

**Examination of Wokingham Borough Local Plan
2023-2040**

Examination Hearing Statement

October 2025

PREPARED FOR



**CREST
NICHOLSON**



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Document History

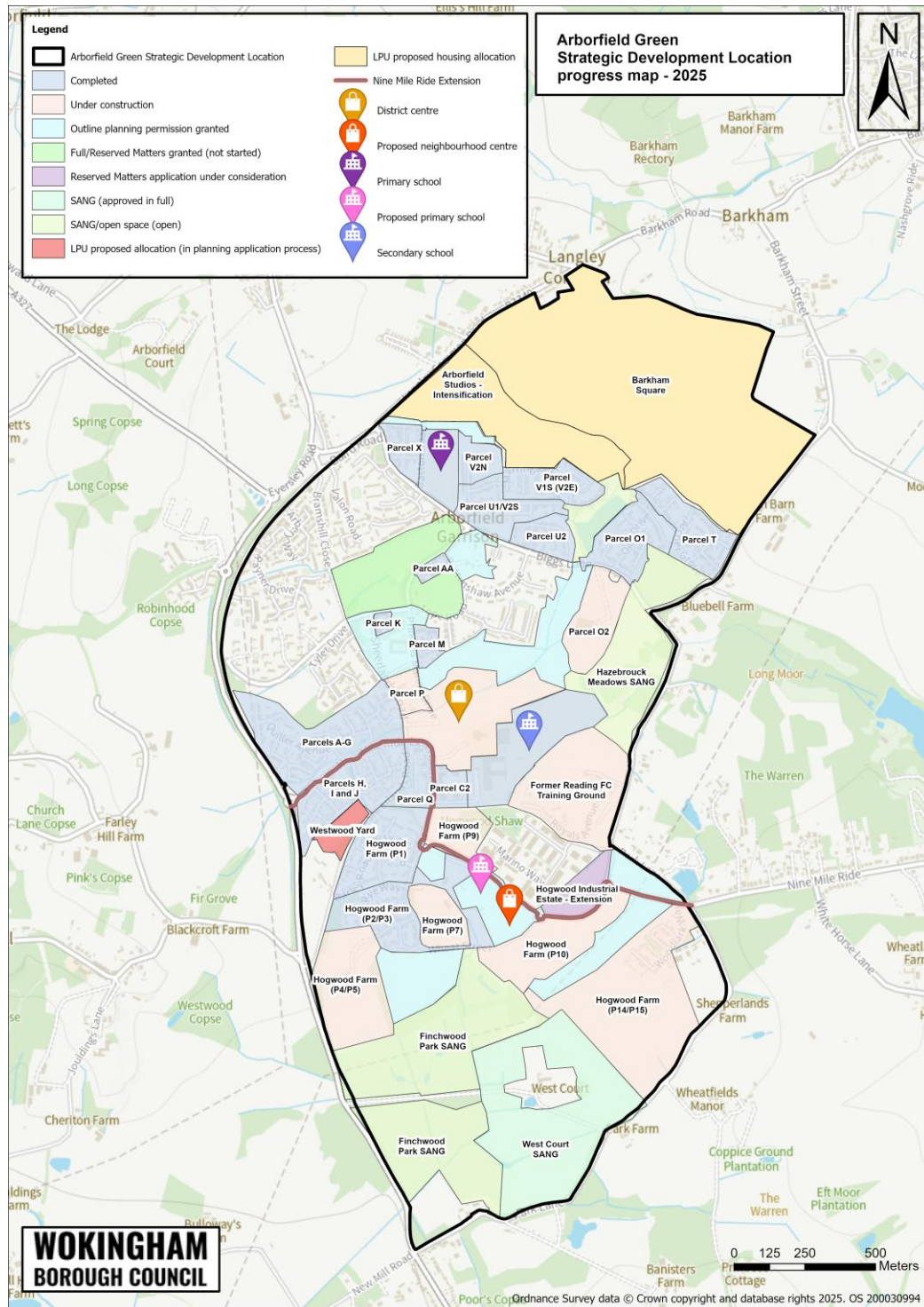
Issue	Date	Issued by	Comment
1.0	31/10/2025	DB	

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 This examination hearing statement has been prepared by Savills on behalf of Crest Nicholson Partnerships and Strategic Land (“Crest Nicholson”).
- 1.2 Crest Nicholson is a leading new homes developer with more than 60 years’ experience.
- 1.3 Crest Nicholson strives to create distinctive new build homes and sustainable communities for their customers to live in and enjoy.
- 1.4 One such example is Arborfield Green, Berkshire, which is one of the newest garden villages.
- 1.5 Crest Nicholson is working in partnership with the landowner and with relevant stakeholders, including Wokingham Borough Council (“the Council”), to continue to bring forward development at Arborfield Green.
- 1.6 This examination hearing statement has been prepared solely in respect of land known as the former studios site (“the Site”).
- 1.7 The Site is within an area of land that is consented for strategic-scale development under outline planning permission reference: O/2014/2280. The consented development is for up to 2,000 dwellings and other development.
- 1.8 The maximum dwellings under this outline planning permission can be accommodated on the consented land area, leaving land which is being masterplanned for additional residential development, possibly around 330 dwellings, prior to submission of a new planning application to the Council.
- 1.9 The Council has submitted a plan entitled ‘Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location Progress Map 2025’, under the examination into the local plan and which has been assigned reference: WBC 17B.
- 1.10 An extract of this plan is shown below. The Site forms the majority, but not all, of the area of land annotated ‘Arborfield Studios – Intensification’, on this plan.
- 1.11 Responses were provided to the regulation 19 consultation of the local plan on behalf of Crest Nicholson Partnerships and Strategic Land, regarding land known as Barkham Square and separate and unrelated land in Wokingham Borough in respect of land known as Grazeley.
- 1.12 A Regulation 19 response was not submitted on behalf of Crest Nicholson in respect of the former studios site at Arborfield Green.
- 1.13 A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG), dated 15 August 2025, between Wokingham Borough Council and Crest Nicholson in respect of Arborfield Studios, Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location Site SS11, has been submitted under the examination into the local plan and which has been assigned reference: WBC 21.
- 1.14 The SoCG sets out the matters that are agreed and not agreed between the Council and Crest Nicholson regarding Policy SS11: Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location, of the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040: Proposed Submission Plan.

- 1.15 The SoCG describes how Policy SS11 incorporates both development permitted under the Core Strategy Local Plan which has not been completed from the base date of the Proposed Submission Plan, plus the delivery of additional 910 dwellings to be achieved through three sources of supply, comprising the following:
- 300 dwellings by optimising development density at land currently occupied by Arborfield Studios
 - 600 dwellings on land to the northeast of Arborfield Studios (excluding any care provision), known as Barkham Square
 - 10 dwellings at Westwooid Yard, Sheerlands Road
- 1.16 It is stated in the SoCG (paragraph 6.1) that there are no areas of disagreement between these parties regarding Policy SS11 and that the proposed development will be discussed and evolved through the planning application process.
- 1.17 Agreement of the SoCG followed on from the Council's response to the Inspectors' Initial Questions (ID10), which is examination document reference: WB6, and is dated 28 May 2025.
- 1.18 As mentioned, Crest Nicholson has entered into pre-application engagement with the Council in respect of the proposed residential redevelopment of remaining land on the studios site.
- 1.19 Since agreement of the SoCG in August 2025, Crest Nicholson and advisers have given further consideration to Policy SS11 and have moved their position on from some aspects of the SoCG.
- 1.20 The statements, which are in the format of points a) to d), agreed between the Council and Crest Nicholson at paragraph 5.1 of the SoCG largely remain in place except for the following aspects of the development principles only within Policy SS11 Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location:
- Change in 3 a) ii. To read around 330 dwellings
 - Question whether there is evidence which has led to inclusion of 25 self and custom build plots under 3 ii.
 - Question whether there is evidence which has led to inclusion of 5 gypsy and traveller pitches under 3 iii.
- 1.21 It is considered that this does not affect the Arborfield Green SDL Development Guidelines at Appendix A of the local plan.
- 1.22 Our request is for the Planning Inspectors to accept this examination hearing statement and to identify Savills acting on behalf of Crest Nicholson as participant into the examination hearing in respect of Matter 3.3 Arborfield Green SDL. This hearing is scheduled to take place on Day 3 of the hearings, being Thursday 20 November 2025, under version 1 of the draft Part 1 Hearings Timetable.

Extract image below of the Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location Progress Map 2025, taken from examination document: WBC 17B



2. Issue 3 – Arborfield Green SDL

- 2.1 This section comprises responses to the matters, issues and questions for the part 1 hearing sessions, under Issue 3 – Arborfield Green SDL. In particular, these are responses to questions 7, 8 and 9.
- 2.2 In the context of the introduction and background provided above, we have only provided responses to questions relevant to the Site and in particular the points under paragraph 1.20, but for ease of understanding we have provided all questions in bold text below.
- Question 7) Is the site suitable for allocation as an SDL and have the constraints to development been adequately assessed and considered?**
- 2.3 Arborfield Green is a well established strategic-scale development in Wokingham Borough with a well established community in place and some land yet to be developed. This includes Policy CP18 Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location, within the Core Strategy, adopted in January 2010.
- 2.4 Arborfield Green is a masterplanned new place, which benefits from an evidence base.
- 2.5 The proposed allocation of Arborfield Green as a Strategic Development Location is a logical continuation of the existing development commitment, with an updated evidence base and covering a larger land-area.
- a. Has the impact of the development on the highway network been adequately assessed? Would there be unacceptable impacts on highway safety or severe residual cumulative impacts on the highway network as a result of the development?**
- 2.6 For the Site (former Arborfield Studios), we are due to undertake a transport assessment, including strategic modelling for the additional dwellings, taking into consideration the committed development on Arborfield Green and the proposed additional dwellings at Barkham Square.
- b. Is a secondary access capable of being taken through the adjoining development to the southwest, as indicated in Figure 6 of the Plan? Is a secondary access necessary for this site to be delivered?**
- 2.7 It is unclear as to whether this question is intended to relate solely to the primary route where it crosses the south west boundary of Barkham Square as shown on Figure 6, which is the Arborfield Green Strategic Development Location: Barkham Square Concept Plan. For the purpose of this response, it is assumed that the question is intended to refer to the primary route in this location.
- 2.8 Crest Nicholson at this stage do not consider there is evidence to support the concept plan including a primary route crossing the south west boundary of Barkham Square. Crest Nicholson will be undertaking a transport assessment for the site which will establish if a link is necessary.
- c. Is it clear that sufficient sewerage capacity would be available to facilitate the proposed development?**
- 2.9 This is for the Council to comment on.
- d. Have all other constraints to development been adequately assessed and considered?**
- 2.10 This is for the Council to comment on.

Question 8) Is there sufficient certainty that the infrastructure required to support the development could be delivered viably and at the point which it is needed?

- 2.11 For the Site (former Arborfield Studios), we are assessing delivery requirements as part of the pre-application stage.

Question 9) Are the delivery assumptions regarding this site robust? In particular:

a. How has the assumed number of dwellings been determined?

- 2.12 This is for the Council to comment on.

b. Part 6 of Policy SS11 requires that a site masterplan and other strategies are prepared. Is the preparation of these documents reflected in the assumed delivery timescales?

- 2.13 This is for the Council to comment on.

c. Would the site deliver the number of units per annum that are envisaged?

- 2.14 The Site (former Arborfield Studios), is currently being masterplanned and has the potential capacity for around 330 dwellings. We request a change to Policy SS11 to reflect this.

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