

PLANNING STATEMENT

Site Location: Land West of Edneys Hill, Barkham Hill

Proposal: Erection of 16 houses and apartments,
with new access, footpaths, car ports,
parking and landscaping



Abbeymill Homes

ESTABLISHED 1991

JUNE 2025

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Appendices

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Appendix 5 - Committee Report for Application no. 241567

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application, for development of land west of Edneys Hill, Barkham Hill. The full description of development comprises the following:

“Erection of 16 houses and apartments with the construction of a new access off Edneys Hill, alongside footpaths, car ports, parking, landscaping and all enabling works”.

- 1.2 The application site lies within the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council, in the county of Berkshire.
- 1.3 The site lies on the south western edge of the settlement of Barkham Hill, west of Wokingham town centre. It is a grazing field which adjoins the Barkham Road and is contained by existing residential development on three sides.
- 1.4 Barkham Hill is considered a location where ‘limited development’ to support the vitality of existing local services will be appropriate.
- 1.5 This application has been prepared by Abbeymill Homes who are medium sized developer based in Buckinghamshire, and specialise in delivering high quality bespoke developments often located on the edge of existing settlements. The company adopts a selective approach towards site selection seeking prime residential locations where it can create high quality residential schemes of a sympathetic architectural design, that make a positive contribution towards the character of an area.
- 1.6 In support of this application, a Design and Access Statement has been prepared which has informed the preparation of the planning application.
- 1.7 The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate how the proposal accords with the relevant policies of the development plan, together with national planning guidance. The document has been structured with Section 2 identifying the ‘Site and Surrounding Area’, followed by Section 3 which seeks to explain the ‘Planning History’ of the site. Section 4 describes the ‘Proposal’, whilst Section 5 establishes the

‘Planning Policy Context’ of the development, ‘Planning Considerations’ of the development are explored in Section 6 and the statement concludes with a ‘Summary and Conclusion’ in Section 7.

2.0 The Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The application site consists of a modest sized field on the south western extent of the settlement of Barkham Hill. It forms pasture land which is not currently being actively grazed.
- 2.2 The site contains no existing structures and is largely open land, but has well screened boundaries to the north with Barkham Road, and east with Edneys Hill. Its boundaries to the west and south are more open with more landscaping to the south including a specifically protected tree just beyond the boundary.
- 2.3 A marked variation in levels exists across the site with a fall from the north west to the south east toward Edney Hill. The variation in levels amounts to circa 8m.
- 2.4 The site extends to 0.7 ha and a site location plan confirming its extent is included at **Appendix 1**. Access into the site is via Barkham Road to the north which includes a bus stop layby on this boundary.
- 2.5 The surroundings of the site is predominantly residential in character, with dwellings to the immediate east, west and north of the application site. To the south is open land followed by a dwelling and collection of large framed outbuildings.
- 2.6 The properties in the surrounding area are in the main large, detached two storey dwellings. Development along the Barkham Road is post war in origin with a wide range of architectural designs and mix of materials.
- 2.7 The settlement pattern in this part of Barkham Hill comprises both in depth and a linear arrangement of properties arranged along the Barkham Road. To the immediate east is line of properties which face onto this road but with a further arrangement of properties set behind them. This depth of development aligns with the southern boundary of the application site.
- 2.8 The extensive landscape structure along the main public corridors to the north and east, ensure views into the site are limited.

- 2.9 Barkham Hill offers a range of local services including a store, post office, public house and recreation ground. It is also on a main public transport corridor with regular bus services linking to nearby Wokingham town centre
- 2.10 In this respect, the application site is located in a sustainable location for new development.

3.0 Planning History

- 3.1 A search of Wokingham Borough Council's online planning database has confirmed that the site has previously been the subject of a number of planning applications for residential development. Table 1 below confirms the detail of the relevant applications.

Table 1: Planning Applications on Land West of Edney's Hill

APPLICATION DATE	APPLICATION	DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL	DECISION
27 th February 2008	F/2008/0172	Proposed change of use of land from agricultural to residential garden. Retrospective	Refused
24 th May 2016	L161412	Outline application for the proposed erection of 8no custom-build dwellings with associated garages and access off Edney's Hill (access and layout to be considered).	Refused
17 th August 2016	L162084	Outline application for the proposed erection of 5no custom-build dwellings with associated access off Edney's Hill (access and layout to be considered)	Refused
28 th June 2017	L171276	Application for outline consent for an access road to serve 5 serviced custom build plots (Access to be considered)	Refused

- 3.2 These proposals for self-build plots were all outline planning applications with the majority of reserved matters to be determined at a later date. The LPA refused each of these applications and the appellant appealed these decisions.

- 3.3 All of the appeals were dismissed with the key concerns relating to harm toward the character and appearance of the area, ecological considerations and unsuitable living conditions for future occupiers. In each case, the Inspectors considered that the benefits of the proposals were outweighed by identifiable harm.
- 3.4 The two applications in 2016 (Application Refs: L161412 and L162084) were co-joined for the appeal, with a copy of the appeal decision included at **Appendix 2**. Both were dismissed due to concerns over harm to the character and appearance of the area as well as a lack of provision of affordable homes and unsuitable living conditions for one of the proposed plots.
- 3.5 More specifically on the character and appearance concerns, the Inspector considered that the developments would harm the rural character of the area. Such harm was considered to be amplified by the arrangement of the properties which had side or rear aspects onto Barkham Road, rather than front facing aspects.
- 3.6 Similar concerns arose with a further appeal decision in 2018 (copy included at **Appendix 3**) for application ref: L171276 for 5 custom build plots. As with the previous applications, the level of detail and supporting information was lacking with the Inspector concerned over harm to the open character of the site and the urbanising effect of close board fencing around the site and a new shared access road. The appeal was dismissed due to a combination of harm to the character of the area and ecology related concerns.

4.0 The Proposal

- 4.1 This proposal seeks full planning permission for the erection of 16 dwellings, including houses and flats, with a new access off Edney's Hill, together with footpaths, car ports, parking and landscaping across the site.
- 4.2 The proposal is a sensitively planned scheme which follows the established development pattern of this part of Barkham with properties arranged to face onto the Barkham Road, and depth of development sitting within the build line of Coppid Hill House to the west and its adjoining properties.
- 4.3 The proposed properties will comprise a mix of 1 and 2 bed flats, combined with 2 and 3 bed houses all in a two storey arrangement. A total of 6 units are to be offered as affordable homes in an agreed tenure split ensuring the application offers a wide range of housing opportunities.
- 4.4 The housing mix proposed within the scheme is detailed in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Proposed Housing Mix

DWELLING SIZE	MARKET HOUSING	AFFORDABLE HOUSING	TOTAL
1 Bed Flat	1	1	2
2 Bed Flat	2	2	4
2 Bed House	0	2	2
3 Bed House	7	1	8
Total	10	6	16

- 4.5 The proposed development pattern, plot sizes, orientation and development density is based upon a detailed analysis of the local context. The scale and massing of the proposed dwellings is in keeping with its immediate surroundings at two storeys with a traditional architectural design of the elevations.
- 4.6 The new houses will be built to a high design standard and utilising materials identifiable within the local vernacular. These include red facing brick on the

elevations with more limited use of black stained weatherboarding on the garages, with slate and plain tiles on the roof with integrated PV panels.

- 4.7 Properties have been purposely arranged to maximise overlooking of public spaces within the development site and outside, including the Barkham Road and access roads and open spaces. This natural surveillance across the site is important in discouraging anti-social behaviour.
- 4.8 Each dwellinghouse has been designed to provide a good level of private amenity space for residents with garden depths of circa 10m. Furthermore, the design of the proposed dwellings has fully considered the need to preserve the amenity of those existing properties on the western boundary through designing in appropriate separation distances and minimising windows on more sensitive elevations.
- 4.9 The new access off Edney's Hill will be constructed to adoptable standards, with a 5.5m width to ensure vehicles are able to safely enter and exit the site. A number of direct footpath connections are proposed to the pedestrian network on the Barkham Road, to encourage walking and cycling in the local area.
- 4.10 The existing landscape framework for the site is largely limited to the northern and eastern boundaries of the site where it adjoins existing roads. The scheme has been designed to maximise the retention of these trees and hedgerows with supplemental new planting to preserve the existing character and appearance of the area.

Benefits of the Scheme

- 4.11 This proposal will offer a number of material benefits that weigh in favour of the proposal, and identified as follows:
 - A windfall site that can be delivered relatively quickly to contribute towards the current housing land supply deficit in the district;
 - The proposal will fulfil a local housing need for those properties most in demand in the district. These include much needed affordable housing;
 - Supporting construction jobs in the short term;
 - The site occupies a sustainable location where the principle of residential development is appropriate;

- The site will complement the existing pattern of development and is sufficiently screened from public viewpoints in the surrounding area;
- It will facilitate the delivery of a biodiversity net gain through the creation of new onsite habitat opportunities, along with a modest offsite requirement;
- The development will help support the vitality and viability of the services and facilities in the area;
- It represents an important development opportunity for an SME developer providing wider housing choice than large scale national builder sites; and
- It will fulfil the social, environmental and economic objectives of sustainable development.

5.0 Planning Policy Context

5.1 This section of the Statement considers the relevant planning policy framework for the site having regard to the development proposal. It considers the statutory development plan, any emerging local planning policy guidance together with national planning policy.

5.2 Under the provisions of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, there is an obligation to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.3 The Government revised the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024 with this document acting as an overarching framework for the production of local policy documents and the consideration of development proposals. At the heart of the framework is the presumption in favour of sustainable development which should be a central consideration with both plan-making and decision-making.

5.4 The NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development which include economic, social and environmental considerations. It states that these roles should not be undertaken in isolation as they are mutually dependent.

5.5 An objective of the planning system as defined by the Framework at Paragraph 61 is to 'significantly' boost the supply of homes through ensuring that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forwards where needed and meet the needs of groups with specific housing requirements.

5.6 Paragraph 73 of the Framework recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution towards meeting the housing requirement of an area, are essential for SME housebuilders and can be built out relatively quickly.

5.7 In rural areas, Paragraph 82 of the Framework requires planning policies and decisions to be responsive to local circumstances and support developments that reflect local needs. Further, to promote sustainable development in rural areas housing should be

located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities as specified by Paragraph 83.

- 5.8 In relation to promoting sustainable transport, the framework recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas and that this should be considered in both plan-making and decision-making (Paragraph 110).
- 5.9 The framework encourages at Paragraph 124 the efficient use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses.

Development Plan

- 5.10 The development plan for the application site is formed of the Wokingham Core Strategy, the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan and the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan.

Wokingham Core Strategy (2010)

- 5.11 This Plan provides for the strategic direction of growth in the Borough up until 2026 and was adopted by the Council in July 2010.
- 5.12 Whilst the plan period is nearly out of date, its policies remain relevant for now and until superseded by a more up to date plan.
- 5.13 The spatial vision of the plan states that settlements such as Barkham Hill are suitable for limited development to support the vitality of existing local services.
- 5.14 Those policies within the Core Strategy considered to be relevant to this proposal are identified as follows:

Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) – seeks to ensure that planning permission is granted for development that is considered sustainable forms of development;

Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development) – planning permission will only be granted where appropriate infrastructure upgrades will be delivered;

Policy CP4 (Infrastructure Requirements) – requires all new development to be supported by appropriate on and off site infrastructure;

Policy CP5 (Housing Mix, Density and Affordability) – for all residential proposals involving proposals of at least 5 dwellings or a net site area of 0.16ha, affordable housing is required at 40% in the case of greenfield land at limited development locations;

Policy CP6 (Managing Travel Demand) – planning permission will be granted for schemes which provide for sustainable forms of transport, minimise the need to travel and provide appropriate vehicular parking;

Policy CP9 (Scale and location of Development Proposals) – the scale of development proposals should reflect their level of accessibility, with Barkham Hill considered a limited development location;

Policy CP11 (Proposals Outside Development Limits) – to protect the separate identity of settlements and quality of the environment, proposals outside of the development limits will not normally be permitted

Policy CP17 (Housing Delivery) – states that provision will be made for at least 13,230 dwellings in the period 2006-2026.

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan

- 5.11 This plan was adopted in 2014 and provides a development management framework for the period to 2026. Those policies considered relevant to this proposal are identified as follows:

Policy CC01 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) – specifies that proposals which accord with the development plan will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise;

Policy CC02 (Development Limits) – seeks to restrict proposals on the edge of settlements to being within the development limits;

Policy CC03 (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping) – requires development proposals to demonstrate that it will protect and enhance the Borough’s green infrastructure networks, including protecting and retaining existing trees and hedgerows.

Policy CC04 (Sustainable Design and Construction) – the policy requires new development to achieve high quality and sustainably designed new homes;

Policy CC09 (Development and Flood Risk) – requires all sources of flood risk to be taken into account in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding;

Policy CC10 (Sustainable Drainage) – all development should ensure surface water arising from a proposed development is managed in a sustainable manner;

Policy TB05 (Housing Mix) – residential proposals should include an appropriate housing mix which reflects the character of the area and local housing needs, with a proportion built to lifetime homes standards;

Policy TB07 (Internal Space Standards) – specifies minimum standards to ensure the internal layout and size are suitable to serve the amenity of future occupiers;

Policy TB21 (Landscape Character) – requires proposal to demonstrate how they address the Council’s Landscape Character Assessment, and retain and enhance the condition of existing landscape features;

Policy TB23 (Biodiversity and Development) – planning permission will only be granted where opportunities for new biodiversity features are incorporated and new development is ecologically permeable.

Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.12 This plan was adopted in 2020 and the application site lies beyond the settlement limits of Barkham Hill. It contains a number of policies relevant to this proposal as follows:

Policy IRS1 (Preservation of Separation of Settlements) – seeks to protect the separation of settlements with development proposals outside of the development limits required to preserve the character and appearance of the countryside and not lead to visual or perceived coalescence;

Policy IRS2 (Recognise, Respect and Preserve Identity and Rural Setting of Settlements) – requires development proposals to recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements;

Policy IRS3 (Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment and Green Spaces) – the policy aims for development proposals to conserve and enhance the natural environment and green spaces of the area;

Policy AD2 (Prioritise Housing for Local Needs) – new housing developments should demonstrate how the types of homes contribute toward a balanced mix of housing to meet housing needs;

Policy AD3 (High Quality Development with Generous Open Space, Properly Landscaped) – all new developments must reflect the rural character and historic context of existing dwellings within the plan area;

Policy AD4 (Address Local Flood Risk Management) – proposed development must ensure that the principles of flood risk management are adopted;

Policy GA1 (Minimise Additional Traffic on Unsuitable Roads) – development proposals should consider their impact on local roads and junctions in relation to road safety;

Other Material Considerations

Emerging Local Plan

- 5.13 The Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan for the Borough which will extend the plan period to 2040 once adopted. It identifies the need to deliver nearly 13,000 new homes between 2023 and 2040.
- 5.14 This plan has recently been submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination although a timetable for this has yet to be published.
- 5.15 The plan is currently subject to numerous unresolved objections and whilst this remains the case is of limited material weight in the determination of this application.

Housing Land Supply Statement

- 5.16 The Council's most recently published Housing Land Supply Position Statement for the Borough is dated January 2025 and covers the five year period 2024 – 2029. A copy is included at **Appendix 4**.
- 5.17 Against an annual requirement of 1,403 dwellings and inclusive of a 5% buffer, the Council identifies that it requires a five year supply of 7,014 new homes.
- 5.18 At present, the Council can only demonstrate that it maintains a supply of deliverable sites equivalent to 2,321 units, or 1.7 years supply. This represents a severe land supply shortfall, triggering the 'tilted balance' of Paragraph 11.d ii of the Framework when determining housing applications.

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance

- 5.19 A number of Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance adopted by the Council are of relevance to this application and include:
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2010)
 - Affordable Housing SPD (2013)
 - A Highways Guide for Developers in Wokingham (2019)
 - Open Space, Sports and Recreation Strategy (2013)
 - Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area Guidance

6 Planning Considerations

- 6.11 This section of the statement addresses the key planning issues that arise from the proposal. Such issues have been identified through a review of the planning policy framework that applies, together with an analysis of the local context of the site.

Principle of Development

- 6.12 The principle of development forms the initial consideration in assessing this proposal, with the site comprising an area of undeveloped land on the immediate edge of Barkham Hill.
- 6.13 Under the development plan, Barkham Hill is categorised as a 'limited development' settlement where new development should generally not exceed 25 dwellings. In policy terms, it is therefore recognised that the application site is in a potentially suitable location.
- 6.14 The application site sits outside but immediately adjacent to the defined settlement boundary of Barkham Hill. Policy CC02 of the MDDLDP states that proposals at the edge of settlements will only be granted planning permission where it can be demonstrated that it is within development limits and respects the transition between the built up area and the open countryside.
- 6.15 The applicant acknowledges that the site falls outside of the development limits of Barkham Hill giving rise to a potential policy conflict. However, all parts of the development plan for this site are increasingly out of date due to being over 5 years old and combined with a severe housing land supply shortfall in the district, the provisions of Paragraph 11d of the NPPF and the tilted balance is triggered in relation to this proposal.
- 6.16 In these circumstances the NPPF states that planning permission must be granted unless the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or any

adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole.

- 6.17 In light of this, it is therefore necessary to consider the sustainability of the development site having regard to the district's growth strategy. Barkham Hill is a limited development location which has a more basic range of services and facilities which meet some of the residents' day to day needs.
- 6.18 Through Policy CP17 of the adopted development plan, residential development of up to 25 dwellings is considered an appropriate level of development that can be sustainably accommodated at the settlement. The application proposal therefore accords with these parameters.
- 6.19 Whilst services and facilities in the immediate locality of the application site are more limited, it aligns a public transport corridor with regular bus services directly outside the site providing a quick and convenient connection to nearby Wokingham and Reading town centres. A wide range of services and facilities exist there including mainline rail, which are also accessible from the site by cycling.
- 6.20 At a recent planning committee, Wokingham Borough Council resolved to approve an application for 38 residential dwellings on the edge of the village of Finchampstead, which is also a limited development settlement. A copy of the Committee Report is included at **Appendix 5**.
- 6.21 Whilst the proposal does not satisfy the exceptions specified under Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy, given the Council's current housing land supply position and the triggering of the provisions of Paragraph 11d of the NPPF, the committee determined that the planning balance favoured a grant of planning permission and resolved to approve the application. This is a material consideration in the determination of this application which has a very similar context to the Finchampstead application.
- 6.22 Given the current context of an out of date development plan and a severe housing land supply shortfall, those policies concerning the delivery of housing are of more limited weight making the conflict with Policies CP9 and CP11 less determinative. Whilst a planning balance exercise is necessary to determine the overall acceptability

or otherwise of this proposal, it is locationally sustainable and of a scale that is acceptable in adopted policy terms.

Housing Delivery

- 6.23 The Council's most recently published Housing Land Supply Position Statement (January 2025) identifies only 1.7 years supply of deliverable housing land in the period to 2029.
- 6.24 This represents a severe shortfall in land supply and therefore at the current time the LPA accept they do not maintain a 5 year housing land supply and its housing policies are rendered out of date.
- 6.25 Housing delivery requirements in the district have significantly increased as a result of the new local housing need calculations introduced in the revised NPPF in December 2024. This increased the Borough's housing requirement from 748 dwellings to 1,336 dwellings, an increase of 78%. A stepped increase in the amount of land being made available for development is therefore going to be needed going forward if housing needs are to be met in the emerging plan period.
- 6.26 Boosting the supply of homes is a key Government objective of the planning system, and sites such as this are essential for SME housebuilders and offer the benefit of being built out relatively quickly. The NPPF at Paragraph 73 requires LPAs to support the development of windfall sites such as this through policies and decisions.
- 6.27 There is a demonstrable housing need for this site to be released for residential development to enable the Council to meet its current requirements. There are no constraints toward its development and with an end developer in control of the site it is capable being built out relatively quickly, providing new housing opportunities in the Borough.

Housing Mix

- 6.28 Policy CP5 requires residential developments to provide a mix and balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures and sizes. It is also supported by Policy TB05 which

seeks an appropriate housing mix which reflects a balance between the underlying character of the area and both the current and projected needs of households.

- 6.29 The most up to date evidence on housing need in the Borough is contained within the Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment. This identifies that the greatest housing need in the Borough is for 3 bed properties followed by 2 bed. For affordable housing, it is 2 bed followed by 1 bed dwellings.
- 6.30 This proposal reflects the needs of the local housing market with the majority of market properties being 3 bed, and those for affordable homes being 2 bed. It also includes smaller market and affordable units providing a range of housing opportunities including for first time buyers through to family housing opportunities.
- 6.31 The proposed housing mix is therefore considered appropriate and complies with policies CP5 of the Core Strategy and TB05 of the MDDL.

Affordable Housing

- 6.32 Affordable housing is required under Policy CP5 for all residential proposals of at least 5 dwellings (net) or covering a net site area of at least 0.16 ha. For greenfield sites at limited development locations the level of affordable housing provision expected is 40% of the net additional units.
- 6.33 Policy TB05 provides more specific requirements stating that an appropriate mix of accommodation should be delivered on a site by site basis, that reflects the Council's Housing Strategy and the Affordable Housing SPD.
- 6.34 This proposal offers 6 dwellings as affordable homes which equates to slightly below 40% (a commuted sum can be agreed to round up the provision) and is a significant benefit in favour of the proposed development.
- 6.35 The most recent assessment of need for affordable housing in the Borough is contained in the Local Housing Needs Assessment (2023) and identifies an overall need for 352 affordable houses per annum, a figure considered very high. Housing affordability has continued to worsen in the Borough which is a key driver in ensuring demand for affordable home products.

- 6.36 A clear need therefore exists for the proposed affordable homes and this application accords with the requirements of Policies CP5 and TB05 of the development plan.

Character and Design

- 6.37 The application site is a modest sized field on the edge of the village. It is not subject to any national or local qualitative landscape designations and is not prominent nor remarkable in its form.
- 6.38 It is located within a built up context, immediately adjacent to the existing settlement with residential development on three sides. The site itself is not isolated and does not extend into the wider rural landscape, forming a small undeveloped gap in an otherwise built up area.
- 6.39 This built up contextual background has the effect of reducing its landscape sensitivity. This includes the adjoining road corridors of Barkham Road and Edney's Hill which further diminishes its rural character.
- 6.40 This development proposal has been informed by a landscape and visual appraisal (LVA) and the extent of the developable area has been carefully considered to ensure an appropriate scheme which reflects the characteristics of the locality.
- 6.41 The scale, form and pattern of the proposed scheme reflects and responds to the established form of development within its surrounds, with properties aligned along the sites frontage to face onto the Barkham Road, whilst not extending the settlement edge any further south of the existing built up boundary.
- 6.42 The arrangement of properties was a primary concern with the previous failed appeals on the application site, as the proposed dwellings were arranged with rear or side aspects onto the main road and contributing towards the Inspector's concerns over harm to the character and appearance of the area. This scheme has avoided such an arrangement with properties positively engaging with the adjoining road network whilst stepped back to retain all existing boundary vegetation.
- 6.43 The adoption of a sensitive design approach including stepping back development from the road frontage and the more sensitive rear boundary, ensures that it can be

successfully integrated in this location without significant adverse landscape or visual effects. Existing boundary vegetation is also to be retained and reinforced further mitigating the impact of the proposal.

- 6.44 Whilst an inevitable degree of change will arise from the change of use of the land, this will be highly localised and limited to the landscape character of the site itself and immediate adjoining areas only where it will be compatible with the prevailing character. The accompanying LVA concludes that the proposed residential development of this site would not give rise to significant landscape or visual effects and any potential landscape and visual effects are moderated by the landscape and design mitigation measures that have been put in place.
- 6.45 In relation to design, the proposed properties reflect the established character of this part of Barkham Hill, with a traditional architectural design using materials that form part of the local vernacular. These include good quality red brick, black stained weatherboarding on car ports and slate and plain roof tiles.
- 6.46 The layout of the proposal has been arranged to positively engage with public spaces throughout the development, including the road system and green spaces. This design approach of active frontages maximises natural surveillance from the properties onto the public realm within the site, helping to minimise the opportunities for criminal activity within the site.
- 6.47 The density of this proposal at circa 23 dwellings per hectare is considered appropriate given its edge of settlement location, and is comparable with the existing development density found in this part of Barkham Hill.
- 6.48 Each of the proposed dwellings will be provided with private garden areas with a good level of amenity. Ensuring that the amenity of adjoining residential properties is maintained has also been fully considered with proposed properties positioned well away from the boundaries of existing properties with appropriate separation distances designed into the proposal.
- 6.49 A multi-functional green space is proposed on the southern edge of the site to provide a soften transition toward the adjoining open countryside. This area will deliver ecological enhancements within the site through the planting of native plant species

alongside a drainage feature in the form of a swale which also introduces new habitat opportunities.

- 6.50 Overall, this proposal has been demonstrated to be sympathetically designed and high quality residential scheme which is responsive to the local design context and in keeping with the character and form of this part of Barkham Hill. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policies CC03 of the Core Strategy and TB21 of the Local Plan, together with Policies IRS1, IRS2, IRS3 and AD3 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Highways, Access and Parking

- 6.51 A new access into the site is proposed off Edney's Hill, with the arrangement being a simple priority junction onto the public highway with required visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m achievable in both directions.
- 6.52 The internal road is proposed at a 4.8m width and will be a shared surface. A 2m footway is proposed outside plots 5-13 and whilst no footway is proposed onto Edney's Hill due to the existing lack of such infrastructure, two separate footpath links at proposed onto the Barkham Road.
- 6.53 A vehicle trip analysis of the proposal has been undertaken as part of this application, with the scheme projected to generate on average 7 two way vehicle movements per hour. In transport terms this is considered a negligible impact upon the local highway network.
- 6.54 Refuse collections will be undertaken kerbside and swept path analysis has been undertaken to show both refuse and fire tender is able to enter and egress the proposed site in forward gear.
- 6.55 The level of parking provision within the scheme accords with the prevailing parking standards in the district, with a total of 30 car parking spaces proposed across the site, including 4 unallocated parking spaces. The proposal accords with the Council's defined parking standard for new residential development.

- 6.56 The scheme recognises that ultra-low and nil emission vehicles will become more widely used in the future, and hence EV charging units will be installed for future occupiers.
- 6.57 The site is positioned in a good location to promote sustainable transport, being next to existing bus stops on the Barkham Road which provides frequent services between Woking and Reading town centres. Convenient and safe pedestrian and cycling infrastructure exists on the Barkham Road encouraging use of non car modes of transport to access local services. This accords with Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy and GA1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 6.58 The application site lies within flood zone 1 which represents the area of lowest risk. In this respect flood risk is not a concern with development of the site.
- 6.59 National planning guidance requires that new development does not exacerbate flood risk and that surface water discharge is managed to ensure no increase in run off rates into existing networks.
- 6.60 In developing a drainage strategy for the site, the drainage hierarchy has been followed. In this location, geological conditions do not support infiltration to dispose of surface water runoff.
- 6.61 SuDs will be used for attenuation purposes and to control surface water discharge, a detention basin, permeable paving and an underground tank is proposed within the development. Hydrobrakes will be installed to attenuate the site's runoff to greenfield rates, before discharge into the sewer that crosses the eastern edge of the site.
- 6.62 Foul water flows will discharge into the existing sewer within the application site and via a gravity connection. Thames Water has confirmed that sufficient capacity exists to accommodate the additional flows from this proposed development.

- 6.63 In summary, the site is not at risk of flooding and acceptable solutions exist in terms of surface water and foul water drainage of the proposed development, ensuring the scheme complies with Policies CC09 and CC10 of the Core Strategy, and AD4 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Ecology

- 6.64 An ecological survey of the site has been carried out as part of this planning application. This has confirmed that the site is of limited biodiversity interest being primarily neutral grassland, but with some important ecological features along the boundaries with the existing hedgerows and trees.
- 6.65 The site itself is not of any recognised ecological value but it is within the zone of influence of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. This requires a financial SANG and SAMM contribution to be made as part of the proposal.
- 6.66 The survey did not identify any evidence of protected or notable species using the site, with limited opportunities for roosting bats, nesting birds or small mammals. No further surveys have been recommended at this stage.
- 6.67 A number of mitigation measures are proposed to reduce the impacts of the development proposal on the habitats and species present, for example safeguards during the construction phase for mammals and a sensitive lighting scheme.
- 6.68 Ecological enhancements are proposed within the site including native tree and hedgerow planting, wildflower grassland in the open space, bat and bird boxes and installation of bee bricks.
- 6.69 The proposal has been designed to try and deliver a biodiversity net gain post development to target the statutory 10% requirement. A BNG assessment accompanies the planning application which assesses the site pre and post development.
- 6.70 In terms of habitat units, the assessment highlights that achieving the full 10% onsite is not achievable due to the limited land area, and that an offsite credit will need to

be purchased from an approved habitat bank. The applicant is in the process of obtaining quotes from a number of habitat bank operators. With hedgerows, the scheme will deliver in excess of a 400% net gain so no further such units are required.

- 6.71 The proposal is therefore capable of achieving the 10% biodiversity net gain subject to agreeing an offsite mechanism, and compliance with Policy TB23 of the Local Plan and IRS3 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Trees

- 6.72 As part of this proposal, a tree survey has been carried out to assess the arboricultural quality and baseline of the existing trees on the site. No trees are within the Conservation Area with single tree protected by a tree preservation orders on the south western boundary of the site.
- 6.73 In total, the condition of 21 individual trees and four groups of trees have been surveyed which has confirmed that the majority are category B and C overall quality, but with two category A specimens which are both offsite but have an influence on the development proposal.
- 6.74 The scheme has been designed to retain as many of the existing trees as possible with only limited removal to facilitate the construction of the access off Edney's Hill, and footpath onto Barkham Road. This requires the removal of a single low quality tree and the partial clearance of a lapsed hedgerow and area of understorey scrub.
- 6.75 The proposal has been designed to ensure a sustainable long term relationship between the existing trees and new development on the site so that the health of the trees is not compromised. In this regard, the application is considered to comply with Policy NE8 of the Local Plan.

Sustainability

- 6.76 The proposed development has been designed with the objective of ensuring dwellings that achievable high environmental standards, and that minimise their resource requirements during the lifetime of the home.

- 6.77 In achieving this, proposed measures include an enhanced specification of building fabric through a combination of upgraded materials and increased insulation, reducing the space heating requirements of the properties.
- 6.78 Renewable technologies are proposed for inclusion within the properties including air source heat pumps and solar PV on the roof, helping to meet some of the energy needs of the homeowners. Other features to reduce energy demand include low-E light fixtures. Overall, these measures should exceed Part L building regulations to achieve at least a 31% reduction in carbon emissions.
- 6.79 Water efficiency has also been considered in the design of the properties, with the ambition that no more than 110 litre of potable water is consumed by each resident per day. Measures to achieve this include dual flush WCs, low flow rate taps and efficient specification domestic appliances.
- 6.80 The proposal intends to install EV charging infrastructure for each dwelling to encourage the transition to low emission transport. Each plot will be provided with EV charging systems so that residents have the infrastructure in place should they own a low / nil emission vehicle.
- 6.81 It is the ambition that this application will represent a sustainable form of development with a limited carbon footprint. The application is considered to comply with Policy CC04 of the Core Strategy.

Planning Obligations

- 6.82 As the development will have an impact upon local infrastructure it creates a need for financial contributions toward certain infrastructure and services to mitigate its impact and make it acceptable in planning terms. To secure such contributions the Council adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in 2015 with the CIL rate for this development being £365 per m2.
- 6.83 In relation to this proposal, the GIA of the proposal amounts to 882m2 (includes deduction of floorspace for affordable units) and which results in a CIL payment of £321,930.

- 6.84 The application proposes affordable housing and these units will need to be secured via a separate legal agreement which will need to be drafted during the course of the planning application.
- 6.85 The site is also within the 5km mitigation zone of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area where contributions will be sought toward delivering capacity at alternative SANG / SAMMS. Based upon this proposal, a SANG contribution of £36,960.94 will be sought and for SAMM the figure is £13,630.

7.0 Summary and Conclusion

7.1 This Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the erection 16 new dwellings on land west of Edney's Hill, Barkham, and sets out the case for the application, along with the supporting information submitted with the planning application itself. This is briefly summarised as follows:

- A demonstrable housing need for this proposal exists with windfall sites such as this required to fulfil the current severe housing land supply deficit in the district;
- Delivery of new housing opportunities for first time buyers and families in a sustainable location, with a range of core services and a genuine alternative to the private car for local trips;
- Provision of affordable housing of a mix of tenures and in a location where the need is particularly severe due to major housing affordability issues in the area;
- A windfall site which can be delivered quickly by an SME developer, an important component of supporting housing delivery in Wokingham;
- A high quality and sensitively designed scheme which will form a logical complement to the pattern of development of this part of Barkham Hill, and is appropriately designed to ensure no adverse harm to the character and appearance of the area;
- A proposal which respects the amenity of existing adjoining residential properties.

7.2 Although this proposal leads to a degree of conflict with the development plan being beyond the defined settlement limits, this part of the plan is though out of date given the combination of a lack of a 5 year land supply in the district and the plan being well over 5 years old.

7.3 In weighing up the proposal, it is necessary to consider the three mutually dependent dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental factors. In relation to this application, these are assessed as follows:

- **Economic:** the construction of the proposed houses will provide a source of employment in the short term and an opportunity for an SME developer. Once constructed, the additional population will increase the level of expenditure in the local economy supporting the vitality and viability of local services. The Council will

also benefit financially securing additional funding through the New Homes Bonus. These economic benefits will be of significant positive weight;

- **Social:** the proposal will make a relatively quick contribution towards boosting the supply of housing in an area with great housing need, including first time buyer and family housing opportunities. It will offer choice beyond large scale volume development sites as a small bespoke residential scheme. Significant positive weight should be attributed to this benefit. In addition, it will provide much needed affordable housing in a location where there is significant need for this form of housing. This is also of significant positive weight.
- **Environmental** – the proposal will increase landscaping within the site and deliver a biodiversity net gain over the existing baseline in combination with offsite measures. These environmental benefits will be of modest positive weight. Whilst some limited harm will arise through the introduction of new development on the site, this will be tempered by the sensitive nature of the proposal combined with the mitigation through enhancing the existing landscape framework of the site.

In concluding on the planning balance, the benefits identified outweigh any harm arising from the proposal when assessed against the policies of the Framework and through application of the tilted balance given the severe housing land supply shortfall in the district. The planning balance therefore favours a grant of planning permission in this instance.