

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261132
Site Address:	Land Adjacent to Hucklebury, Waingels Road, Charvil, RG10 0UA
Expiry Date:	10 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	1 July 2026
Proposal: Permission in principle application for the proposed erection of a maximum of 6 no. dwellings (or a minimum of 4 no. dwellings) including formation of access from Waingels Road.	

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping TB05 – Housing Mix TB21 – Landscape Character TB22 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS4 – Development within or adjacent to minor settlements SS5 – Development in the countryside SS10 – Meeting our housing needs H1 – Housing mix, density and standards H12 – Residential development of existing private gardens NE6 – Valued landscapes NE7 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value
Other	Charvil Neighbourhood Plan

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
Full planning history of the site can be viewed on the Council's website; relevant applications are outlined below.		
241688	Full application for proposed 5 bed detached dwelling with associated parking and landscaping.	Refused 11/09/2024. Appeal Dismissed 22/07/2025
182351	Application for a non-material amendment for planning consent 160902 to allow repositioning of the garage from the eastern to western boundary.	Refused 26/09/2018
181858	Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey side / rear extension following demolition of the existing conservatory.	Approved 31/08/2018
180888	Application to vary condition 2 following grant of planning consent (160902 - APP/X0360/W/16/3154876) for the proposed erection of single dwelling with triple garage and associated access. Condition 2 relates to allow changes from drainage mains to septic tank.	Approved 11/05/2018
160902	Full planning application for the erection of single dwelling, with triple garage and associated access.	Refused 31/05/2016 Appeal Allowed 09/12/2016
110927	Erection of two storey rear/single storey side extension to dwelling following removal of existing conservatory.	Refused 17/08/2011
091485	Proposed erection of three bay garage block	Refused 19/12/2009
072656	Application for a Certificate of Lawfulness for the proposed erection of detached building to be used as a games room ancillary to the use of the main dwelling.	Approved 16/10/2007
062325	Proposed erection of detached games room.	Refused 11/04/2006
062670	Application for a certificate of lawful proposed use for the erection of games room/function room within residential curtilage of dwelling.	Refused 15/01/2007
041454	Outline application for the erection of one dwelling and detached garage.	Refused 14/12/2004

		Appeal Dismissed 22/06/2005
011157	Proposed erection of new stable building to replace existing.	Approved 21/12/2001
011678	Proposed erection of new dwelling. Demolition of existing dwelling and outhouses. (Amendment to consent 2000/0465)	Approved 09/05/2001
970187	Proposed Erection of One Dwelling	Refused 05/01/1998

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health - No objection
 WBC Drainage – No objection
 WBC Highways – No objection
 WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Community Infrastructure) – No comments received
 WBC Landscape and Trees – Objection – discussed in report
 WBC CIL – No objection
 WBC Ecology Newts – No objection
 WBC Ecology – No objection
 WBC Waste Services – No response received
 WBC Cleaner and Greener – No response received
 WBC Green Infrastructure – No objection

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No response received

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Woodley Town Council – No objection Charvil Parish Council – Objection (comments summarised as follows): • Site lies outside settlement limits and within the gap between Woodley and Charvil. • Development would harm the character of the area and reduce the separation between settlements. • Proposal conflicts with Policies CP9, CP11 and Charvil Neighbourhood Plan policies. • Site is not considered sustainable due to distance from services and reliance on the private car. • Concerns regarding pedestrian accessibility and the quality of walking routes. • Reference to the dismissed Huckleberry appeal and the Inspector's conclusions regarding suitability of the location.
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	• The site comprises paddock and garden land and is considered undeveloped countryside. • Four to six dwellings would cause greater harm than the previously refused single dwelling. • Development is considered out of keeping with the character of the area and would not support active travel.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	• The site lies outside settlement limits within the countryside and the green gap between Woodley and Charvil and is therefore considered an inappropriate location for development. • The proposal would erode the rural character of the area and reduce the separation between settlements. • The development is considered out of keeping with the prevailing low-density character of the locality. • The proposal represents overdevelopment of the site, including when considered cumulatively with nearby approved development. • Highway safety concerns, including increased traffic and turning movements on Waingels Road and Beggars Hill Road. • Poor visibility, constrained access arrangements and concerns regarding the adequacy of the proposed internal access road. • Limited pedestrian infrastructure, including a narrow footway and lack of safe crossing provision. • The location is unsustainable due to limited access to services and the absence of public transport, leading to reliance on private cars. • Concerns regarding the adequacy of drainage infrastructure, including the absence of mains drainage and reliance on septic tanks. • Concerns regarding the capacity and reliability of utilities, including electricity supply and absence of mains gas. • Potential impacts on biodiversity and wildlife habitat, including land described as forming part of an ecological corridor and proximity to ancient woodland. • Concerns regarding the loss of trees and impact on the natural environment. • Impact on neighbouring amenity, including loss of privacy, outlook and light. • Reference to a previous refusal and dismissed appeal, with concerns that the same issues remain applicable. • Cumulative impact of development in the locality and incremental loss of open land.

	• Concerns regarding lack of affordable housing within the proposal. • General concerns regarding infrastructure capacity and pressure on local services. • Impact on Ancient Woodland • Objections noting that the proposal would primarily benefit the landowner and future occupiers.
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APPRAISAL

Procedural Matters:

The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second (“Technical Details Consent”) stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.

The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted.

The PPG requires the amount of proposed development to be expressed as a range. In this case, the proposed range is 4 to 6 dwellings.

Officers have taken into account the submitted Planning Statement in the assessment of this application.

Site Description:

The application site comprises multiple parcels of land on the southern side of Waingels Road, Charvil, which together create an irregularly shaped plot. The site contains a mixture of open grassland used as a paddock, paddocks/agricultural land located to the rear of Huckleberry and Hilliary House, a small area of hardstanding including two buildings, and some scrubland.

The northern section of the site relates to an open field used for horse grazing, located along the south-eastern side of Waingels Road. A previous Inspector described this section of the site as follows:

“The appeal site is situated on the southern side of Waingels Road, outside the development limits of Woodley and Charvil, within the open countryside. It is currently used as a grazing field for horses. A post and rail fence marks the boundary of the site and separates it from the adjacent dwellings.”

The south-eastern part of the site contains an area of hardstanding and two buildings. Whilst limited planning history has been identified relating to those structures, aerial imagery indicates that they have likely been present on the site for a period in excess of ten years. The Council’s records indicate that the land to the rear of Huckleberry has

a lawful use as a paddock, as this is annotated on the proposed plans when that house was erected. The land to the rear of Hilliary House displays characteristics associated with both domestic and agricultural use and its precise lawful use has not been demonstrated.

The southern boundary adjoins mature vegetation associated with Norris Copse and the adjacent lake.



Aerial View showing approximate site boundary outlined in red.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The starting point for decision making is the development plan. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy and Policy CC02 of the MDD Local Plan establish the Borough's spatial strategy and define development limits. The application site lies outside the defined settlement boundary and is therefore located within the countryside. The proposal is appreciably outside of and unconnected to any settlement and conflicts with the spatial strategy of the development plan.

Development proposals in the countryside must be assessed against Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy. The proposal comprises between 4 and 6 market dwellings and

does not fall within any of the exceptions set out in Policy CP11. It is therefore contrary to the development plan in principle. As explained later in this report, the proposal would also conflict with the aims and supporting text of Policy CP11, which seek to maintain the quality of the environment and prevent development in locations that are poorly related to facilities and services. However, it is noted that the development would not result in harmful impact on settlement separation, which is also an objective of Policy CP11.

A previous application on the northern section of the site for the erection of a 5-bed detached dwelling was refused in September 2024 (ref. 241688), the subsequent appeal (ref. APP/X0360/W/25/3359760) was dismissed in July 2025. The inspector dismissed the appeal in part because of the conflict with the development plan spatial strategy. They stated at para 16:

“Paragraph 232 of the Framework makes it clear that due weight should be given to existing policies according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. According to the Framework the creation of high quality and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning development process should achieve. It also seeks that developments are sympathetic to local character. Therefore, the conflict between the proposal and Policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6, CP9, CP11 and CP17 of the adopted Core Strategy, and Policies CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan should be given significant weight in this appeal.”

It is relevant to note that the appeal was dismissed when the tilted balance was engaged, as the Council’s five-year housing land supply position was 1.7 years. The current five-year housing land supply position is 2.5 years. Matters relating to housing land supply and the tilted balance are considered later in this report.

Overall, the proposal is contrary to the spatial strategy of the development plan and conflicts with policies CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy and Policy CC02 of the MDD Local Plan. The absence of a five-year housing land supply is a material consideration and is addressed later in this report.

In addition, the site would fall outside settlement limits in the Council’s emerging Local Plan Update. At no future point is the principle of residential development on the site supported by a strategic planning policy allocation. The Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023–2040: Proposed Submission Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Planning Inspector on Friday 28 February 2025. Part One hearing sessions were completed in November 2025 and Part Two hearing sessions finished on 10 July 2026. Adoption of the Plan is expected towards the end of 2026 or beginning of 2027.

With regard to the principle of development, the proposal is contrary to the development plan and the emerging Local Plan Update. It conflicts with the underlying aims of Policy CP11, which reflect sound planning principles consistent with the NPPF. Allowing the principle of development would also conflict with the recent dismissed appeal decision, which relates to a sizeable proportion of the application site.

Locational Sustainability:

Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy states *‘the scale of development proposals in Wokingham borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility.’*

Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy states:

“Planning permission will be granted for schemes that:

a) Provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice;

b) Are located where there are or will be at the time of development choices in the mode of transport available and which minimise the distance people need to travel;”

The supporting information in policy CP6 states:

“Paragraph 2.16 recognises that the borough has one of the highest car ownership rates of any English local authority. To reduce the likelihood that these vehicles will be used and to encourage modal shift, it is important to ensure all proposals achieve sustainable development’

‘To help achieve sustainable development, proposals likely to generate significant demands for travel movements should be located in areas with best access to existing good services. This means that people can have the widest range of choice in selecting transport modes and help reduce the use of the private car. The availability of good existing public transport services has been considered in drafting the strategy for the Borough.’

Walking is at the top of the movement hierarchy. The Borough Design Guide SPD and the National Design Guide (2019) both emphasise that sustainable, walkable neighbourhoods require local services and facilities to be within a 10-minute walk, approximately 800 metres.

The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) document *“Providing for journeys on foot”* advises that 400 metres is a desirable walking distance outside of city centres; 800 metres is stated as acceptable, and 1,200 metres is the preferred maximum. 2km is the preferred maximum for secondary schools, core employment areas and train stations. The document clarifies that the suggested walking distances are for pedestrians without mobility impairment. These distances are also cited in the Wokingham Highway guidance Living Streets.

Pedestrian and cycle access along Waingels Road is inconvenient due to the lack of suitable footways and dedicated cycle lanes. The footway outside the application site is only on one side of the road and falls below the minimum 2 metre width set out in Manual for Streets. This would provide insufficient space for pedestrians using walking aids, wheelchairs or pushchairs to pass each other comfortably. It would also require pedestrians to walk close to the carriageway, which would not provide a positive walking experience and would discourage walking. There is also no street lighting along Waingels Road, which would further deter future occupiers from walking rather than

using a car, particularly during the winter months when it gets dark earlier. Consequently, the infrastructure surrounding the site would be less than ideal for encouraging sustainable modes of transport.

It is also relevant to consider sustainability not simply by reference to walking distance to the edge of a settlement, but by reference to access to the facilities and services within those settlements. The local shops within Woodley are located further into the settlement than the defined policy edge and beyond the 800 metre distance referred to in national guidance for walkable neighbourhoods.

As set out above, a recent appeal decision in June 2025 (ref. APP/X0360/W/25/3359760) for a single dwelling was dismissed partly because of the site's poor locational sustainability. The parcel of land considered in that appeal now forms part of the current application site and includes the northern section. A location plan for the previously dismissed appeal is set out below:



APP/X0360/W/25/3359760 – Location Plan

The inspector stated in their decision letter:

“Consequently, the proposal would not be isolated. However, it would be located some distance away from many of the essential services or facilities that are required for day-to-day living. Furthermore, there is no designated footpath along the southern side of Waingels Road and no pedestrian crossing near the site. While there is a footpath on the northern side of the road, some sections are narrow due to the presence of street trees and telegraph poles. Given these constraints, occupiers of the appeal proposal would be unlikely to regularly use the footpath to access day-to-day services and facilities, particularly during the winter months when conditions are likely to be less accommodating. Consequently, the occupiers would be reliant on private vehicles rather than more sustainable modes of transport.”

The Inspector went on to conclude:

“Overall, I conclude that the appeal site would not be a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to the Council’s spatial strategy and to local and national policies regarding sustainable transport. The proposal would, therefore, be contrary to Policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6, CP9, CP11 and CP17 of the Core Strategy, and Policies CC01, CC02 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan. These policies seek, amongst other matters, to limit development in the open countryside and to direct the majority of new development to the settlements where services and facilities can be easily accessed.”

There have been no material changes to the physical attributes of the site that would warrant a different conclusion. The current application seeks permission for between 4 and 6 dwellings. Given the size and configuration of the site, it is likely that the majority of dwellings would be set back from the road frontage. This would result in walking distances to nearby facilities being increased beyond those assessed in the 2025 appeal, thereby exacerbating the identified sustainability concerns.

There are no bus stops along Waingels Road. CIHT guidance, *Buses in Urban Developments*, recommends a bus stop catchment of 300 metres for less frequent routes. There are no bus stops within or close to this walking distance.

An earlier appeal was allowed in 2016 for the erection of the property now called Huckleberry (ref: APP/X0360/W/16/3154876). The Inspector found that future occupiers would not be wholly reliant on private motorised transport and that the site broadly accorded with the travel objectives of Policies CP1, CP6 and CP11. Whilst the 2016 appeal found that future occupiers would not be wholly reliant on private motorised transport, significant weight must be afforded to the more recent appeal decision relating to land that forms part of the current application site and represents the most up-to-date assessment of the application site. In that case, the Inspector concluded that occupiers would be reliant on private vehicles rather than sustainable modes of transport. The 2016 decision predates the National Design Guide (2021) reference to a walkable Neighbourhood being 800m radius and the council’s Living Streets (2019) guidance.

A Permission in Principle application (ref. 250407) was approved at committee in May 2025. However, that site is located further along Waingels Road and closer to the settlement of Woodley. The appeal decision is more recent and represents the most up-to-date assessment of the sustainability of this site.

The Local Highway Authority has made observations regarding the location of the site and noted the conclusion of the 2016 appeal decision but did not identify the 2025 appeal decision on the application site. Given this omission, it is not considered that response reflects the most up-to-date assessment of the application site.

The sustainability of the site goes directly to the principle of development and it is not a matter that can be resolved as the Technical Details Consent stage.

Drawing these matters together, whilst the site is not isolated for the purposes of paragraph 84 of the NPPF, the evidence, including the recent appeal decision, demonstrates that future occupiers would be likely to rely on private vehicles to a

materially greater extent than would be the case at more sustainably located sites within the established settlement hierarchy. The limited quality and convenience of pedestrian routes, in particular, weighs significantly against the site.

Officers therefore conclude that the site represents a less sustainable location for residential development, and that the proposal conflicts with the aims of Policies CP6 and CP11, which seek to secure development in accessible locations that reduce reliance on private car travel.

Housing Land Supply:

Paragraph 78 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to identify and maintain a minimum five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The Council's latest Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement confirms that Wokingham Borough Council can currently demonstrate approximately 2.5 years of deliverable housing land supply.

Consequently, the policies most important for determining applications for housing development are considered out-of-date for the purposes of paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF and the tilted balance is engaged.

The proposal must therefore be assessed against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole, with the benefits of the proposal weighed against any identified harm through the overall planning balance. This is revisited in the concluding section of this report.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the impact on character and appearance of the area:

Core Strategy Policy CP1, Sustainable Development, states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that “maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment”. The supporting text recognises the community’s value of the Borough’s high-quality environment. Core Strategy Policy CP3, General Principles for Development, states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are appropriate in scale, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character for the area.

As set out above, Core Strategy Policy CP11, Proposals Outside Development Limits, seeks to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, except where one of the listed exceptions applies.

Policy CC03, Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping, of the MDD Local Plan states that development proposals resulting in the loss, fragmentation or isolation of green infrastructure will not be acceptable. The supporting text explains that green infrastructure includes countryside.

MDD Local Plan Policy TB21, Landscape Character, states that proposals should retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape. The policy also requires proposals to address the Council’s Landscape Character Assessment.

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, among other matters, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. This applies directly to the determination of this application and is also reflected in the relevant development plan policies and the absence of any allocation for the site in the emerging Local Plan Update.

The northern part of the site comprises open paddock land and was previously considered under appeal ref. APP/X0360/W/25/3359760. The south-eastern part of the site contains an area of hardstanding and two buildings. Whilst limited planning history has been identified for those structures, aerial imagery indicates that they have likely been present on the site for more than ten years. The Council's records indicate that the land to the rear of Huckleberry has a lawful use as paddock land, as this is annotated on the approved plans for that dwelling. The land to the rear of Hillray House displays characteristics associated with both domestic and agricultural use, and its precise lawful use has not been demonstrated. However, nothing turns on this distinction for the purposes of the current assessment.

The site comprises several parcels with differing characteristics. Broadly, the northern land has a more open and rural character, whereas the southern land is more enclosed and influenced by existing development. However, paragraph 187 of the NPPF is clear that development should contribute to and enhance the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The application site is located within the eastern part of the Woodley–Earley Settled and Farmed Clay Landscape Character Area. The Landscape Character Assessment describes this character area as densely settled, with a strong urban and suburban character. Part of the landscape strategy is to conserve and enhance the character of the landscape between settlements.

The Council's Landscape Officer has objected to the proposal. The Landscape Officer identifies the site as being within the countryside and notes its relationship with the River Loddon Valued Landscape, Norris Copse and the surrounding landscape character areas. The Landscape Officer considers that the site contributes to the wider landscape context and that residential development would harm landscape character.

The land considered under appeal ref. APP/X0360/W/25/3359760 was found by the Inspector to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area through its open and rural character. The decision letter described the impact as follows:

“The appeal site is one of a number of undeveloped fields in the vicinity. Its open nature and rural character offer a pleasant visual break between the surrounding countryside and areas of built form. As such, it makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

While there are some mature trees along Waingels Road and Beggars Hill Road, the appeal site is visible from Beggars Hill Road. Whilst the house would be near to existing residential properties, it would not be an infill site as suggested by the appellant, as it would lie behind the rear boundary of Malma. Given this location,

and the fact that the site is partially surrounded by open fields, the proposal would result in an incongruous feature that would undermine the prevailing rural character of the area. The adverse effect would be exacerbated by the substantial scale of the proposed buildings and the domestic paraphernalia that would be associated with the new dwelling. I acknowledge that the design and materials are similar to the adjacent dwelling, Huckleberry, but this does not overcome the harm identified.

Overall, I conclude that the proposed development would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area. This would be contrary to Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, and Policies CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan. Taken together, these seek to ensure that development is designed to the highest standard and to respect the character of the area.”

Significant weight is afforded to the Inspector's findings in appeal ref. APP/X0360/W/25/3359760, which relates to land within the northern part of the application site. In that case, the Inspector found that the paddock forms part of a wider pattern of undeveloped fields and that its open and rural character provides a valuable visual break between built form and the surrounding countryside. The Inspector concluded that development would represent an incongruous and urbanising feature that would undermine the prevailing rural character of the area and have an unacceptable effect on its character and appearance. There have been no material changes to the site or its surroundings since that decision, and the Inspector's conclusions remain directly relevant and carry substantial weight.

Whilst the Inspector referred to the scale and form of development as exacerbating factors, the harm identified was not contingent on these details but arose from the principle of introducing residential development into an area that performs an important role as open countryside. As such, even if a smaller or differently configured scheme were proposed at the Technical Details Consent stage, the fundamental objection would remain, as it relates to the loss of this positive contribution to the landscape rather than the specific form of development.

The current application relates to a materially larger site, which includes the paddock land assessed by the Inspector, together with land to the south containing hardstanding, existing buildings and other open land that was not directly considered in the previous appeal. The southern land is more enclosed and makes a lesser contribution to the rural character of the area. As a result, the harm arising from development on the southern part of the site would be less pronounced. However, the inclusion of the northern paddock remains a fundamental concern, as this parcel has already been found to make a positive contribution to the rural character of the area. The proposal would introduce built form into this open area, eroding its role as a visual and spatial break and introducing an urbanising influence into the countryside.

Although detailed matters such as layout, appearance and landscaping are reserved for Technical Details Consent, the effect of the proposed location, land use and amount of development can be assessed at Permission in Principle stage. The proposal seeks permission in principle for between 4 and 6 dwellings. The resulting harm to the character and appearance of the area could not be overcome entirely at Technical

Details Consent stage, particularly given the NPPF's reference to the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The application is for up to 6 dwellings. Based on a site area of approximately 0.7 hectares, this would equate to around 8.5 dwellings per hectare.

The dwellings along Waingels Road are characterised by large houses set within very generous plots, at a density of approximately 3.46 dwellings per hectare. The proposed backland development would inevitably have a finer grain and different character, which would be somewhat at odds with the linear pattern of residential development along the road frontage.

The approved development to the south-west for 9 dwellings has a site area of approximately 0.95 hectares, resulting in a density of around 9.5 dwellings per hectare. The density and resulting grain of development would be more similar to that permission. However, the current application differs because parts of the site, particularly the northern section, would encroach more harmfully into existing undeveloped open countryside.

In conclusion, the development would harm the character and appearance of the area, which forms part of the countryside, and would have a greater urbanising influence than the existing pattern of development. It is acknowledged that the site has a mixed character and that development of the southern section would be less harmful than development of the northern part. However, the lesser harm associated with the more enclosed parts of the site does not overcome the harm arising from development of the more open northern land. Accordingly, the proposal would be contrary to Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, and Policies CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to impact on neighbouring amenity:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development shall be without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users.

This application seeks Permission in Principle only. Matters relating to layout, scale, appearance, landscaping and the precise position of buildings are not under consideration at this stage and would be assessed as part of any subsequent Technical Details Consent application.

Development of the site would require a long access drive running through it, creating an awkward relationship between the private rear garden of Huckleberry and a more publicly used access route. Avoiding such conflict between private and public areas is a well-established urban design principle. However, traffic levels would be low and the access is likely to function more like a private drive than a public road. Given the shape of the site, this issue could not be fully resolved at Technical Details Consent stage. Although this is a weakness of the proposal, it is not determinative.

There is no evidence at this stage that a development of up to six houses could not be designed to maintain the amenity of neighbouring residents with regard to overbearing, loss of light and privacy.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to flooding and drainage:

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1. There are no areas of surface water flooding on the site. The site is within an area where groundwater levels are between 0.025m - 0.5m and 0.5m - 5m below the ground surface. Within this area there is a risk of flooding to subsurface assets but surface manifestation of groundwater is unlikely. The site is therefore not within an area of flood risk that would trigger a requirement for a sequential test.

Further information relating to drainage design, groundwater monitoring, SuDS and long-term management arrangements has been requested by the Council's Drainage Officer. These matters relate to the detailed design of the development and would be considered at the Technical Details Consent stage.

Therefore, whilst groundwater levels represent a site constraint which will require further assessment, officers raise no objection to the proposed location, land use and amount of development in relation to flood risk at Permission in Principle stage.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the highway network:

Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure development does not result in highway problems and promotes sustainable travel.

The Highway Authority has reviewed the application having regard to the limited scope of Permission in Principle and raises no objection on technical highway matters. The Highway Authority also advises that the traffic associated with up to 6 dwellings would not have a significant impact on the wider highway network.

Matters relating to access arrangements, parking provision and detailed highway design fall outside the scope of the current application and would be considered at Technical Details Consent stage.

Accordingly, the proposed location, land use and amount of development are considered acceptable in relation to highway matters.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the natural environment (trees and ecology):

Policy CC03 of the MDD seeks to protect existing green infrastructure, trees and landscaping. Policy TB23 seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity.

The application site adjoins Norris Copse Bird Sanctuary, a Local Wildlife Site containing priority lowland deciduous woodland. The Ecology Officer advises that the

site itself does not contain priority habitat but that an appropriate buffer should be maintained between development and the adjoining Local Wildlife Site.

The Ecology Officer considers that the indicative 6 dwelling arrangement submitted with the application would not provide an adequate buffer to the adjacent woodland. However, the application seeks Permission in Principle for a minimum of 4 and maximum of 6 dwellings. The Ecology Officer concludes that a development of 4 dwellings would allow for an appropriate buffer and is acceptable in principle, with detailed ecological matters considered at Technical Details Consent stage.

Subject to the detailed design of any future proposal, officers do not consider that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that residential development of the site is unacceptable in principle on ecological or arboricultural grounds. However, the Ecology Officer's comments indicate that the upper end of the development range may constrain the ability to provide an appropriate ecological buffer. Detailed consideration of this matter would take place at Technical Details Consent stage.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to Environmental Health:

The Environmental Health Officer raises no objection in principle to the proposed development. Whilst the site lies within a landfill gas consultation zone and a radon affected area; Environmental Health considers these matters can be investigated and addressed through appropriate assessment and mitigation measures at the Technical Details Consent stage. Environmental Health also raises no concerns regarding noise, air quality or lighting arising from a development of this scale.

Accordingly, the location, land use and amount of development are considered acceptable in relation to Environmental Health considerations at Permission in Principle stage.

Planning Balance:

The application site lies outside the defined settlement boundary and is therefore located within the countryside. It is not adjacent to, or well-related to, any defined settlement limits and is therefore contrary to the spatial strategy of the development plan. The proposal does not fall within any of the exceptions set out within Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and is therefore unacceptable in principle. The proposal would also fail to meet key objectives of Policy CP11 in that it would not maintain the quality of the environment and would result in development in a location where future occupiers would be reliant on private motor vehicles. However, it is acknowledged that the development would not undermine the separate identity of settlements.

The site would also lie outside the defined settlement limits in the emerging Local Plan Update and would similarly conflict with the LPU spatial strategy. While the emerging plan is afforded limited to moderate weight, it nonetheless demonstrates a consistent and continued policy approach that does not identify the site as suitable for residential development. This reinforces the conflict with the adopted development plan and weighs against the proposal.

Consistent with the appeal decision on the site, the site is not a good sustainable location for residential development. Whilst it is not isolated, future occupiers would rely on private vehicles for services and facilities. This would be contrary to the aims of Policies CP6, CP9 and CP11, which seek to direct development to accessible locations that offer a genuine choice of transport modes.

In respect of character and appearance, the proposal would result in harm to the countryside. The Council's Landscape Officer has objected to the development in principle, and a recent appeal decision (APP/X0360/W/25/3359760) found that residential development on the northern part of the site would result in unacceptable harm through the loss of a parcel of land that contributes positively to the rural character and acts as a visual break. While the southern part of the site is more enclosed and would result in a lesser degree of harm, this does not outweigh the harm arising from the development of the northern parcel. The proposal would therefore have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the countryside, contrary to Policies CP1, CP3, CC03 and TB21.

Significant weight is afforded to the findings of the Inspector under appeal APP/X0360/W/25/3359760. The Inspector identified conflict with the spatial strategy, an unsustainable location and harm to the character and appearance of the countryside, all of which go directly to the acceptability of development in principle. The appeal site forms part of the current application site and there have been no material changes in circumstances that warrant a different conclusion. As such, the Inspector's conclusions represent the most up-to-date assessment of development on this land and carry substantial weight. In the absence of any material change, a consistent conclusion should be reached.

The identified harm arises from the location and use of the land itself and cannot be mitigated through detailed design at the Technical Details Consent stage. This is a fundamental consideration at Permission in Principle stage.

The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land (approximately 2.5 years), and therefore paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged and the tilted balance applies.

The proposal would deliver between 4 and 6 dwellings, which would contribute to housing supply at a time of significant shortfall. The proposal would also generate some economic benefits during construction and through ongoing expenditure by future occupiers. However, these benefits are limited in scale and are afforded limited weight. The previous inspector gave these benefits limited weight. The current application is for a greater number of dwellings, but this does not increase the weight to these benefits significantly, or to the extent that would have changed the overall planning balance, the council's housing land supply position has also improved since this appeal, albeit the shortfall is still substantial.

The Planning Statement refers to self-build plots but this would be a technical matter and cannot be secured at the first stage of a permission in principle. No conditions or legal agreement can be imposed or tied to this first-stage application. In addition, the Council Topic Paper on Self-build and Custom Housebuilding lists the number of people who joined Part 1 of the self-build register between 1 April 2016 and 30 October

2023, which totalled 97. Table 2 of the paper highlights that the Council permitted 250 self-build CIL exemptions within the same period, which is significantly greater than those on the register.

Taking all matters into account, and applying the tilted balance, the adverse impacts arising from the permission in principle, namely the conflict with the spatial strategy, the unsustainable location and reliance on private vehicle use, and the harm to the character and appearance of the countryside, are of sufficient magnitude that they significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Reasons for refusal:

The permission in principle is contrary to the development plan and the NPPF and would result in material harm for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development is outside of and unrelated to any development limits and within the countryside, contrary to the spatial strategy and objectives of the development plan and to Policies CP1, CP3, CP6, CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, Policies CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan and sections 2, 4, 9 and 15 of the NPPF.
2. The application site is within an unsustainable location that would not encourage a modal shift towards sustainable modes of transport, by reason of the countryside location outside of settlement limits, distances to facilities and services, lack of public transport links and poor quality of the walking/cycling environment, contrary to Policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, Policies CC01 and CC02 of the MDD Local Plan and sections 8 and 9 of the NPPF.
3. The proposed development would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area, by reason of the loss of undeveloped open green land within the countryside that contributes positively to the rural character and

appearance of the area, contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, and Policies CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment and section 15 of the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed: Not required

Recommendation: Refuse

Date: 3 July 2026

Earliest date for decision: 30 June 2026

**Recommendation
agreed by:
(Authorised Officer)**

MC

Date: 10.07.2026