

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Coordination of new development in Barkham</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28 February 2024
<b>WARD</b>	Barkham;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Early consideration and coordination of construction activities across various development projects at Barkham will help mitigate the impact upon the locality and the community.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

To note:

- The projects proposed and being considered in the vicinity of Barkham Ride; and
- The undertaking of the Council, as landowner and developer, to coordinate development impacts and mitigation, and information sharing with the local community.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

A number of development projects are potentially coming forward in the Barkham Ride vicinity over the coming years. The development activity, if not appropriately managed, could have the potential to impact negatively upon the locality.

This report sets out the status of the various development projects and their timelines for development, and proposes an approach to managing impacts and engagement with the local community.

The Council has two roles in the developments at Barkham:

- 1) As landowner, promoter and developer of projects
- 2) As Local Planning Authority, to consider and determine the suitability of development proposals from a planning perspective, and grant planning consent(s) as appropriate

Consideration of issues within this report should be taken in role (1) above – the Council as landowner, promoter and developer of projects. Overview & Scrutiny Committee cannot consider and recommend the approval, or otherwise, of projects from the perspective of the Council's role as the Local Planning Authority.

## **Background**

The area in and around Barkham Ride is potentially going to see a number of development projects coming forward over the coming years. The majority of these projects are being promoted by and are proposed on land owned by the Council. They will be developed by the Council's Commercial Property team. A smaller number of these schemes are being promoted and delivered by private, third party developers.

The schedule below sets out this projects, which are also show on the plan in appendix A.

**Project Schedule (see corresponding plan in Appendix A)**

Project	Developer	Construction Contractor	Status	Construction Timescales
Barkham Solar Farm – Main construction	WBC	Equans (formerly Bouygues)	Planning Permission Approved Detailed design ongoing Construction Contract to be awarded towards end of 2024	Main Construction Spring/Summer 2025 2-3 Months duration
Barkham Solar Farm -Grid Connection (includes works in highway)	SSEN (on behalf of WBC)	TBC	Grid Connection offer of August 2026 in contract	Programme of connection works tbc.  Needs to be completed before the solar farm can be connected into the grid
Barkham Solar Farm - Greenway Construction	WBC	Equans (formerly Bouygues)	Part of the Solar Farm project/construction	Main Construction Spring/Summer 2025 2-3 Months
Woodland Planting (combined) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid Memorial Woodland (extension to California Country Park)</li> <li>• Solar Farm Woodland Planting</li> </ul>	WBC	TBC	Archaeological Investigation of sites ongoing in advance of planting	Scheduled for 2024/25 Tree Planting Season – November through to April
SEND Schools	WBC	TBC	DfE funding confirmed Site identified and project agreed by Executive – 29/06/2023 WBC's Self-Delivery-Bid currently being considered by DfE Planning application not yet submitted.	Early 2025 through to Summer 2026 For opening in the 2026/27 academic year.

Project	Developer	Construction Contractor	Status	Construction Timescales
SANG Extension – Extension to existing Rooks Nest Wood Country Park (SANG)	WBC	TBC	Executive agreement to promote site into the Local Plan Update – September 2023	Currently anticipated in 2025/26
High Barn Farmhouse – Specialist Residential Accommodation	WBC	TBC	WBC Adult Social Care currently working with WBC's Development Team around bringing forward a scheme to provide housing for adults with disabilities	TBC
High Barn Farm – Local Plan Update (LPU) Promotion Gypsy and Travellers and Plots for Travelling Show People – 15-20 plots	WBC	TBC	Executive resolution to promote site into LPU – 28/09/23 Site allocation currently being considered by Local Planning Authority for inclusion in next version of the Local Plan	TBC Dependent on whether included as allocation within an LPU, and if so, dependent on timetable for LPU adoption
Barkham Ride Residential Schemes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31 Barkham Ride – 26 dwellings</li> <li>• 33 Barkham Ride – 56 dwellings</li> </ul>	31 Barkham Ride – A1 Properties Ltd 33 Barkham Ride - Elivia Homes Ltd and Knowles Land Ltd	TBC	Outline planning applications submitted. Both currently pending determination by the Local Planning Authority	TBC

## **Managing Development Impact and Community Engagement**

The extent of development activity, if not appropriately managed, could have the potential to impact negatively upon the locality. Given that the majority of the projects will be developed by the Council, there is a significant opportunity that projects and development impact can be coordinated in a coherent fashion. The same project team will be managing all the building contracts, so Construction and Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs) can be coordinated, including construction traffic routing, works on the highways, delivery times and site operation hours.

At the time of writing, of the developments only Barkham Solar Farm has secured planning permission. Under the requirements of the solar farm planning permission, prior to the commencement of the solar farm the Council will need to submit a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the consideration and approval of the Local Planning Authority. Whilst the other projects have yet to secure planning permission, if they are ultimately successful in doing so then it would be usual for those projects too to be subject to a similar CEMP submission / approval planning condition.

As part of the construction management for the solar farm, there is an explicit planning requirement to establish a Community Liaison Group for information sharing and to discuss and manage local issues. Details of that group, including membership, will be refined and agreed with the LPA in due course. This will be set up towards the end of this year, in advance of any construction work on the solar farm. Conversations with Parish Councils around membership have already commenced.

In terms of the wider projects, the majority are WBC projects that will be progressed via the Commercial Property Development Team. As WBC projects, the project teams will be held more accountable by local residents and Councillors than would necessarily be the case for private development schemes. Once contractors are identified/appointed there will be an expectation of coordination across the projects to better understand cumulative impacts and mitigate those as far as practicable. The Community Liaison Group, to be set up in the first instance under the solar farm project, will provide a forum within which those local impacts can be considered and mitigation strategies can be devised. It is therefore the intention that the Community Liaison Group will continue beyond the solar farm delivery and be opened up to the wider projects as and when they come forward and can meaningfully input. The Council's Highways Team will feed into the proposed mitigation strategies and the Community Liaison Group as appropriate.

The potential residential developments to the north of Barkham Ride are not WBC projects. Those, if successful in securing planning permission, will be required under condition to submit their own CEMPs for the Local Planning Authority's approval. The Commercial Property Development Team will at the relevant time seek to engage with those developers to better understand their construction programme / intentions and in doing so will also open out invitation to the Community Liaison Group.

The Council also has a number of residual sites in the area, those being: the existing caravan storage at High Barn Farm; the land adjacent to High Barn Farmhouse; and the Farmhouses and adjacent land of Rooks Nest Farm, Mortimer Lodge Farm and Brook Farm. Current and future use of these sites will need to be cognisant of the wider development context.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0		

### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

**Cross-Council Implications** (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

### Public Sector Equality Duty

Each of the individual WBC development projects will have been subject to EqIA

**Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030**

Management and coordination of construction activity has the potential to reduce carbon emissions from the construction process.

### Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

### List of Background Papers

Appendix A

- Map Showing Barkham Sites

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