

To:
Planning Department, Wokingham Borough Council
planning.enquiries@wokingham.gov.uk

Date: 8 June 2026

Formal Objection to Planning Application 253071 – Land West of Park Lane, Charvil

Proposal: Approval of Reserved Matters (including layout and landscaping) for the residential development of 75 dwellings, pursuant to the outline permission for the site.

Dear Sir/Madam,

We act for the owners and occupiers of 22 and 23 Canberra Lake Way, Charvil (“our clients”), whose rear boundaries adjoin the south-eastern edge of the application site, and we submit this objection to the above Reserved Matters application on their behalf. Our clients do not object to the principle of 75 dwellings on this site, which is established by the outline permission. This objection is directed at the detailed layout and landscaping at the interface with their properties, and in particular at the failure of the submitted scheme to provide an effective landscaped buffer along that boundary and an adequate degree of separation from established homes. For the reasons set out below, the layout as drawn conflicts with the adopted development plan and the Council’s adopted design guidance. We ask the Council to require the applicant to submit an amended layout that secures a proper boundary buffer. As we demonstrate by reference to a revised layout we have prepared, such an amendment is achievable within the site, with no reduction in the approved number of dwellings and with a net gain in greenspace and tree cover.

The adopted development plan and design guidance

The application must be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The most directly relevant provisions are Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (adopted 29 January 2010), Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (adopted 21 February 2014), and Policies CHARVIL 3 and CHARVIL 4 of the Charvil Neighbourhood Plan, which was made on 7 May 2026 (90.9 per cent of those voting in favour) and now forms part of the statutory development plan. The Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD is a material consideration of substantial weight in the assessment of design and amenity.

Policy CP3 provides that planning permission will be granted for proposals that, among other things:

“(a) Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life; ... (f) Contribute to a sense of place ... in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping ...”

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy, Policy CP3.

The Borough Design Guide SPD reinforces these requirements. Requirement R15 provides that “Buildings must be designed to provide reasonable levels of visual privacy to habitable rooms”, and the SPD sets out the Council’s adopted separation standards, including a minimum back-to-back distance of 22 metres. Critically, the SPD makes clear that those standard distances are a floor, not a ceiling, where new development meets established homes:

“These distances will generally be considered adequate for the relationships within new developments but may not be appropriate in relation to existing properties. ... The relationships between existing properties and new development can be particularly sensitive. In such cases ... it will be necessary to provide a greater distance or to incorporate additional design features to

minimise any harm caused by perceptions of loss of privacy or other potential impacts at the rear of properties.”

Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD, section 4.7 (Privacy, visual impact and amenity).

The boundary between the application site and our clients’ established homes is precisely the “particularly sensitive” relationship to which the SPD refers. It calls for a greater degree of separation and additional design measures — not less. The submitted layout does the opposite.

Failure to provide an effective landscaped boundary buffer

The submitted layout provides only a narrow residual strip of land between the rear elevations and gardens of the new dwellings and the boundary with our clients’ properties. That strip is too constrained to accommodate and sustain the trees and hedgerow planting necessary to form an effective and durable visual and acoustic screen; planting confined within so restricted a space is liable to fail to establish or to be lost over time. A buffer of this nature cannot be an incidental by-product of a tightly drawn layout; it requires a defined and adequately dimensioned landscaped zone. The failure to provide it is contrary to Policy CP3(f) and to Policy CC03 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, which seeks the provision and long-term retention of green infrastructure, trees and landscaping as an integral part of development.

The revised layout prepared on our clients’ behalf

To demonstrate that the necessary improvement is deliverable, we have prepared a revised layout, which is reproduced below. It adjusts development within the site so as to establish a continuous, properly dimensioned landscaped buffer along the eastern boundary with Canberra Lake Way and northern boundary with The Hawthorns.

The revised layout materially increases the separation and screening to our clients’ properties at 22 and 23, to the other dwellings immediately adjacent, and to the properties further to the north, while retaining the full complement of 75 dwellings and the developable area of the scheme.

The landscape and biodiversity effect of the revised layout is positive overall. As the plan shows, the new arrangement creates substantial additional greenspace and tree and hedgerow planting (shown in green), principally in the form of the enhanced boundary buffers. It would involve the removal of only a small number of trees (shown in red), which are of limited size, and the new planting created comfortably exceeds the planting lost, resulting in a net gain in greenspace and tree cover and ample space for mitigation planting. The limited tree removal would, moreover, be further reduced at the detailed design stage, including through the modest garden-depth adjustments described below, which provide the necessary flexibility to refine the layout around the trees worth retaining.

The revised layout is also deliverable in highway and access terms. The internal road geometry has been prepared with regard to vehicle tracking, and where any junction requires it there is space to widen the turning radius to accommodate the swept paths of refuse and emergency vehicles. The amendment we seek therefore raises no impediment of access or highway safety.

Over-provision of private garden depth at the expense of the buffer

The space required to provide the buffer and avoid tree removals exists within the applicant’s own layout. The applicant’s Garden Depths and Areas Plan classifies the rear gardens of the scheme against the Council’s minimum garden-depth standard, identifying gardens of approximately 11 metres as complying with the minimum, gardens of 12 to 14 metres as exceeding it, and gardens of 14 metres or more as significantly exceeding it.

On the applicant’s own plan, for example, Plots 41 to 43 and Plots 25 and 26 are shown with rear gardens of 14 metres or more, significantly exceeding the minimum. As such a layout that achieves a reasonable buffer and safeguards the existing trees can be achieved here while retaining compliant 11m gardens.

We do not suggest that generous gardens are an issue in themselves. The point is one of design balance, and of flexibility. The applicant has allocated substantial garden depth, far in excess of the adopted minimum, to new private occupiers while leaving established neighbours with an inadequate separation and no effective buffer. That distribution does not represent the high quality of design or the protection of neighbouring amenity required by Policy CP3, does not accord with the Borough Design Guide’s

requirement for a greater degree of separation where new development abuts existing homes, and is inconsistent with Policy CHARVIL 4, which requires plot depths and development form to respect the established low-density character of Charvil. Importantly, this surplus depth also provides headroom for detailed design: the modest reductions in over-deep garden depth referred to above would allow the layout to be fine-tuned so as to minimise tree removal while still delivering the buffer.



Revised layout prepared by Planning Voice on behalf of 22 and 23 Canberra Lake Way (green: greenspace/tree planting created; red: small trees lost).

Harm to the residential amenity of 22 and 23 Canberra Lake Way

Independently of the buffer, the disposition of the plots closest to the boundary in the submitted scheme causes a direct loss of amenity to our clients' properties. The footprints of the dwellings on Plots 25 and 26 are angled relative to the common boundary, presenting their corners towards our clients' dwellings and gardens. The effect is an overbearing relationship and a loss of outlook, most acute at the corner plot, aggravated by the absence of the screen planting discussed above. The separation provided falls short of the standard the Borough Design Guide expects, still less the "greater distance" the SPD requires at a sensitive interface with existing homes.

These impacts are contrary to Policy CP3(a) and to Requirement R15 of the Borough Design Guide. They are also contrary to the Charvil Neighbourhood Plan: Policy CHARVIL 3 (Design of New Development) requires proposals to maintain a sympathetic relationship to existing development in terms of scale, building orientation, building line and setback, in accordance with design code MS02. A layout that turns angled building corners towards the established rear boundary of neighbouring dwellings, with an inadequate setback, is not a sympathetic response and does not step the development down towards the boundary as that policy and code envisage. The revised layout, by contrast, achieves that stepping down and a sympathetic building line.

Reduction in separation since the pre-application proposals

We are also concerned that the separation between the development and our clients' boundary in the submitted layout has been reduced compared with the arrangement shown to residents at the pre-application stage. Rather than responding to the concerns raised by affected residents, the layout now before the Council places built form closer to the boundary than the earlier proposals did. That worsening of the relationship at this sensitive interface, in the direction opposite to that which the Borough Design Guide requires, weighs further against the scheme as drawn.

Inadequate landscape specification, management and boundary treatment

The submitted material does not demonstrate that the boundary treatment and landscaping will be delivered and maintained to an acceptable standard. No detailed, scaled landscape specification has been provided identifying the species, planting densities and soil depths for this boundary, and the masterplan shading alone does not enable a proper assessment of whether effective screening can be achieved. Nor is there any binding long-term management and maintenance strategy, or any defined ownership and boundary-treatment regime, for the strip of land along the boundary; absent such provision there can be no confidence that planting will be retained rather than cleared or enclosed by future occupiers. This is contrary to Policy CC03 and to the requirement in Policy CP3 for a high quality of design that integrates with existing dwellings through appropriate and durable landscaping.

The amendment is feasible, deliverable and involves no loss of dwellings

The harm we have identified is avoidable, and the revised layout shows how. The amendment combines a re-distribution of built form within the site with the reduction of the over-deep boundary gardens towards the adopted minimum, the land so released being allocated to a properly dimensioned planted buffer. It involves no net loss of dwellings, consistent with Policy CP3(i), and it delivers a net gain in greenspace and tree cover.

In advancing the revised layout, we are mindful of the role that an alternative scheme plays in planning law. As the Court of Appeal confirmed in *R v Westminster City Council ex parte Mount Cook Land Ltd* [2003] EWCA Civ 1346 (applying *R (Scott) v North Warwickshire Borough Council*), the relative merits of an alternative are normally immaterial where a proposal is itself acceptable, and become material only in the case where the proposal gives rise to a clear planning objection and the alternative is not vague or speculative but has a real prospect of implementation.

We respectfully argue that this is such a case. The submitted layout gives rise to a clear and demonstrable conflict with the adopted development plan and the Borough Design Guide for the reasons given above; and the revised layout is concrete, lies wholly within the applicant's own site and control, and retains the full development quantum, such that there is a real prospect of its implementation if the layout were required

to be amended. The existence of that feasible and less harmful alternative is accordingly a material consideration going to the weight to be attached to the identified harm and to whether it is necessary. We respectfully invite the Council, which is able to do so at this Reserved Matters stage, to require the amendment rather than approve a layout that entrenches an avoidable harm.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, the Reserved Matters layout as submitted fails to provide an effective landscaped buffer, over-provides private garden depth in the very location where a buffer and greater separation are required, gives rise to an overbearing relationship and loss of outlook to 22 and 23 Canberra Lake Way (as well as in relation to other dwellings), reduces the separation previously shown to residents, and is unsupported by any adequate landscape specification or management strategy. It is contrary to Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy, Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, Policies CHARVIL 3 and CHARVIL 4 of the Charvil Neighbourhood Plan, and Requirement R15 and the separation standards of the Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD.

We therefore object, on our clients' behalf, to the application in its current form. We do not ask the Council to refuse the principle of development, but to require the applicant to submit an amended layout — along the lines of the revised layout enclosed — which re-establishes a properly dimensioned landscaped buffer along the Canberra Lake Way boundary, by re-distributing built form within the site and reducing the over-deep boundary gardens to the adopted minimum, together with a detailed and enforceable landscape and management specification for that boundary. We would be grateful to be notified of the Council's decision in due course.

Kind regards,

Planning Voice Chartered Town Planners

on behalf of the owners and occupiers of 22 and 23 Canberra Lake Way, Charvil