in the attached SW/2 document. These works must be supervised by an SGN representative, please contact David Jordan on 07778136887 / dave.jordan@sgn.co.uk to arrange a pre-works site visit and any future supervision.

10. The nearby gas pipeline is of prime importance to the gas supplies of this area. It is essential that the developer comply with the restrictions detailed below and in the document SGN/WI/SW/2 in order to protect SGN plant and equipment and to maintain the safety of construction operatives. A SGN representative must be contacted before any works commence. Further guidance / restrictions are detailed below:

- 1) No mechanical excavation is allowed within 3 metres either side of pipeline. SGN High Pressure Gas Pipelines in the vicinity of your works
- 2) No plant or storage of equipment shall be made within any easement strip.
- 3) If any metallic pipes or cables are being laid in proximity to gas pipelines then interference testing will be required, the cost of which to be borne by the promoter of the works. A minimum clearance of 600mm is required.
- 4) All precautions stated in publication SGN/WI/SW/2 (Safe Working in the Vicinity of High Pressure Gas Pipelines) shall be fully complied with in all respects. Acceptance of SGN/WI/SW/2 shall be acknowledged by the responsible site person signing and returning the form Appendix A to the SGN representative contacted in (7).
- 5) No thrust boring shall take place within three meters of the pipeline.
- 6) All planting within the easement strip should comply with 'Notes for Guidance on Tree Proximity'.
- 7) Before commencing work on site, you must contact our Pipeline Maintenance Section on the number above at least seven days before work commences. A Southern Gas Networks representative will then contact you to arrange to visit site. Details of working near to high-pressure gas pipelines can then be discussed.
- 8) Pipeline sections that are planned and agreed by SGN to be permanently covered (i.e. by road surface) will require a coating survey. SGN will repair any indicated coating defects free of charge. The survey costs will be borne by the promoter of the works. Prior to any surface cover cathodic protection coupons and reference cells will require installation at no cost to SGN.
- 9) This pipeline is cathodically protected and as such has test cables located in test posts. Were these to be lost through this work we would look to the developer for remedial action at no cost to SGN.
- 10) Intrusive construction methods will require an agreed method statement prior to work starting.
- 11) Any extended period of SGN site supervision may incur charges to the developer. These will be charged based on visiting times, materials and occurrences. The developer will be informed when these come into effect and be invoiced direct.
- 12) Any piling or boreholes within 15 metres of the pipeline may require vibration monitoring. No piling or boreholing must take place within 3 metres of the pipeline.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
SO/2015/1073	Application for a Scoping Opinion to determine the content of an	EIA Development – advised on required

	Environmental Impact Assessment for proposed Arborfield Cross Relief road, land west of Eversley Road	content of Environmental Impact Assessment. Replied 21/07/2015.
170433	Full application for the proposed extraction and processing of approximately 3.6 million tonnes of sand and gravel from a site of 190 ha, known as land south west of bridge farm, together with erection of an aggregates processing plant, ready mix concrete plant and the provision of associated ancillary infrastructure and parking for HGV's and staff, with mixed restoration including importation of inert material to agriculture, lowland meadows and wetlands. Proposed temporary diversion of public footpath 20 for the duration of operations	Live application, decision pending.

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Site Area:	21.5ha
Previous land use:	Predominantly agricultural. Site intersects public highway (Swallowfield Road, Milkingbarn Lane) and two Public Rights of Way (ARBO22 & 17).
Proposed land use:	Public highway, including vehicle carriageway, cycleway and footway.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Hampshire County Council	No objection
Reading Borough Council	No objection
Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust	Recommends conditions to ensure permeability of existing badger habitat, monitoring use of green bridge by bat populations, off site mitigation to conserve farmland birds. Application required to demonstrate net gain in biodiversity. <i>[OFFICER NOTE: BBOWT comments have been considered and addressed by Ecology Officer. Various ecology conditions are recommended.</i>
Historic England	“Historic England has no objection to the application on heritage grounds ... less than significant harm to heritage assets.” Advises that when determining this application the local authority should weigh this harm against public benefit, as set out in paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Berkshire Archaeology	No objection – recommends conditions requiring a programme of archaeological mitigation in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, prior to commencement.
Loddon Valley Ramblers	No objection
National Grid	No objection
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue	No comments received
Southern Gas Networks	Development is adjacent to gas pipeline # P6067. The exact location of the pipeline be located before work commences, subject to procedure – refer to informatives. <i>[OFFICER NOTE: No excavation are proposed within the immediate proximity of the pipeline. Informatives are specified.]</i>
SEE Power Distribution	No comments received
Thames Water	Not consulted – the proposal does not affect Thames Water infrastructure.
WBC Biodiversity	The impact in terms of ecological habitats and protected species is acceptable subject to conditions to secure implementation of various measures as specified. Various conditions recommended.
WBC Conservation Officer	No objection. Identifies that harm (less than significant) will be caused to heritage assets – the development is acceptable if there is a clear and convincing justification of the public benefits. <i>[OFFICER NOTE: the nature of the application is such that it provides a clear and convincing justification]</i>
WBC Drainage	No objection. Recommends condition requiring full details site drainage system prior to commencement.
WBC Environmental Health	No objection. Recommends conditions requiring a noise management plan and control of dust / construction noise.
WBC Highways	No objection. Recommends various conditions.
WBC Tree & Landscape	No objection. Recommends conditions requiring details of acoustic fencing, site levels, retention/protection of existing trees, a landscaping scheme and landscape management plan.
WBC Public Rights of Way	No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

Town/Parish Council:

Arborfield Parish Council

“Arborfield and Newland Parish Council welcome the submission of proposals for the construction of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road, and the opportunity to comment on

them. The Council has a number of concerns, however, that it wishes to see addressed:

- This Council has made representations, repeatedly, about the importance of the mitigation measures as a means of protecting nearby residents against the negative impacts arising from operation of this major road, especially in view of the revisions made in 2014 without consultation. Specifically, we request the reinstatement of 3m high bunds in the Greensward Lane and Highfield Park areas of the scheme to protect residential properties against increased noise, as originally approved and promised.
- We have also advised against the adopted staggered crossroads junction at Swallowfield Road, preferring the original proposal for a roundabout on road safety grounds, notwithstanding the likely beneficial effect of traffic reduction in Swallowfield Road and across the entrance to Arborfield Park. A commitment to present an assessment of the roundabout alternative as part of the Environmental Statement has not been honoured.
- This Council has asked repeatedly for clarification of the proposed traffic operations on the southern approaches to the scheme, in order to establish the traffic management arrangements necessary to prevent the revised junction arrangements leading to more Arborfield Green traffic continuing to use the existing A327 through Arborfield Cross village.
- The Council is also concerned about the effective operation of 4 roundabouts in close proximity (Poperinghe, Relief Road, Langley Common, and Biggs Lane), and requests that this combination be modelled in detail to identify traffic issues associated with future operation.
- The proposed speed limit of 50mph is inappropriate for a road with an uncontrolled crossing at Arborfield Footpath 22, and for a staggered crossroads. The originally adopted proposal for a 40mph speed limit should be restored.
- Planting schemes should consist of specimens of reasonable size, so as to reduce to practical minimum the period required for the scheme to reach maturity. We note that the long-term impact of the scheme allows 15 years for development, which is far too long.
- Planting proposed for the area between the new southern terminus roundabout and nearby properties will need to be further reviewed in order to minimise the visual impact of the view along the new road. A denser planting scheme is needed that provides more effective screening.
- Six veteran trees, cherished by the community as important heritage assets, are scheduled for removal. It would appear, from the scheme drawings, that there is scope to retain some of these veteran trees, which would require special protection during construction. We urge Wokingham Borough Council to review this potential.
- We further urge Wokingham Borough Council to progress this scheme without delay. The programmed opening date has slipped by 2 years in the last 4, whilst development of Arborfield Green and other sites along the A327 continues apace.”

[OFFICER COMMENTS]:

Noise / screening

Earth bunds have not been included in the application, although were shown in earlier pre-application consultation versions of the plans. Noise and visual impact has been considered as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process. In the case of Greensward Lane, visual impact has been mitigated through the provision of tree and hedgerow planting, complementing the existing screening provided by Pound Copse. The noise impact will be reduced by tree and hedgerow planting. The EIA considered whether engineered noise barriers would be appropriate adjacent to Greensward Lane.

The benefits of doing so were found to be negligible – this has been balanced against the visual impact and deemed, on balance, not to be necessary. At Highfield Park, EIA noise modelling indicates there will be negligible change and no mitigation is deemed necessary.

Central junction

Officers have had regard to the views of the parish council. However, it is the view of the Local Planning Authority that a staggered junction will provide the best overall solution as it minimises land take, avoids the need to fell additional mature trees and minimises ecological impact. A roundabout junction would draw more through-traffic, undermining the ‘relief’ benefits offered by a new road.

Traffic Management

The relief road would be classified as the A327, thereby declassifying the existing route through Arborfield Cross. All existing signage along the approach will be reviewed in order to direct traffic along the new road. The applicant intends to limit signage into the village to “B3030, Winnersh and “local traffic”. Traffic management and environmental improvements within Arborfield village will also be undertaken. The Council has undertaken to engage with Arborfield Parish Council on the details of these measures – condition 6 refers.

Impact on junctions

Detailed traffic modelling was undertaken within the Transport Assessment and has demonstrated that there will not be a significant detrimental impact on any nearby junction.

Speed limit

The relief road is designed for a speed limit of 50mph, supporting the attractiveness of the route over its alternatives, thereby further relieving traffic within Arborfield Village. Road Safety Audits, taking into account the uncontrolled pedestrian crossing and staggered junctions, have not raised speed as being cause for concern. Thames Valley Police have been consulted and, due to the nature of the road itself, will not support a lower 40mph speed limit.

Landscape Design

The detail of landscaping is to be secured by condition, with full details provided at a later date. The scheme will be subject to approval by the Tree and Landscape officer. However, it should be noted that landscape planting will inevitably take time to mature and a 15 year period is not considered unreasonable in this regard. A number of mature trees are shown to be planted in the vicinity of Baird Road in order to provide screening to the roundabout where appropriate.

Loss of mature trees

The road alignment has sought to minimise the loss of mature trees, for example, by proposing a staggered junction at Swallowfield Road instead of a roundabout. However, it is accepted that some trees will need to be felled. The landscape officer is satisfied with the proposals and the level of replacement planting. Tree protection measures for retained trees are proposed - condition 11 refers.

Barkham Parish Council

“The Parish Council is not happy with the proposed plans for the southern end of the by-

pass. There will be five roundabouts in very quick succession (Biggs Lane, A327 Bramshill Hunt, The Relief Road, Poppyfields and the SDL); this is only going to discourage residents from using the by-pass route. Residents travelling from Watermans View in the direction of Wokingham will undoubtedly turn right from Biggs Lane into Langley Common Road to avoid all the roundabouts. Therefore creating a lot of traffic along Langley Common Road. The Parish Council would like further discussions with WBC as to how to address the situation and if improvements can be made here.”

[OFFICER COMMENTS]:

Waterman’s View residents travelling in the direction of Wokingham will naturally use Langley Common Road, as this is the most direct route. However, many residents travelling in the direction of Shinfield are likely to use the proposed Relief Road. As well as mitigating the impact of the Arborfield and South of M4 SDLs, the ACRR is intended to provide benefits to users of the A327 more generally, by providing a faster route. Detailed traffic modelling was undertaken within the Transport Assessment and has demonstrated that there will not be a significant detrimental impact on any nearby junction or route, including Langley Common Road.

Swallowfield Parish Council

Swallowfield Parish Council find the plan for the Arborfield Cross Relief Road impacting our Parish acceptable.

We consider the provision of shared pathways allowing cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders a good addition to the design.

The green bridge is also a good design feature for the Relief Road.

Also, the provision of badger tunnels providing a crossing point for wildlife another good feature.

We think the imposition of a 50mph speed limit good, and the design of the staggered junction, allowing good vision and entry runways onto the road.

We feel a staggered junction safer than crossroads, however, as a 50 mph road, we request consideration given in the Road design for adequate road markings and signage warning of the staggered junction.

[OFFICER NOTE: the road design has been subject to a stage 1 road safety audit, which did not raise any significant safety issues. Detailed consideration will be given to road markings and signage as part of the highways technical approval (s.278) process; this would follow on from a planning permission]

Local Members: No comments received

Neighbours: 4 letters received in support of the proposals
16 letters / emails received objecting to the proposals, summarised as follows:

Hydrology

- The application has the potential to negatively impact private ground water supply for Arborfield Court reducing groundwater levels, flow and quality *[OFFICER NOTE: this*

is addressed in the later section of this report, sub-titled “Arborfield Court – Private Water Supply”]

Flood Risk

- The ACRR may increase flood risk at Greensward Lane and Church Lane
[OFFICER NOTE: comments addressed in the later section of this report, sub-titled “Flooding and Drainage”]

Landscape

- Road will have a detrimental impact on landscape character
- Green Bridge is essential for landscape mitigation
- Road will detract from rural character
- Trees proposed for removal along Swallowfield Road could be retained
[OFFICER NOTE: comments addressed in the later section of this report, sub-titled “Trees and Landscape”]

Ecology

- ACRR will cause harm to ecology.
[OFFICER NOTE: comments addressed in the later section of this report, sub-titled “Ecology”]

Route Alignment , Design

- The original pre-application consultation on route options was flawed
- Traffic modelling underpinning the route options consultation was flawed
- Low noise road surface is necessary
- ACRR does not require separate roundabout on Eversley Road – Langley Common Road roundabout could be utilised instead. *[OFFICER NOTE: the alignment has been subject to consultation and a subsequent refinement exercise. The planning application alignment, which proposes a new roundabout junction, is considered appropriate].*
- Requests footway along existing A327 so as to link to Shinfield ERR *[OFFICER NOTE: this pertains to land outside the planning red line boundary. Additional footways are not required to make this application acceptable in planning terms and therefore fall outside of the scope of what can be assessed for the purposes of this application].*
- Inconvenient for cyclists using Swallowfield Road, proposed alternative route is significantly longer. Suggests central refuse island to allow a more direct crossing.
- Staggered junction design at Swallowfield Road may not be safe given road speed
- 50mph speed limit not appropriate – suggests lowering to 40mph
[OFFICER NOTE: comments addressed in later sections of this report, sub-titled “Principle of Development”, “Access and Movement”]

Public Rights of Way

- Protection (central refuge island) needed for pedestrians crossing the road at intersection with ARBO22.
[OFFICER NOTE: comments addressed in later sections of this report, sub-titled “Public Rights of Way”]

Security

- A number of residents comment that the ACRR may pose a security risk for their property given existing permeable boundaries.

[OFFICER NOTE: the proposed relationship and proximity of the road to residential properties would not be atypical and is not considered to result in an unacceptable security risk].

Amenity

- ACRR likely to give rise to increase in noise levels for various existing properties *[OFFICER NOTE: it is acknowledged that the development may result in a ‘high’ level of impact for a number of properties – this is addressed in the Environmental Health section below]*
- ACRR likely to affect house-prices/saleability of existing properties *[OFFICER NOTE: this is not a planning issue and therefore cannot be taken into consideration in the decision making process]*
- Construction likely to take a long time / be disruptive.
- Construction compound likely to cause pollution / nuisance to local residents *[OFFICER NOTE: comments addressed in later sections of this report, sub-titled “Environmental Health”, “Residential Amenity” and “Heritage”].*

PLANNING POLICY		
National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP4	Infrastructure Requirements
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP8	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	CP10	Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network
	CP11	Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC06	Noise
	CC09	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
	TB24	Designated Heritage Assets
	TB25	Archaeology

	TB26	Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD		
Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location SPD		
South of M4 Strategic Development Location SPD		

PLANNING ISSUES

Principle of Development:

1. Wokingham Borough Core Strategy policy CP17 establishes a requirement to provide at least 13,487 new dwellings with associated development and infrastructure in the period 2006-2026. The majority of this new residential development will be in four SDLs.
2. Core Strategy Policy CP18 is amplified by Appendix 7 of the Core Strategy, the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD, which address the associated infrastructure impacts across the borough. These documents establish the requirement for a mixed-used development and make clear that a co-ordinated approach to the development of the SDL will be required to deliver the necessary infrastructure to meet the needs of the expanded community.
3. CP18 makes specific reference to the need for improvements to the A327 in conjunction with the Arborfield SDL, while the Infrastructure Contributions SPD refers to a new route to bypass Arborfield Cross. The need for a relief road was identified through detailed work in support of planning permissions for both the South of M4 SDL and Arborfield Garrison SDL, both of which were approved subject to planning obligations that will contribute to the overall cost of an Arborfield Cross Relief Road (ACRR).
4. Traffic modelling indicates that housing growth will severely impact the existing A327 prior to 2026. Therefore, the ACCR is expected to be delivered either in advance of, or concurrently with the proposed developments within the Arborfield and South of M4 SDLs.
5. A route options appraisal process has previously been undertaken by WBC. Following a public consultation process in 2013, a preferred route for progression was recommended. In 2014/15, further refinement exercises were undertaken to examine options within the preferred route alignment. The outcome of these investigations was presented to WBC's Executive in March 2015 and a preferred option was approved to progress to preliminary design / planning application stage.
6. The current application seeks full planning permission for an Arborfield Cross Relief Road. The principle of development is both identified within and supported by the Development Plan as an essential piece of infrastructure required to support ongoing development within the South of M4 and Arborfield Strategic Development Locations. Therefore, the proposal is acceptable in principle, subject to

consideration of the detail for access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale.

7. The proposal has been screened in accordance with Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations and has been identified as EIA Development. The application is informed by an EIA Scoping Opinion and, accordingly, is supported by an Environmental Statement (ES).

Description of Development:

8. The site lies in open countryside, bisecting Swallowfield Road and between the settlements of Shinfield and Arborfield. The ACRR would connect the A327 Reading Road at its northernmost extent, down to the A327 Eversley Road at its southernmost.
9. Just south of the Reading Road within the northernmost section of carriageway, the proposed alignment crosses an unnamed tributary of the River Loddon. After crossing arable land, the carriageway crosses Milkingbarn Lane and its adjacent ditches. The alignment then continues through arable land including crossing a hedgerow until Swallowfield Road, where a junction is proposed. The road would then continue through arable land to a ridgeline, across more arable land and under electricity pylons before joining Eversley Road at its southernmost extent.
10. The alignment would be a single carriageway, approximately 2.3km in length and approximately 7.3m wide. In addition to the proposed highway, the scheme includes improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians, including the provision of a shared use 3m wide pathway alongside the eastern side of the carriageway.
11. Roundabouts connecting to the existing road network are proposed at either end of the road. To enable access to Swallowfield Road, a staggered priority junction would be provided, with priority given to traffic travelling along the proposed route. To enable pedestrians and cyclists to use the ACRR, a 3m wide footway and cycle way will be provided on the northern side together with a pedestrian crossing where the ACRR bisects Footpath ARBO 22. This crossing will be situated 600m southeast of the northern junction
12. In addition, a Green Bridge is proposed at the location where the alignment bisects Footpath ARBO 17, 350m south-east of the staggered junction at Swallowfield Road. This bridge will provide all non-motorised users – pedestrians, cyclists and equestrian - with a grade-separated crossing.
13. Considerable landscaping is proposed to mitigate the landscape and visual impact on the character of the area. Sensitive lighting, if deemed necessary at technical design stage, would be provided at the proposed northern and southern junctions, the details of which are subject to Local Highway Authority approval through the technical design / approval process (S278), and is also controlled by recommended conditions 3 and 13. No lighting is proposed at the central staggered junction.

Access and Movement:

14. The planning application is supported by a Transport Assessment. The document has fully assessed the nature and extent of transport impacts together with any cumulative impact associated with known future development. Potential traffic resulting from gravel extraction operations at Farley Farms (subject to planning

permission) has also been taken into account.

15. The assessment draws upon modelling data derived from the Wokingham Strategic Transport Model 3 and takes into account the SDL developments together with on-site infrastructure provision and known off-site transport interventions. The base year is 2010 and the model was developed to represent average weekday AM peak hour (08:00 - 09:00), Inter peak hour (average 10:00 – 16:00) and PM peak hour (17:00 - 18:00).
16. The forecast years used for this development were 2019 and 2026. It is accepted practice to carry out an assessment 15 years after the opening year of 2019, however it was agreed to assess 2026 as being in line with the end of the current Local Plan period.
17. The following existing junctions were assessed using the standard junction modelling tools:
 - A327 Arborfield Road / B3349 School Green / A327 Hollow Lane roundabout;
 - A327 Reading Road / Greensward Lane priority junction;
 - A327 Reading Road / Church Lane priority junction;
 - Arborfield Cross - B3349 School Road / A327 Eversley Road / Swallowfield Road/ A327 Reading Road / Sindlesham Road roundabout;
 - Sindlesham Road / Church Lane / Mole Road Priority junction;
 - A327 Eversley Road / Langley Common Road / Baird Road / A327 Eversley Road roundabout; and
 - Swallowfield Road / Greensward Lane priority junction.
18. Traffic modelling has considered each junction at a base year (2015), assumed opening year (2019) and a future design year (2026) i.e. once the SDLs have been substantially completed. The assessments concluded that each junction would benefit from the introduction of the ACRR, none more so than the Arborfield Cross roundabout. The operation of this junction would improve significantly which would be expected as through traffic would be diverted away from Arborfield Cross and onto the ACRR - flows through the village would fall from around 2,500 vehicles (two way peak hour) to around 800 vehicles (two way peak hour) by 2026. This reduction in traffic would lead to improvements in noise and air pollution and improving the environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Proposed gravel extraction at Farley Farms

19. The Local Planning Authority is currently in the process of assessing a planning application for the proposed extraction and processing of 3.6 million tonnes of sand and gravel from a 190ha site on land south west of Bridge Farm. The site is partly contiguous with the current planning application for an Arborfield Cross Relief Road.

20. The ACRR application was submitted after the Cemex application, though has come before the planning committee in advance of it. The ACRR proposal does not preclude possible future mineral extraction on the wider Farley Estate; however, there are implications for what might be extracted in the vicinity of the road, should it



come forward in advance of Cemex operations. These are commercial, rather than planning considerations and are not relevant for the determination of the ACRR application. However, it is anticipated that there will be further dialogue between the Local Planning Authority, Wokingham Borough Council and Cemex prior to the determination of the Cemex application at planning committee.

21. Sensitivity testing has been undertaken to assess the impact of traffic that would result from the Cemex development, were this to be approved and implemented. Regardless, none of the assessed junctions would be expected to be over capacity by 2026.

Northern roundabout junction – A327 Reading Road

22. In the event that mineral extraction does not take place on the Farley Estate, the ACRR could be delivered with a 3-arm roundabout at its northern junction with A327 Reading Road. However, in considering cumulative impacts the Transport Assessment has also assessed a 4-arm scenario, also detailed in the application, which could provide a dedicated new access to the gravel extraction site, if required. Both roundabout options feature a designated uncontrolled pedestrian crossing on the southern arm. The Cemex application is being considered separately and on its own merits; however, a grant of planning permission for the ACRR would allow either roundabout option to be implemented.
23. The Transport Assessments has demonstrated that the northern roundabout would operate successfully. Were to be granted planning permission in future, operational traffic generated by the mineral extraction site would, subject to a 4-arm roundabout and based on officers' current understanding of the traffic forecasts, not have an adverse impact on the operation or safety of the northern junction, or on any other part of the ACRR.

Central staggered junction – Swallowfield Road

24. The central junction provides an intersection between the ACRR and Swallowfield Road. The applicant given detailed consideration to the design of this junction, concluding that a staggered priority junction is the optimal solution. Following a detailed design process, the possibility of a roundabout junction was discounted – a rationale is provided in table 4.1 of the Transport Assessment.
25. Officers agree with the applicant's conclusions in this regard. In summary, a roundabout is likely to have required lighting and had negative implications for land take, neighbouring properties, existing mature trees and ecology. A roundabout would also have led to increased traffic flows along Swallowfield Road, making it a more attractive route for east-west traffic and undermining the 'relief' benefits for Arborfield village.
26. A resident has commented that cyclists using Swallowfield Road will be inconvenienced by the staggered junction, and suggests that a central refuge island is introduced to facilitate crossing, rather than relying on the Green Bridge. Although a 'splitter island' would be present in this location, it is not possible to introduce a formal central crossing island due to the road and junction design. However, it is not anticipated that every cyclist approaching via Swallowfield Road would opt to utilise the Green Bridge; many users are likely to traverse the staggered junction itself. Therefore, the ACRR would not result in a significantly increased journey times for all cyclists.

27. The proposed staggered priority junction has been fully assessed using swept path analysis and is considered to be a safe, acceptable solution. Officers are satisfied that a large vehicle can manoeuvre safely at each stage. Visibility splays meet national standards and provide users with appropriate site lines. The staggered junction component is therefore acceptable, subject to implementation of traffic management and environmental improvements within Arborfield Cross in order to further discourage through-traffic. The Council is committed to implementing such measures, following engagement with the Parish Councils and the Local Planning Authority. Condition 6 refers.

Southern roundabout junction – A327 Eversley Road

28. The ACRR would connect to the A327 Eversley Road at its southernmost extent. The design provides for an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing off the northern arm. The junction is appropriately designed.

Speed, lighting and highway safety

29. The design speed proposed during earlier pre-application consultation was 40mph. However, following liaison with the police, a speed of 50mph was assessed as being more appropriate. The ACRR is intended to be an attractive, efficient route for road users and the characteristics of rural road environment have few features to slow vehicles down naturally. The police considered that a speed of 40mph would have been impractical to enforce. A 50mph speed limit has been assessed as safe and is therefore considered to be appropriate.

30. In order to maintain the rural night time character of the area and safeguard protected species, street lighting is not proposed along the main section of the ACRR. However, lighting is likely to be required at the roundabout junctions with Reading Road and Eversley Road (subject to the detailed highways design through the s278 process, which follows on from a planning consent). Should it be required, sensitively-designed lighting could be specified and would be acceptable in planning terms. Specifications for highway lighting are controlled by recommended conditions 3 and 13.

31. High reflective road markings, high quality road studs and illuminated signs and bollards are proposed along the alignment. No lighting is required for the green bridge and footpaths to avoid attracting night time activity where natural surveillance would be at a minimum. No lighting would be installed at the staggered junction; this is in line with DfT guidance for a junction of this type in a rural location.

32. Swept path analysis has been carried out for all three junctions. This analysis has demonstrated that large vehicles would be able to manoeuvre safely.

33. The Transport Assessment is supported by an independently assessed Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and did not identify any significant issues. Future stages in the Road Safety Audit process would be carried out at later stages.

34. Therefore, the road alignment, layout and design is considered to be acceptable.

Public Rights of Way:

35. The site is crossed by two Public Rights of Way – Footpath 17 (ARBO17) and Footpath 22 (ARBO22).

36. Footpath 17 begins in Arborfield Cross on Eversley Road and continues for approximately 1.6km in a south-westerly direction past Arborfield Court and Spring Copse towards Great Copse where it connects with Byway 15. ARBO17 traverses an existing ridgeline, which was set to be reduced by up to 6.5m, creating a cutting in accordance with design standards. As originally envisaged, this would have required a permanent diversion of the footpath to meet with a new at-grade carriageway crossing. However, following pre-application discussions with the Local Planning Authority, a 'green bridge' has been included in the plans. The bridge is capable of accommodating horses, cyclists, badgers and bats, whereas a standard bridge would not have been suitable for horses or as an ecological link. User-groups were consulted on the proposal at pre-application stage and have welcomed the Green Bridge component.
37. Footpath 22 is around 700m in length, and begins in Arborfield on Greensward Lane, continuing along the western edge of Pound Copse before turning south west and connecting with Footpath 20.
38. A local resident has commented that a central refuge island is necessary to protect ARBO22 footpath users. However, the crossing is not raised as concern in the Road Safety Audit. A refuge island is not considered necessary on highway safety grounds and is therefore acceptable in planning terms.
39. No permanent diversion or stopping up of either PROW is required. The Ramblers' Association and PROW officer raise no objection to the application.

Character of the Area:

40. From a landscape perspective, the site can be divided into roughly two halves – to the north between Reading Road and Swallowfield Road, and to the south between Swallowfield Road and Eversley Road. Land to the north is comprised predominantly of large to medium-sized fields under intensive farming, with occasional small woodland blocks, which results in a relatively open character. Land to the south in contrast is comprised of smaller fields, supporting both arable and pasture farming, interspersed with a number of small woodland block. Field boundaries across the site are of varying quality, with some formed of hedgerows in good condition with numerous mature hedgerow trees; and others comprised of post and wire fencing and/or unconnected remnant hedgerows.
41. The northern section is largely flat, gradually rising from around 45m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at Reading Road, to around 60m AOD where it reaches Swallowfield Road. The topography then rises more steeply as the route travels south east towards a peak of 80m AOD some 430m south east of the Swallowfield Road junction before declining to a level of around 62m AOD at the A327 Eversley Road in the south east
42. The site is also crossed by two existing roads/lanes – Swallowfield Road, located roughly at the centre, and Milkingbarn Lane further to the north. These roads connect Arborfield Cross and Arborfield respectively to the agricultural land to the south-west and are lined by a number of mature trees, a number of which are identified as veteran specimens. These well-treed lanes are a characteristic feature of the local landscape.

43. The wider landscape is relatively well wooded, with a number of small woodland blocks and copses, particularly to the south and west. Notable areas of woodland include Spring Copse and Long Copse to the south and Pound Copse to the north. Long Copse and Pound Copse are designated as Ancient Woodland. In addition, a notable area of woodland surrounds Arborfield Court located to the south-west of Arborfield Cross.

Trees and Landscape:

44. Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3 require a high quality design that respects its context. This requirement is amplified by MDDL Policies CC03 and TB21 which require development proposals to protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure (including designated Green Routes such as the A327), retaining existing trees, hedges and other landscape features wherever possible and incorporating high quality - ideally native – planting as an integral part of any scheme, within the context of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment.

45. It is inevitable that a new road on this scale will result in some harm to the existing landscape. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) forms part of the application submission and has assessed the visual impact of the development from key visual receptors and from a variety of different representative viewpoints. The impact is also assessed in term of the initial construction and once the development is complete and operational.

46. The development will result in some significant visual effects during the construction phase from a number of key sensitive visual receptors, including residential properties and users of the Public Rights of Way.

47. In the longer term, the effect is greatly reduced as a result of proposed mitigatory planting measures to soften the visual impact of the road, helping to integrate it within the landscape.

48. One such primary measure is the proposed inclusion of a green bridge corresponding to alignment of the ARBO17 Public Right of Way. The design of the bridge has evolved through pre-application consultation with the LPA and in response to concerns about the potential impact of a more conventional bridge design on the landscape. The green bridge features a curved horizontal profile, which widens at either end. The vertical alignment integrates with the existing natural ridgeline, meaning that it will continue the line of the localised natural ridge. When combined with tree planting across the structure on either side of the footpath, the visual impact of the road cutting from the north and south is greatly reduced.

49. Elsewhere along the road, the landscape proposal is to reinstate and strengthen lost or declining hedgerows along the route. This will help to reinforce the rural character of the landscape and screen or soften views of the road from key visual receptors. It is also proposed to plant strips and blocks of native deciduous trees; again, softening or screening views of the road. Highway verges and embankments would be seeded with species rich grass, helping to increase habitats and biodiversity.

50. Some significant landscape effects during the operational phase are predicted to occur in the short-medium term. However, following the establishment of the

proposed mitigation measures, these would be minimised in the medium-long term. At year 15, following the establishment of woodland and hedgerow planting, the long-term effects on visual receptors is expected to reduce to between moderate adverse to minor adverse. Therefore, no significant residual visual effects are expected in the long term.

51. The Landscape Mitigation Plans provide sufficient information on the type of planting proposed along the length of the relief road at this stage. Detailed landscape plans (to be implemented in conjunction with an extended maintenance contract) would need to be agreed with the LPA prior to commencement. Conditions 8 and 12 refer.
52. The alignment of the road has avoided the most significant individual trees and groups of trees, and where specimens are shown to be removed, substantial replacement planting is indicated as part of the landscape proposals. Retained trees and hedges would be protected during the construction process and protection of existing trees and hedges are also recommended. Conditions 4 and 11 refer.
53. An acoustic fence that is proposed in the vicinity of Arborfield Court will require further consideration in terms of its visual appearance and siting. Condition 9 refers.
54. In summary, the impact of the ACRR is considered to be acceptable in landscape terms; the benefits of the road, subject to mitigation, are considered to outweigh the harm.

Heritage:

55. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 establishes a statutory duty to consider the effect on heritage assets: development should preserve or enhance the character and setting of listed buildings. In considering designated heritage assets, the NPPF (Para 132) requires 'great weight to be given to the asset's conservation', and that any harm should require 'clear and convincing justification'. The MDD Local Plan (TB24) requires that '...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.'
56. There are no statutorily designated assets or conservation areas located within the immediate site boundary. Arborfield Cross Conservation Area is located approximately 800m to the north-east - this comprises the nucleus of the Arborfield Cross settlement and the northern section of Eversley Road. Views towards the site from the core of the conservation area are generally restricted by intervening built-form within the village. One of the benefits of the ACRR would be to reduce the amount of vehicle traffic through Arborfield Cross, improving the setting of the conservation area. Recommended condition 6 requires implementation of environmental and traffic management improvements (subject to consultation with parish councils) within two years of the road opening.
57. There are a number of listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments located nearby. Since the application Environmental Statement was first submitted, further consideration has been given to Landscape, Visual, Noise and Vibration impact on

two listed buildings – Barlett’s Farmhouse and White’s Farmhouse. Both of these heritage assets have subsequently been scoped in to the Environmental Statement (ES), meaning that the impact has been assessed.

Bartlett’s Farmhouse

58. Barlett’s Farmhouse is sited on the southern side of Swallowfield Road, approximately 400m to the south-west of the proposed scheme. The building dates to the 16th century and its immediate setting is comprised of agricultural land. From the east, the buildings are isolated and are evocative of a post-medieval agricultural settlement set in closes. Its wider setting is that of a rural landscape of irregular fields interspersed with narrow lanes and trackways. As an example of a relatively isolated rural farmstead with a historic functional relationship with the surrounding landscape, the setting makes a substantial contribution to the significance of the asset in terms of its historic value.

White’s Farmhouse

59. White’s Farmhouse is a heritage asset of high significance located opposite Bartlett’s Farmhouse, on the north side of Swallowfield Road, approximately 400m south-west of the Proposed Scheme. It dates to the 18th century. The asset is enclosed by the treeline and surrounding farm buildings (a mixture of modern and late 19th/early 20th century barns and sheds) and is set back from the road creating a sense of isolation and seclusion. Like Bartlett’s Farmhouse, the property is an example of a relatively isolated rural farmstead with a historic functional relationship with the surrounding landscape; the setting therefore makes a substantial contribution to the significance of the asset.

60. In the case of both Bartlett’s and White’s farmhouses, the presence of intervening buildings and mature trees would reduce the visibility of the ACRR, especially during periods when tree foliage is dense. However, since the road would pass at grade (and on a low embankment approximately 400m to the north-east of the asset), it would still be visible. At night the proposed lighting at the northern roundabout would be largely imperceptible; however, light from passing vehicles would be visible.

61. Both properties face each other across Swallowfield Road and are equidistant from the proposal. The noise level indicated by modelling indicates there will be a net reduction in noise on Swallowfield Road (relative to predicted level) and that this benefit (i.e. avoiding an increase in traffic noise on Swallowfield Road – which both properties front directly on to) is greater than the traffic noise introduced in relation to the proposed new road, 400m to the north.

62. In summary, the noise and light from associated traffic on ACRR would detract somewhat from the overriding rural character of the setting of both assets. It is predicted, however, there will be little net noise effect as a result of the development. The mitigation proposed would not entirely offset the impact and consequently there is still likely to be a minor direct, permanent, long-term residual effect on the setting of both heritage assets. The impact is assessed as being “less than substantial” and can therefore be acceptable subject to a clear and convincing justification of the wider public benefits.

Arborfield Court

63. This is a Grade II listed heritage asset of high significance located approximately

100m north-east of the proposed ACRR. It is a former large country house dating to 1904 that has been divided into two residential units. The close proximity of the property to the village creates a link between the old settlement north of Church Lane to the expanded village to the east of Arborfield Court. The residential property was originally built within enclosed grounds, offering privacy and seclusion, and was set back from the road to Arborfield. It retains its secluded and tranquil setting today.

64. The immediate setting of the asset is similarly tranquil. It is well set back from Swallowfield Road, and is screened by tall, mature trees and hedging. The wider setting is an agricultural rural landscape, on the western fringe of a semi-rural village. The setting contributes positively to the significance of the asset, in terms of its historical, evidential and aesthetic values. The development will result in some minor negative impact to the setting of the building; however, a noise barrier is proposed along this stretch of the road, which will mitigate the impact to some degree. The impact is assessed as being “less than substantial” and can therefore be acceptable subject to a clear and convincing justification of the wider public benefits.

Ducks Nest Farm

65. Duck’s Nest Farmhouse is Grade II listed and therefore of high significance. The contribution of setting to the asset’s significance is moderate to minor. The main elevation faces south-west towards the proposed southern section road, with views over agricultural land. The local topography is such that the land is undulating and views towards the ACRR are undulating but noticeable. Some modern buildings interrupt the directness of these views.
66. The setting of the asset may be affected by increases in light and movement, however, the presence of new screening will reduce this affect, while sensitive lighting at the southern roundabout (controlled by condition) would further reduce the impact. The overall resulting harm is considered to be less than substantial and can therefore be acceptable subject to a clear and convincing justification of the wider public benefits.
67. Both the WBC Conservation officer and Historic England have assessed the planning application submission and subsequent ES addendums. It is agreed that the development would result in some negative impacts in terms of noise and light. Although this would cause a degree of harm to designated heritage assets, in each case this is assessed as being “less than substantial” in NPPF terms. Development that results in less than substantial harm nevertheless requires a clear and convincing justification. In this case, the wider public benefits of a new road are considerable, and include relieving the current and predicted volume of traffic through designated heritage assets at Arborfield Cross (Conservation Area and roadside listed buildings). On this basis, and despite the less than substantial harm to the listed buildings, the development is acceptable in heritage terms.

Flooding and Drainage:

68. Core Strategy Policy CP1 and MDDL Policies CC09 and CC10 establish that new development should avoid increasing and where possible reduce flood risk (from all sources) by first developing in areas with lowest flood risk, carrying out a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) where required and managing surface water in a sustainable manner.

69. The proposed ACRR falls entirely within Flood Zone 1 where the risk of flooding is low. The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment, Drainage Strategy and Environmental Statement. The indicative Surface Water drainage strategy demonstrates that the proposed scheme will be drained via a network of swales, which will be underlain by filter trenches, discharging to two attenuation basins adjacent to the road alignment.
70. Overland flow routes would be intercepted by the road structure, but the attenuation proposed will cater for the 1 in 100 flood event with a 40% allowance for climate change prior to controlled discharge into existing drainage ditches. One infiltration test demonstrated borderline infiltration – additional trial pits will be required along the length of the road.
71. The development is acceptable in drainage terms subject to further ground investigation surveys, demonstration of SUDs feature levels, calculations demonstrating soakaway performance, and a drainage strategy and maintenance plan. Condition 7 refers.

Arborfield Court – private water supply:

72. Residents at Arborfield Court have expressed concern that construction of the ACRR may negatively impact upon a private water supply utilised by these properties. Arborfield Court receives its primary water supply from a spring fed tank. The supply is known to have run dry on previous occasions.
73. Chapter 13 of the Environmental Statement considers the potential effect of the road on the Arborfield Court spring fed water supply, concluding that the overall effects are expected to be 'negligible'.
74. As part of its investigations, the applicant - the Council - has undertaken research on the known history of the supply arrangements, which are considered to be potentially sensitive, particularly in summer months when the supply has previously run dry. Ground monitoring has been undertaken through onsite boreholes to better understand the maximum groundwater levels, so as to inform the drainage design for the proposed adjacent cutting.
75. The applicant has requested data from the Arborfield Court Management Company on water consumption, so as to correlate against historic and on-going ground water monitoring data. This data is required in order to understand the potential impact of the road (however unlikely) on the Arborfield Court water supply. To date, no such data has been received by the applicant.
76. Although the overall effect of the development has been assessed as negligible, the applicant has undertaken to keep the situation under review in case it were to transpire that the ACRR were to effect the water supply. Monitoring of groundwater, which began in December 2016, will continue until after the development is completed. It is understood that WBC will continue to liaise with Arborfield Court Management Company over this period.

Environmental Health and Residential Amenity:

77. Core Strategy Policy CP3 requires that new development should be of a high quality of design that does not cause significant detriment to the amenities of adjoining land

users and their quality of life. The application Environmental Statement includes detailed assessment of noise, vibration and air quality.

Construction Noise and Vibration

78. Noise during the construction phase has been predicted using methodology in BS5228:2009+A1:2104, demonstrating that the impact on the majority of sensitive receptors will be negligible if standard 'best practicable means' for the control of noise are employed.
79. However for The Lodge, New Cottage and dwellings in Baird Road; additional measures such as site hoarding and localised screening will be required to reduce the potential impact to 'negligible' during the construction phase. Localised screening at The Lodge will not be as effective and a short term 'moderate' impact is predicted of "perhaps no more than a day". Condition 4 refers.

Operational Noise

80. The operational impact of the proposed ACRR has been assessed for both the short and long term. Comparison has been made with short term 'do minimum' (DM) 'do something' (DS) impacts at 33 sensitive dwellings (Arborfield Court including The Lodge and Arbery Way) the magnitude of change, prior to mitigation, is predicted to have "direct, temporary, short term effect of moderate significance. There are 10 dwellings where, prior to mitigation measures, there is predicted to be a temporary, short term effect of major significance, prior to mitigation measures.
81. A 3m high acoustic barrier is proposed along the footpath north of the road between the Swallowfield Road junction and the proposed green bridge at PROW ARBO17. The barrier would achieve a noise reduction in the region of 2dB. Although a modest reduction, it may reduce the impact on some receptors at Arborfield Court from 'high' to 'medium'.
82. The use of bunding / screening has been explored but this has been ruled out as being ineffective at most locations.
83. The road is proposed to have a 50mph speed limit and would be constructed with a low noise surface. Were the speed limit to be limited to 40mph, this would negate the benefits of the low noise surface, which are only realised with higher road speeds. The rationale for a 50mph speed limit is discussed in paragraph 29.
84. The impact of the ACRR on sound levels at Arborfield Court will be below the lower limit (50dB) of what is considered acceptable for new residential development across the Borough.
85. On balance, the proposed mitigation is considered to be sufficient to mitigate the operational noise impacts of the ACRR.

Air quality

86. Chapter 4 of the ES includes an assessment of dust and fumes arising from construction activity. Oxides of nitrogen and particulates (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) have been assessed.
87. In terms of construction dust and fumes, the impact will be negligible if controlled in a proper manner. Accordingly, a Construction Environmental Management Plan is

proposed – condition 4 refers.

88. The Air Quality assessment concludes that there will be decreases and increases in concentrations of NO_x PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} associated with the new road. However, there will be no significant impact on the Air Quality objectives overall and no mitigation measures are considered necessary.

Ecology:

89. Core Strategy Policy CP7 requires appropriate protection of species and habitats of conservation value. Design Principle 1b (i-ii) is concerned with protection of ecological habitat and biodiversity features, together with mitigation of any impacts that do arise.
90. The ecological baseline status of the site and wider area been established through desk and field survey. A range of sites, habitats and species were considered in the Environmental Statement; including statutory and non-statutory wildlife sites ancient woodland, habitats of principal importance, badger, bats, birds, reptiles and Great Crested Newts.
91. An Ecological Impact Assessment has evaluated ecological features within 250m of the road alignment in terms of the potential effects during the construction and operational phases of the development, taking into account the various mitigation measures that are proposed.
92. In summary, while there are likely to be some moderate adverse effects to habitat during the short term construction phase, there will be residual positive ecological benefits in the longer term as a result of habitat creation. Other proposed mitigation measures, such as the Green Bridge and badger tunnels, would ensure that the road does not sever commuting routes. Therefore, the development would not have a significant effect on receptors.

Protected species

93. The surveys so far completed, Environmental Statement and subsequent dialogue with the applicant has established that the risk to protected species and species of principal importance can be adequately mitigated. Various measures are secured by condition – 4, 8, 12 and 13 refer.

Hedgerow

94. The Environmental Statement identifies that circa 465m of hedgerow will be lost at various points along the proposed alignment. Unmitigated or compensated, this would result in habitat fragmentation and a net loss for biodiversity. However, the landscape mitigation proposals include the creation of circa 2,790m of new hedgerow running parallel to the road and connecting to hedgerows that have been severed. Over time, this will adequately compensate for the initial loss.
95. The inclusion of a green bridge between Spring Copse and the mature woodland around Arborfield Court provides an open crossing point for terrestrial animals safe from road traffic and mitigates the loss nearby hedgerow. The inclusion of additional tree planting at other hedgerow crossing points will help provide safer high crossing routes for bats in the long-term. Condition 8 ensures that replacement hedgerow planting will be species rich and appropriately spaced

Spring Copse

96. A triangle of approximately 100m² in the north-eastern most tip of Spring Copse will be lost or subject to significant ground level alteration. While this is a small proportion of the Copse (0.5% of the overall area), the loss is significant nonetheless. However, this would not compromise the ecological integrity of the wider woodland.
97. The landscape strategy proposes a greater amount of new woodland planting to act as a buffer between the remaining ancient woodland and the ACRR. The new planting will go some way to providing a larger, less fragmented (within the landscape) and more ecologically stable woodland unit in the long-term.
98. Nevertheless, the road would be constructed within a cutting at this point in the alignment, and this has the potential to impact hydrology within the Copse, with possibly negative implications for ground flora. However, this can be compensated by introducing suitable ground flora species within the new buffer woodland areas. Condition 8 refers.

Net gain for biodiversity

99. NPPG para 109 requires development to provide net gains for biodiversity where possible. A Biodiversity Metric Assessment addendum to the Environmental Statement has demonstrated that habitat creation is likely to give rise to a net gain to biodiversity. While some improvements are not on a like-for-like basis (i.e. loss of farmland), the mitigation is balanced and would provide a variety of new and valuable habitat.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

100. The application has been assessed in terms of its potential impact of particulates on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Bramshill and Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Natural England have confirmed that Predicted Environmental Concentrations would not have an adverse impact on designated sites.

Archaeology:

101. MDD Policy MB25 requires applicants to provide a detailed assessment of the impact on archaeological remains. If development is likely to affect an area of high archaeological potential or an area, which is likely to contain archaeological remains, the presumption is that appropriate measures shall be taken to protect remains by preservation in situ. Where this is not practical, applicants shall provide for excavation, recording and archiving of the remains.
102. Archaeological trial trenching and survey work has been undertaken in support of the planning application. An evaluation of the results has identified the site of an Iron Age / Early Roman settlement towards the centre of the route. This area also seems to have been the focus for later medieval activity as well. The possible location of a Cold War era Royal Observer Corps Monitoring Post has also been identified. These monitoring posts consisted of concrete below ground bunkers. The documentary records suggest that this post was demolished and the evaluation identified an area of demolition material, however it remains unknown as to whether any of the bunker remains intact below ground at this stage. Limited evidence for archaeological activity was recorded at either end of the route, but did include an undated ditch and a possible cremation burial.

103. Berkshire Archaeology have advised that further phases of investigation, including excavation of the settlement site are required in advance of the commencement of construction works. The development is therefore acceptable in archaeology terms. Conditions 14 refers.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

104. The proposal is infrastructure development and therefore is not CIL liable.

CONCLUSION

The ACRR would provide an essential piece of infrastructure that is required to support the Council's planned approach to development within the wider area.

The development provides for a safe, functional and well-landscaped scheme, in keeping with the Council's spatial strategy. Appropriate mitigation is proposed to overcome impacts, where necessary. The application complies with Development Plan polices and can therefore be recommended for approval.

CONTACT DETAILS

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Enclosures:

- 1) Site plans
- 2) Parish Council Comments

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