

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
241567	31/03/2025	Finchampstead	Finchampstead South

Applicant	Catesby Strategic Land Ltd & Stonebond Properties (Guildford) Ltd
Site Address	Land East of Longwater Road, Longwater Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3TS
Proposal	Full application for the proposed erection of 38no. dwellings (Use Class C3), together with associated outdoor space and landscaping, drainage infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, parking, access, and associated works.
Type	Full application
Officer	Adriana Gonzalez
Reason for determination by committee	Major application

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 12 March 2025
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place and Growth
RECOMMENDATION	i) APPROVAL subject to conditions and informatives outlined in Appendix 1 of this report and the completion of a S106 legal agreement to secure the following: - Affordable Housing – 60% on site affordable housing (Cascade mechanism) - Employment and Skills Plan – Employment and Skills Plan or in lieu contribution to be provided - Thames Basin Heaths SPA - NHS Financial Contribution - Bus Service Improvement Contribution - Traffic Regulation Order – for speed reduction on Longwater Road - Roads – Details of road status – either to remain as private or to be adopted by the Council and to be built to adoptable standards - Establishment of Management Company – to be responsible for drainage, roads (the latter if not adopted by the Council) - Biodiversity Net Gain – Monitoring of the Landscaping/HMMP to ensure the BNG objectives are met over a 30-year period.

OR

ii) That the committee authorise the Head of Development Management to REFUSE full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed within six months of the date of this resolution (unless officers on behalf of the Head of Development Management agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).

SUMMARY

The application site comprises a circa 2.29Ha parcel of greenfield land located on Longwater Road. The proposal seeks full planning permission for the erection of 38 residential dwellings (C3) with associated informal outdoor space, landscaping, drainage infrastructure, parking and access.

The site lies within the open countryside and outside of but adjacent to the limited development location of Finchampstead village. There are existing residential properties within Wood Moor and Lower Sandhurst Road immediately to the north of the site within the settlement limits.

The principle of developing this site for residential purposes is contrary to the Spatial Strategy of the adopted Local Plan. However, this needs to be considered in the context of the current identified shortfall in housing delivery and any identified benefits of the scheme. Namely these include the opportunity to create a development that would satisfactorily integrate into the surrounding area, one that would protect and enhance the natural environment, and bring about the creation of 38 new homes alongside the 60% provision of much needed onsite affordable housing in this part of the borough.

The proposal is deemed acceptable in relation to its impact on the existing countryside and landscape character, and it is considered that suitable dwelling types, mix and sustainability standards are achieved within the proposed design and 38 dwellings is an appropriate density for this site on the settlement edge. It has also been demonstrated that the proposal will provide suitable access provision to and from Longwater Road without negatively impacting the existing highways network. The development will not result in a negative impact on biodiversity including priority habitats, but rather proposes notable biodiversity enhancements and overall net gain.

It is recognised that opportunities for sustainable modes of transport in this location are limited, but not to a sufficient degree that the site would be at odds with the existing settlement of Finchampstead village. Moreover, the site would be no less sustainable in this regard than other peripheral parts of the village, including those immediately adjacent to the site along Longwater Road, and appropriate opportunities will be secured to promote the limited sustainable transport modes that are available.

Overall, in applying the tilted balance required by Paragraph 11d (ii) of the NPPF and when taking all matters into consideration, there are no identified adverse impacts associated with the proposals that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits and there are no other material planning considerations of significant weight that would indicate otherwise.

As such, Officers recommend the application be approved, subject to the conditions and informatives listed and legal obligations set out in this report.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

010755 – Proposed change of use of land from agricultural to equine use and erection of a horse shelter (Retrospective) – Approved 30/07/2001

140815 – Proposed erection of barn for storage of agricultural implements – Approved 21/07/2014

171993 – Outline application for the residential development of up to 40 dwellings with all matters reserved except for means of access from Longwater Road – Withdrawn 26/04/2018

DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION

Site Area	Approximately 2.29Ha
Proposed units	38
Proposed density - dwellings/hectare	16.59 DPH
Number of affordable units proposed	23 (60%); all on site
Previous land use	Agricultural
Existing parking spaces	None
Proposed parking spaces	85 (76 allocated & 9 unallocated/visitors)

CONSTRAINTS

Countryside
Flood Zone 1
Bat roost habitat suitability
Great Crested Newts consultation zone
Tree Preservation Order
Affordable Housing Thresholds
Archaeological Site consultation zone
Farnborough aerodrome consultation zone
Public Rights of Way (FINC13)
Public Open Space boundaries
Thames Basin Heaths - Special Protection Area – 5Km
Local Plan Update – Submitted Site
JCEB Mineral Safeguarding Area
Landscape Character Assessment Area - Blackwater River Valley with Open Water

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WBC Planning Policy	No objection
WBC Environmental Health	No objection subject to conditions
WBC Drainage	No objection subject to condition
WBC Highways	Objection on accessibility grounds
WBC Trees & Landscape	Objection on landscape grounds
WBC Ecology	No objection subject to conditions and obligation
WBC Sustainability	No objection subject to condition
NatureSpace (Newts)	No objection subject to condition
WBC Sports Development	No comments received

WBC Housing (Affordable Housing)	No objection subject to legal obligation
WBC Employment and Skills	No objection subject to legal obligation
WBC Green Infrastructure	No comments received
WBC Education (School Places)	No comments received
WBC Cleaner and Greener	No comments received
Southern Gas Networks	Refer to standard advice
SSE Power Distribution	Refer to standard advice
Thames Water Utilities Ltd	No objection
Berkshire Archaeology	No objection subject to conditions
Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue	Refer to standard advice
NHS Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West	No objection subject to legal obligation to secure financial contribution
WBC Developers Contribution	CIL Liable Development
WBC Traffic Management	No comments received
WBC Community Engagement	No comments received
AWE Burghfield	Application is outside the DEPZ for AWE Burghfield
WBC Public Rights Of Way	No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

During the course of the application, the proposed site layout was amended and revisions to technical documentation made.

The original consultation ran between 03/07/2024 to 31/07/2024.

The second consultation ran between 05/12/2024 to 28/12/2024.

COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE ORIGINAL SCHEME

Town/Parish Council: Finchampstead Parish Council raised an objection on the following grounds:

- Application is inconsistent with the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan, specifically on:
 - Policy GA1 - Improve environment and health from traffic pollution
 - Policy IRS2 - Protection of Outstanding Views
 - Policy IRS4 - Implement strategy to preserve the identity of Finchampstead Parish through informal green spaces
 - Policy IRS5 - Ecologically important areas and Biodiversity
 - Policy GA2 - Reduction in car usage with safe personal mobility options
 - Policy AHD1 - Development within Development Limits
- Unsustainable location
- Outside of the settlement boundary contrary to local plan policies
- Street lighting having an urbanising effect and impact on wildlife
- Sufficient provision of affordable housing from other developments within Finchampstead (i.e. Gorse Ride and Arborfield SDL)
- No mitigation measures proposed for Thames Basin Heaths SPA

- Cemex quarry adjoining the site is in Flood Zone 3, uncertainty whether this extends into the application site due to restoration levels
- Unsafe footpaths to immediate facilities
- Traffic and speed limits as Longwater Road changes from 30mph to 60mph speed limit at the proposed point of access.

(Officer's comments: the above issues will be addressed in the report.)

Local Members: Councillor Charles Margetts raised an objection on the following grounds:

- Unsustainable location
- Site cannot be accessed by public transport
- No cycleways or footpaths to the site
- Local NHS primary care network is full and has no further capacity
- Proposal out of keeping with the character of the area
- Site in countryside outside settlement boundaries, contrary to local planning policies
- Inappropriate density

Councillor Rebecca Margetts raised objections on the following grounds:

- Application does not comply with the FNDP
- Unsustainable location
- Density
- Development out of keeping with the street scene

(Officer's comments: the above issues will be addressed in the report.)

Neighbours: 26 letters received in support of the application summarised as follows:

- Many residents and potential buyers express difficulty in finding suitable, affordable housing in Finchampstead
- Proposed development would help young families, first-time buyers, and those wishing to remain close to relatives
- Affordable development would be an opportunity to remain within the community
- Assist in supporting local businesses, including shops and services that have been struggling with declining customer numbers
- A more diverse demographic, particularly younger families, would help sustain schools, local amenities, and community vitality
- Additional housing would encourage improvements to local infrastructure and public transport services
- Rejecting small-scale development could leave the area vulnerable to larger, less controlled developments imposed at a later stage
- Green space and biodiversity enhancements proposed, which will balance the environmental impact
- Development's density is considered relatively low compared to other local schemes, with ample green buffers
- Development aligns with national government commitments to increasing housing supply; a balanced approach is needed in Finchampstead
- Impact on local services such as schools and healthcare could be addressed through planning contributions and service improvements rather than blocking development altogether

- Increased housing demand could support the case for better transport links and other infrastructure upgrades.

257 letters of objections from neighbours were received (some of which include duplicate comments) on the following grounds, summarised:

- Impact on nature conservation
- Inappropriate layout and density
- Insufficient parking
- Contrary to Local Development Plan which consolidates development into strategic hubs
- Reduction of green gap between Finchampstead and Everley
- Previously planning applications for the site have not been approved
- Impact on local services
- Unsustainable location
- Local sewage works are already at overcapacity
- Proposed entrance opposite entrance to allotments causing highway safety concerns
- Site is not included in the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan
- Site adjacent to the Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve
- Additional vehicular traffic on Longwater Road
- Lack of or inadequate neighbourhood amenities and infrastructure (i.e. village shop, petrol station, bus services, schools)
- Existing roads and footpaths are already in a poor state of repair
- Flood risk, area is very wet in the winter
- Danger to public with lack of pathways and country road lighting not adequate
- Proposed development out of keeping with the character of the village
- Noise levels of traffic
- Proposals do not allow for a road crossing for children and families to safely cross the main road to access the village and the local school
- Increase light pollution
- Adverse impact on the landscape character
- Increased chances of littering in the area

(Officer's comments: the above issues will be addressed in the report.)

COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING SECOND CONSULTATION PERIOD

Town/Parish Council: Finchampstead Parish Council continues to raise an objection on the same grounds outlined above.

Local Members: No comments received.

Neighbours: 102 letters of objections from neighbours were received (some of which include duplicate comments) on the following grounds, summarised:

- Revisions to the scheme do not address previous neighbours objections
- Proposal not in accordance with the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan
- Loss of open space within the countryside
- Additional traffic impact
- Change in layout increase density of properties with more 2 bed dwellings
- Proposed level of affordable housing is excessive with regard to local needs
- Light and noise pollution

- Detrimental effect on local wildlife
- Additional impact on local services and infrastructure
- Reduction of buffer zone around the nature reserve
- Unsustainable location
- Flooding
- Reduction of green gap between settlements
- Impact on TPOs
- Impact on character of the area
- Risk of subsidence impact on neighbouring properties (**not a material planning consideration**)
- New houses already built in Arborfield and Finchwood Park
- Local sewage works are already at overcapacity
- Urbanisation of the area
- Longwater Road transitions from 30mph to 60mph at the site entrance
- Development could attract anti-social behaviour and crime (**no evidence to support this claim**)

(Officer's comments: the above issues will be addressed in the report.)

PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework

National Design Guide

National Planning Practice Guidance

Core Strategy (CS)

- CP1 – Sustainable Development
- CP2 – Inclusive Communities
- CP3 – General Principles for Development
- CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements
- CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability
- CP6 – Managing Travel Demand
- CP7 – Biodiversity
- CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- CP10 - Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network.
- CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits (Inc Countryside)
- CP12 – Green Belt
- CP17 – Housing Delivery

MDD Local Plan (MDD)

- CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC02 – Development Limits
- CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
- CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks
- CC06 – Noise
- CC07 – Parking
- CC08 – Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure
- CC09 – Development and Flood Risk

CC10 – Sustainable Drainage
 TB05 – Housing Mix
 TB07 – Internal Space Standards
 TB08 – Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards
 TB12 – Employment Skills Plan
 TB21 – Landscape Character
 TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
 TB25 – Archaeology

Joint Minerals and Waste Plan

DM1 – Sustainable Development
 DM2 – Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation
 DM3 – Protection of Habitats and Species
 DM9 – Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity
 DM10 – Flood Risk
 DM15 – Site History
 M2 – Safeguarding sand and gravel resources

Other

Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
 CIL Guidance
 Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
 Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document
 Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (2023)

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Description of Development:

1. Planning permission is sought for the proposed residential development of 38 dwellings, open space, landscaping, internal accesses, parking, drainage measures and other associated works. The proposed Site Layout includes a mix of house sizes and types, including 1 bed terraced houses and 2, 3 and 4 bed detached and semi-detached dwellings. The applicant also proposes 60% affordable housing on site.
2. The application is supported by various professional reports including addendums referred to through this officer report, including:
 - Planning and Affordable Housing Statement
 - Design and Access Statement
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy
 - Noise Assessment
 - Sustainability & Energy Statement
 - Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Desk Study
 - Odour Impact Assessment
 - Mineral Resource Assessment
 - Lighting Impact Assessment
 - Archaeological and Heritage Assessment
 - Air Quality Assessment
 - Tree Survey Report and Arboricultural Impact Assessment
 - Utilities Report
 - Ecological Appraisal
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
 - Transport Statement
 - Travel Plan Statement
 - Statement of Community Involvement

Site and its Surroundings:

3. The application site is situated on a large plot of land adjacent to the limited development location of Finchampstead village. The site has a quadrilateral shape and spans approximately 2.29 hectares, located to the eastern side of Longwater Road. Immediately to the north is a Public Rights of Way (PROW) – FINC13 – and beyond is existing residential development at Wood Moor, which defines the edge of

the village. To the west is Longwater Road and on the opposite side of the road is undeveloped land with allotments further west.

4. To the south is the former Eversley Quarry, where there is a current planning application (Ref. 193354) to vary conditions to vary conditions 3 and 5 of planning permission VAR/2013/2551 in order to extend the duration of planning permission for the completion of mineral extraction, infilling and restoration of the land. This application is still pending determination. This land will eventually form part of the extension to the Moor Green Nature Reserve.



Fig. 1: Aerial view of the site outlined red (Google Maps 2025)

5. Mature tree planting occupies the east, west and southern boundaries, with the PROW and residential development to the north giving the site an enclosed setting. Whilst Longwater Road is not a designated Green Route under policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan, the existing mature vegetation contribute to its verdant character.
6. The site is located within the borough's countryside but adjacent to the settlement limits of Finchampstead village. Residential properties which form part of the Wood Moor cul-de-sac development are mainly two-storey dwellings either terraced or semi-detached, whilst Cricket Hill to the north-east of the site provides more variation in architectural design with a blend of 1.5 and 2 storey dwellings. The predominant use of red brick is supplemented by elements of boarding, render, and brickwork. In the wider context, the housing around Longwater Lane and Burnmoor Meadow is particularly varied in appearance with mainly detached properties.

Principle of Development:

Development plan

7. The site is situated within the designated countryside, outside of but right adjacent to the settlement boundary of Finchampstead village which is a Limited Development Location. The site constitutes greenfield land.



Fig. 2: Finchampstead village settlement defined in yellow with the site outlined in red and countryside shaded green (WBC constraints map)

8. Core Strategy Policy CP9 (Scale and location of development proposals) directs development to locations within development limits and states that *“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.”*
9. Supporting paragraph 4.52 states that Limited Development Locations “are those containing a basic range of services and facilities and are physically and socially cohesive. Within the development limits of these settlements, limited development would be acceptable. This includes affordable housing to meet identified local needs.”
10. Whilst the specific location of the proposal should allow future residents to reasonably utilise the services and facilities present within the village or in higher order settlements (i.e Finchampstead North) via public transport, the site is not located within development limits and therefore the proposal is contrary to Policy CP9.
11. Development proposals in the designated countryside should be assessed against Core Strategy Policy CP11 (Proposals outside Development Limits). Policy CP11 states that development proposals will not normally be permitted in the countryside except where one or more of the specified exceptions apply:
 - 1) *It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and*
 - 2) *It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and*
 - 3) *It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or*
 - 4) *In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;*
 - 5) *In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:*
 - i) *Bring about environmental improvements; or*

- ii) *Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.*
 - 6) *Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;*
 - 7) *Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.*
12. The application proposal does not meet any of these specified exceptions and is therefore contrary to Policy CP11.
13. Turning to the overall aim of policy CP11, this is to protect the separate identity of settlements and to maintain the quality of the environment. Regarding the former, the proposed development is situated right adjacent to the defined settlement limits of Finchampstead village to the north and is flanked by the floodplain of the river Blackwater and the Moor Green Country Park (and its future extension) to the south. The floodplain is likely to remain undeveloped in perpetuity which along with the expansion of the country park would continue to ensure that the application site and Finchampstead village do not physically coalesce with Eversley Cross to the south. Whilst in conflict due to failure to meet the necessary criteria, the proposal is not considered to undermine the intended purpose of policy CP11. Matters concerning the quality of the environment will be discussed in later sections.

Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP)

14. The application site is located within the parish of Finchampstead and therefore the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP) – formally adopted at Council on 21 September 2023, forms part of the development plan for the area.
15. Policy AHD1 of the FNDP states that development proposals outside of development locations will only be supported where they are in accordance with national and Borough planning policies. Supporting text at paragraph 5.5 states that other forms of development outside development limits will be supported when considered against the criteria set by Core Strategy Policy CP11, or successor. As such, given the Council's view remains unchanged in respect of the proposal's non-compliance with CP11, the proposal is also contrary to policy AHD1 of the FNDP given the alignment between the two policies.
16. The FNDP contains a number of policies on issues including housing; settlement separation; the natural and historic environment; retail facilities; business and commercial development; transport; and design. These inter-relate with other material considerations which are to be discussed later in this report.

Emerging/consultative Local Plan Update

17. The Local Plan Update (LPU), the plan which will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and MDD local plans, is at the consultative stage of preparation. To date, the Council has consulted on two draft strategies: the Draft Plan (2020) and the Revised Growth Strategy (RGS) (2021).
18. The site has not been included as a proposed allocation in the emerging LPU at any stage.

19. The site was promoted to the Council as being available for C3/C2 residential development (Ref. 5FI047).

20. The last published assessment was the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) undertaken in 2021. This considers the broad suitability, availability and achievability of all promoted areas of land across the borough. This assessment concluded that the site (5FI047) was 'unsuitable' for housing:

"Development would be inappropriate to the existing settlement form, pattern and character of the landscape. The site is considered to perform poorly in respect of highways and accessibility issues."

21. It must however be recognised that the LPU is at a consultative stage, and that the draft strategy and related draft policies have limited weight in determining planning applications at this current time. It must also be recognised that the assessment of land in the HELAA is 'high level', with the primary purpose of informing a variety of site options within the plan-making process. This assessment was undertaken four years ago, at a time when the Council was able to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable sites. Whilst not comparable to the level of details that would accompany a specific planning application for any one site, the HELAA remains nonetheless useful in providing an understanding as to how the site is viewed in the context of plan-making and its anticipated role and contribution towards meeting the boroughs identified housing needs over the future plan period.

Regulation 19

22. This LPU including the site's draft allocation was brought to full Council on the 19th of September 2024 under the Regulation 19 process, which was accepted by Members with 30 votes for, and 19 against.

23. In considering the weight to be given to Wokingham Borough Council's emerging Local Plan Update (LPU), it is necessary to refer to Paragraphs 49-51 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024), Paragraph 49 states that decision-makers may give weight to emerging policies according to:

- a) *The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);*
- b) *The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given);*
- c) *The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan with the NPPF (the closer the policies are to the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).*

24. To consider these points in more detail:

- a) *Stage of Preparation* – The LPU is still at an early stage of its preparation. Submission to the Secretary of State is anticipated February/early March, with Stage 1 of the examination scheduled for Spring 2025 and Stage 2 later in the Summer of 2025. The Inspector's post-hearing letter is anticipated in Winter 2025, with the consultation on modifications planned for early 2026, and adoption is not projected until Spring/Summer 2026.

As seen in High Court judgements, even when an emerging plan is at an advanced stage, it may still attract limited weight if further consultation and modifications are required, and the Inspector has yet to issue a final report. Wokingham's LPU has several stages yet to be completed, including the examination hearings and main modifications stages, which restricts the weight that can currently be afforded.

- b) *Unresolved Objections* – Given the timeline noted above, the extent and significance of unresolved objections cannot yet be fully ascertained. However, the LPU will propose a development strategy to 2040, which will result in significant interest from stakeholders, including developers, residents and statutory consultees. It is therefore highly likely that one of the primary areas of contention and potentially objection, will be the spatial strategy for development and the location of land proposed for development to help meet future development needs. How far such objections are capable of being resolved will only become clear at later stages of plan making.
 - c) *Consistency with the NPPF* – Although Officers are confident that the emerging LPU, and its policies align with the NPPF, the degree of consistency has not yet been tested through examination and cannot be guaranteed. As per other cases, consistency with the NPPF is only one factor, and its relative importance depends on the extent to which the LPU impacts the planning balance in decision-making.
25. Using these tests and drawing on the conclusions of the High Court judgments, it is appropriate to conclude that only 'limited weight' can be attributed to Wokingham Borough Council's emerging LPU at this time.
26. In summary, while the emerging LPU is a significant piece of work, its stage of development and the uncertainties surrounding unresolved objections and examination outcomes mean that only limited weight can be given to it at this time. It is noted that the Inspector determining the Council's most recent appeal at Land North of the A4, Twyford (APP/X0360/W/24/3350170) attached limited weight to the emerging plan policy position (para 46). It is therefore necessary for the committee to make decisions in accordance with the current Development Plan and have due regard to any other material considerations until such time as the LPU has progressed further.

NPPF and housing land supply position

27. Paragraph 78 of the NPPF (2024) requires LPAs to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than 5 years old. The latest published Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement (31st March 2024) shows the Council is currently only able to demonstrate 1.7 years' worth of deliverable sites. Subsequently, those policies relating specifically to housing delivery in the borough's Core Strategy and MDD LP (and any made Neighbourhood Plans) are currently considered to be out of date. This does not mean they have no weight, but an assessment of consistency will take place throughout this application.

28. Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means that where policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless:

- I. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- II. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

29. Firstly, in considering i), it must be recognised that the proposed site is not located within any protected areas or assets of particular importance (as outlined above and within footnote 7 and paragraph 195 of the NPPF). Officers must therefore consider the application under ii) and determine whether there are any adverse impacts generated by the development that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. This is referred to as the 'tilted balance', as harm and benefits are not weighed equally, but tilted in favour of any benefits. It should also be noted that Paragraph 11(d) being engaged does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. This is set out clearly in paragraph 12 of the NPPF and is a matter of law.

30. In acknowledging the requirements of paragraph 11(d)(ii) and the tilted balance being engaged, it is necessary to consider whether there are any circumstances which affect the weight that can be given to the supply of additional housing. An important underlying reason in the context of Wokingham Borough is the historic oversupply of housing against both the requirement set in the Core Strategy local plan and the scale of local housing need as calculated by the previous standard method which remains a key contributing factor to the current lack of the required deliverable housing land supply and this must be considered in the planning balance section at the end of the report.

31. Within paragraph 14 of the NPPF it acknowledges the relationship between paragraph 11(d) and those areas that have an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, which is the case in Finchampstead. It states:

In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply:

- a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and*
- b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement*

32. In this instance, paragraph 14 of the NPPF is not engaged as whilst the Neighbourhood Plan became part of the Wokingham development plan within the last

five years, the neighbourhood plan does not explicitly contain allocations to meet an identified housing requirement. Rather it notes and supports, at section 5.3, the proposed allocations located in Finchampstead Parish contained within the emerging LPU (as per the most recent consultation, being the RGS). Notwithstanding, as already mentioned only limited weight can be afforded to the emerging LPU.

33. As such, paragraph 14 of the NPPF is not engaged and therefore any harm identified with the proposal will not be weighted to 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the benefits' as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, a full assessment taking paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF into account will be made.

34. Finally, paragraph 84 of the NPPF seeks to avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless certain special circumstances are met. The site is located adjacent to the settlement limits of Finchampstead Village therefore the proposal would not conflict with the specific objectives of paragraph 84.

Conclusion of principle of development

35. The application proposal is located within the designated countryside, adjacent to, but outside of, the development limits of Finchampstead village. The proposal does not satisfy any of the exceptions set out in Policy CP11 concerning development beyond development limits in countryside locations. The application is thereby contrary to the spatial strategy of the development plan.

36. By virtue of the council's current housing land supply position, the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF at paragraph 11 is now engaged in the decision-making process, whereas paragraph 14 is not. Accordingly, an assessment will need to be made of whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole (the tilted balance). This balancing exercise will be returned to in the planning balance section of this report.

Minerals Safeguarding:

37. The Council's constraint mapping system identifies the half-southern part of the application site located within a Minerals Safeguarding Area as defined under Policy M2 of the adopted Joint Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals & Waste Plan (2023) which highlights its potentially suitability for sand and gravel extraction. Policy M2 states that:

"non-minerals development may be permitted if it can be demonstrated through the preparation of a Mineral Resources Assessment, that the option of prior extraction has been fully considered as part of an application, and:

- a. Prior extraction, where practical and environmentally feasible, is maximised, taking into account site constraints and phasing of development; or*
- b. It can be demonstrated that the mineral resources will not be permanently sterilised; or*
- c. It would be inappropriate to extract mineral resources in that location, with regard to other policies in the wider Local Plans".*

38. Supporting text in Policy M2 states that *“a minimum plot size of 3 hectares will apply in the safeguarding process to avoid repeated consideration of prior extraction where this can be assumed to be uneconomic, due to the small size of the parcels of land involved.”* (Para. 6.40). As the application site is circa 2.29 Ha it does not meet the initial threshold for consideration of suitability for minerals extraction. Furthermore, the site was not included within the established quarrying activities to the south. No further assessment is therefore necessary.

Affordable Housing:

39. MDD Local Plan policy TB05 (Housing Mix) requires that residential development should provide an appropriate density and mix of accommodation reflecting the character of the area assessed on a site-by-site basis and reflecting the Council's Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing SPD. The MDD Local Plan and Affordable Housing SPD suggest a guide mix, to be considered in conjunction with the latest information from the Housing Register.

40. The proposed plans show a varied housing mix with 1, 2, 3 and 4 bed dwellings, to address local and borough wide needs (i.e. provision of some smaller dwellings to support first time buyers), whilst according with the existing character of Finchampstead village (provision of family homes):

- 1 bed (8%) 3
- 2 bed (34%) 13
- 3 bed (53%) 20
- 4 bed (5%) 2

41. Turning to affordable housing provision, policy CP5 of the Core Strategy sets out affordable housing thresholds within the borough. This outlines that given the site is located within the designated countryside, a minimum of 40% of the total number of units (net) should be provided as affordable housing. In the context of this proposal, this equates to 15 units of the proposed 38 dwellings. However, the applicant has proposed a 60% on site affordable housing mix, which would equate to 23 units in this case. This scale of affordable housing provision is significantly in excess of the requirements of the development plan policy.

42. Wokingham borough, as a whole, have a pressing unmet need for affordable housing delivery. The LHNA (2023) outlines a need for 352 affordable dwellings annually over the plan period, with recent appeals identifying significant weight attached to their provision (on schemes providing less affordable housing numbers on site, in more affordable parts of the borough).

43. In addition, a total of 674 housing applications currently feature on the housing register for the Finchampstead Ward alone. This need has been clearly expressed in the support letters received during public consultation. The proposed provision of affordable housing (of any type) therefore attracts substantial weight in favour of this proposal. Even greater weight should be attributed to the proposed provision of 60% affordable housing in this instance, which exceeds the requirements of existing development plan policy, and where the proposed mix of affordable rental units would provide units best responsive to demand within the local area.

44. Policy CP5 also states that the Council will negotiate the tenure, size and type of affordable units on a site by site basis having regard to housing needs, site specifics and other factors. Paragraph 66 of the NPPF (2024) sets out that planning policies and decisions should expect that the mix of affordable housing required meets identified local needs, across Social Rent, other affordable housing for rent and affordable home ownership tenures. It is noted that the 25% minimum delivery requirement for First Homes (as set out in 'Affordable Homes Update' Written Ministerial Statement dated 24 May 2021) no longer applies as of December 2024.
45. The WBC Housing Team has been consulted for this application, indicating the preference would be a mix tenure of social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership. The applicant proposes 70% affordable rent and 30% shared ownership. Further clarification sought from the applicant indicates that the tenure proposed is a result of the current funding available for affordable housing provision. The current funding programme runs from 2021 to 2026 which means that they are at the tail end of the funding cycle and the funding that was available for social rent has now been spent. The applicant's intention is to deliver the housing on site at the earliest opportunity should the scheme be permitted, but without funding available for a social rented product, it would prevent the affordable provision being delivered as a whole by one Register Provider, which would be the most expedite way of implementing the scheme.
46. Whilst the Council's preference is to secure some social rent tenure on site, in this case and on the basis that this is an affordable-led scheme, it is considered that when balanced with the 50% increase in on-site provision above policy compliant levels, the proposed tenure split is acceptable. Notwithstanding this position, it should be noted that the final tenure mix will be confirmed as part of the S106 legal agreement and will take account of changing markets and funding arrangements etc at a later date.
47. All affordable housing units will need to be built in accordance with the standards requirements and latest guidance issued by Homes England and/ or the Regulator of Social Housing, meet the national space standards and conform to building regulation M4(2) (or any other applicable regulation) to ensure the provision of lifetime homes which are adaptable to varying needs.
48. The affordable units should be transferred to the Council's Local Housing Company (Wokingham Housing Limited) or one of the Council's preferred Registered Provider (RP) partners for a price that will enable the RP or Local Housing Company to deliver the affordable housing without the need for public subsidy.
49. Subject to the completion of a S106 agreement to secure the 60% affordable housing provision, the proposed development exceeds the requirements of MDD Local Plan policy TB05 and this aspect of the proposal is afforded very substantial weight in the overall balance.

Impact on Landscape/ Countryside

50. It is inevitable that a development proposal on a currently undeveloped site in the countryside will result in some level of harm to the existing landscape. The application site does not include any statutory or non-statutory landscape designations. However, the WBC Landscape Officer considers that the site exhibits the attributes

to form part of the “River Blackwater” Valued Landscape, based on the emerging policy NE6. In this regard, in January 2020 Wokingham Borough published a Topic Paper on Valued Landscapes to respond to paragraph 187 (a) of the NPPF (2024) and prepared as part of the evidence base for the Emerging LPU and associated policy NE6. This initially identified a series of valued landscapes, however since then further work has been undertaken to make refinements to the boundaries of the valued landscape areas and to update the assessment.

51. The revised document, Valued Landscapes Assessment (September 2024) has now been published as part of the evidence studies produced for the current consultation related to the LPU, and includes the site as part of the “River Blackwater” Valued Landscape as mentioned above. Whilst paragraph 187 of the NPPF seeks to protect and enhance valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils, it states that this should be in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan. It must therefore be recognised that the LPU is at a consultative stage, and that the draft strategy and related draft policies including NE6 have limited weight in determining planning applications at this current time. Nonetheless, given the sensitive location of the site and the provisions of paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024), it is fully expected that the detailed landscaping proposals provide significant mitigation measures, including mature/semi-mature trees in order to mitigate the impact of buildings in this area.
52. Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3 require a high quality design that respects its context. This requirement is amplified by MDD Policies CC03 and TB21 which require development proposals to protect and enhance the Borough’s Green Infrastructure, retaining existing trees, hedges and other landscape features wherever possible and incorporating high quality - ideally native – planting as an integral part of any scheme, within the context of the Council’s Landscape Character Assessment. Core Strategy policy CP11 criteria 2 states that proposals should not lead to ‘excessive encroachment’ within the countryside and policy TB21 of the MDD requires that proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape. Para 187 of the NPPF requires policies and decisions to protect and enhance valued landscapes and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
53. Policy CC02 of the MDD states that planning permission for proposals at the edge of settlements will only be granted where they can demonstrate that the development, including boundary treatments, is within development limits and respects the transition between the built-up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape.
54. Policy D2 of the FNDP states that proposals should be located and designed to maintain the separation of settlements and to complement the characteristics of the landscape in the immediate locality.
55. Policy IRS4 of the FNDP seeks to preserve the identity of Finchampstead Parish through informal green spaces, including retention of green corridors through the extensive rights of way network.
56. The site is identified in Wokingham Borough’s ‘Landscape Character Assessment’ WBLCA (2019) within area B2 ‘Blackwater River Valley with Open Water’, this is a landscape of moderate quality and sensitivity overall, with a modest capacity for

change. The WBLCA identifies 'Valued Landscape Attributes' of LCA B2 the majority of which relate directly to the site;

- *Rural riverine character of the Blackwater River and restored floodplain provide a sense of space.*
- *Ecologically valuable wetland habitats including BAP priority habitat eutrophic standing waters, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and floodplain grazing marsh, as well as remnant wet meadow and ancient woodland e.g. at Longwater Lane Meadow and Fleet Copse not affected by mineral extraction, which provide an important environment for flora and fauna.*
- *Restored gravel pit lakes which provide important ecological habitats and support a diverse range of birds, as well as opportunities for recreation.*
- *Undeveloped character of the valley, particularly in the floodplain, which provides a sense of naturalness and remoteness.*
- *Quiet rural lanes bordered by hedgerows which provide access to the area and enjoyment of the countryside.*
- *Recreational value of the Moor Green Lake Nature Reserve and the public rights of way including the promoted Blackwater Valley and Three Castles Paths which give access to the area and enjoyment of the river valley.*
- *Localised areas of tranquillity and peacefulness, with an experience of dark skies, particularly around the restored lakes, and away from the B0136.*
- *Views to the wooded backdrop of Fleet Copse and Finchampstead Ridges create an enclosed and secluded character, particularly around the Moor Green Lakes*

57. The landscape strategy for B2 is:

To maintain the landscape character of the Blackwater River Valley with Open Water the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance wetland and woodland habitats. The key aspects to be conserved, enhanced and actively managed are the River Blackwater corridor, the wetland habitats associated with the river and former gravel works, the woodland (particularly the ancient woodland) and the perceptual characteristics including the peaceful setting and dark skies.

In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern and retain the views to the wooded backdrop provided by Fleet Copse and M2: Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands.

58. The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) report, which provides an assessment of the visual impacts of the proposed development from key receptors and from a variety of different representative points. As part of the revisions to the scheme, a LVA Addendum was also submitted by the applicant to accompany the revised plans and amendments to the scheme.

59. The LVA Addendum includes a table to address the scenic quality of the site, and regards the site as a transitional area with the southern part of the site being more akin to the countryside whereas the northern part relates more to the settlement edge. The WBC Trees and Landscape Officer still considers that overall the Magnitude of Change to be Substantial/Major with Medium/High sensitivity resulting in a Major/Moderate Adverse effect on the landscape character at Year 1, which as the

development is irreversible will change little over time with the addition of landscaping or the completion of the country park.

60. The LVA Addendum still concludes that the landscape of the site does not contain any physical or perceptual qualities that take it out of the ordinary, beyond 'mere' countryside. WBC Trees and Landscape Officer does not agree with this statement, noting that there are indeed valuable landscape features within the site in the "Veteran" trees. In this regard, it should be noted that these trees will be retained and the revised layout now accounts for a wider buffer zone to keep any development outside of the root protection areas of these trees.
61. The WBC Trees and Landscape Officer disagrees that the proposal will form a proportionate extension of an existing settlement and would not affect the sparser development pattern of the open countryside side beyond the immediate vicinity of the village. Officers are of the opinion that the revised proposal, whilst indeed extending beyond the existing settlement edge still identifies a much wider buffer zone (30m) to the southern part of the site and in this sense, the site could still be read as a continuation of the northern green edge next to the country park.
62. Furthermore, the views provided within the LVA demonstrate how the site would be experienced from the public right of way south of the site, within the country park's future expansion. These highlight that, during the late winter months, the southern edge of Finchampstead village can already be seen at a distance in gaps between vegetation with minimal leaf coverage, meaning the sense of remoteness within the wider River Corridor is not achieved to the south of the site to the same extent as other locations. The new dwellings would sit closer to this boundary but still set back from the boundary by a minimum of 30m landscaped buffer. This will retain the experience of the southern edge of the village for both this view and any other views towards the development within the countryside to the south.
63. The WBC Trees and Landscape Officer also identifies that the location of the entrance/access from Longwater Road is unavoidable as is the sense of urbanisation that will come from its width, the engineering, loss of trees and part of the hedgerow, lighting, the screening effect of which cannot be immediately replaced, will cause a noticeable change of use and urbanising effect in the countryside and landscape of the area. Whilst this is acknowledged, this would unfortunately be the case for the majority of greenfield sites; indeed it was the case for the Land West of Trowes Lane in Swallowfield, allowed at appeal (APP/X0360/W/24/3340006), or land north of the A4 in Twyford, also allowed at appeal (APP/X0360/W/24/3350170), albeit at much larger scale. Moreover, it is considered the effect on the landscape would be largely confined to the site itself and the section of Longwater Road along its western boundary. The containment provided by the trees and hedges around the boundaries would largely screen the development in views from the wider landscape. Whilst there will be some short-term impact on the vegetation along Longwater Road, most of the existing landscape on this boundary will be retained (albeit with the visibility splays height restriction), and over time the replacement planting will establish and the road will appear as any other access to development in Finchampstead and will not appear out of place within the context of the settlement.
64. The site also contains a PROW which traverses the site linking it to the wider village. Its relationship to the development is therefore important in terms of its setting. The PROW will be retained within the site, thus complying with Policy IRS4 of the FNDP.

Following initial concerns raised by the WBC Trees and Landscape Officer, the revised layout now includes north-south routes allowing for permeability and snapshot views towards the south. It is acknowledged that some impacts on the views from the short stretch of right of way part of the site will be unavoidable; however it is noted that views from this short section of the PROW are mainly towards the southern site boundary given the exuberant and dense landscaping and generally flat nature of the site (refer to Fig. 3 below).



Fig. 3: View from the PROW looking towards the south (Officer's site visit photo)

65. In any case, proposed tree planting and native hedgerow immediate south of this route will partially screen and soften the appearance of the development as experienced by users of the right of way. Moreover, this impact should be read in the context of the wider right of way network which provides access beyond the vicinity of the village where the wider rural landscape character can be experienced uninterrupted. In addition, it should be noted that the right of way route along Cricket Hill and within the site has already been impacted somewhat by existing urban form which can be viewed to the north and to the south as a result of parking areas which exist to the south of Cricket Hill.
66. In conclusion, the WBC Trees and Landscape Officer raises an objection to the proposals by reason of its visual harm upon the countryside and surrounding landscape, and the corresponding conflict with policies CP11 and TB21, since the site is located in the countryside and would not meet any of the exceptions criteria of CP11 and would result in harm to the existing landscape, contrary to Policy TB21. However, as noted earlier in the report, officers do not consider that the proposals would be inconsistent with the underlying objectives of CP11 with regards to settlement separation. Officers also considered that sufficient effort has been made to revise the proposals to provide a layout that is designed to provide extensive landscaping opportunities within the site to complement the rural setting and minimise the visual impact of development upon the wider landscape. A condition has been recommended that requires the submission of detailed landscaping plans which will include a significant number of trees and hedgerows to be provided within the site. On balance and given the site's containment, Officers are of the view that the adverse impact of development upon the countryside and surrounding landscape would be minimal and therefore weighed in the balance.

Design and Site Layout

67. Policy CP3 states that development are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design.
68. Policy CC02 of the MDD Local Plan states that development at the edge of settlements is acceptable where it is demonstrated that it is within development limits and respects the transition between the built-up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape.
69. During the course of the application and following comments received from consultation and feedback from consultees, the proposed scheme has been amended to improve the integration of the proposed development with the southern edge of Finchampstead and its relationship with the emerging Country Park to the south by shifting the built form northwards, resulting in a wider buffer between the southern-most plots and the southern boundary. Retaining this wider spatial green buffer aligns the site to its residential identity, as opposed to fully infilling all space on the site as would be characteristic in a non-countryside location. The buffer zone further reduces any notable risk of overdevelopment within the site.
70. The principal changes to the layout include:
- Reduction of the overall units from 40 to 38;
 - The repositioning of built development away from trees on the eastern boundary. All development footprint is now located outside of the 19.2m offset, as requested;
 - Setting back of built development from the southern and western boundaries
 - Reduction in the number of dwellings located along the southern edge of the scheme, enhancing the transition from urban to countryside;
 - A re-configuration of the internal layout to provide views through development and provide more space for internal tree and shrub planting.
 - Reduction in hardscape, including superfluous footpaths and removal of potential connection to the future country park;
 - Increased landscape planting around (SuDS) to improve its aesthetics and integrate it more into its surroundings;
 - Increased planting around the proposed access to minimise impacts on the users on Longwater Road and the PROW;
 - A re-location of trees from the northern boundary to reduce over-shadowing issues for neighbouring properties.

71. For comparison, the original layout and proposed layout are shown in Fig. 4 below:



Original Site Layout



Revised Site Layout

Fig. 4: Comparison Site Layout Plans (Applicant's submission)

72. Of particular note is the removal of the southern internal access road which has allowed for a wider area of public open space and a more intimate relationship between the principal elevations facing towards the open countryside, which provides increased opportunities for natural surveillance and avoids vehicular activity in this part of the site. The number of units in this part of the site has also reduced from 13 to 6 in order to provide a more appropriate transition towards the open countryside beyond. The total number of dwellings has been reduced from 40 to 38 as a result.
73. The revised proposal would still retain the pump station near the southern boundary to retain the regulatory separation distance from the nearest dwellings, however, this feature has been carefully landscaped to ensure it assimilates into the landscape overtime. Further clarification from the applicant has been sought regarding the size and appearance of the pump station, who indicates that the majority of equipment will be located below ground with only a small cabinet structure(s) visible, to be screened by native hedgerow planting as shown on the Landscape Strategy. Details of the final appearance of the pumping station perimeter and equipment will be secured via condition.
74. The vehicular access to the pumping station is shown to be differentiated from the main vehicular routes with a different landscaping treatment, in this case grasscrete

which is considered acceptable, with details to be secured as part of the detailed landscaping condition.

75. The proposed layout has been further enhanced by loosening the arrangement of streets and plots within the site, reducing the number of dwellings from 40 to 38 units, and setting back development from key views, such as the approach from the main entrance and the internal access routes running in a north-south orientation. This would create a plethora of points of interest when traversing the street scene, which adds to the site's unique sense of place. In tandem, the amount of hardstanding has been reduced considerably and increased opportunities for more defined green infrastructure routes have been sought to allow for a multi-functional landscape to thrive. Consideration has been taken regarding the treatment of surfaces with narrower roads leading northwards and differing surface treatments in the southern part of the site to soften the transition to the open countryside. As a result, the development has become less formal in its appearance and better reflects this edge-of-settlement location.
76. Whilst the proposal indicates strong green infrastructure, blue infrastructure (SUDs basins) in character terms can be viewed as equally important. In this case, the proposed SUDs attenuation basin has been indicated to the southern part of the site to integrate well into the surrounding informal greenspace, which provides visual interest for future occupiers whilst also having an ecological and functional surface water treatment primary use.
77. Dwellings are generally shown to be oriented so that they address and provide frontages to the streets, and this is in keeping with other dwellings elsewhere on Longwater Road which face the public highway. Those dwellings on plots 1-3 facing Longwater Road are shown to be set back from the frontage and with a similar building line to those neighbouring properties immediately north of the site, thus retaining the pattern of development and allowing for appropriate landscaping which will contribute to retain the verdant character of Longwater Road.
78. The grain of development in the immediate vicinity of the application site comprises of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses on medium to large plots. The proposed development is considered to maintain this underlying grain due to the proposed house typology, and proposed size of the plots which fairly reflects those on Wood Moor cul-de-sac.
79. Overall, the proposed site layout as revised is of high quality design and demonstrates that a development of 38 dwellings can be suitably accommodated on a site and a layout that is compatible with its surroundings and would be suitable on the settlement edge, positively achieving a natural transition between built form area and open countryside, in accordance with policies CP3 of the Core Strategy, CC02 of the MDD Local Plan and the Borough Design Guide recommendations.

Density

80. MDD Local Plan policy TB05 (Housing Mix) requires that residential development should provide an appropriate density. Officers are also mindful that as development is located within the countryside (and will be adjacent to countryside), a suitable density is expected to highlight a natural transition from built form to rural landscape. R10 of the BDG states that an assessment of an appropriate density must be design-

led as well as considering the number of units per hectare to ensure that the development relate well to local character.

81. In this regard, when looking at surrounding residential development, on the northern boundary of the site is Wood Moor cul-de-sac development which equates to 15.17 dwellings per hectare (DPH); to the north-east is the development along Cricket Hill which equates to circa 15.65 DPH; dwellings along Longwater Road equate to 17.36 DPH.
82. The proposed density of the scheme would equate to 16.59 DPH which would be comparable to those residential developments in close proximity to the site, and so would not see the introduction of a materially greater or inappropriate density on the edge of the countryside. This has been expressed in some of the support letters received during public consultation. Officers are of the view that the proposal would reflect a suitably density which would make an effective use of land as required by the NPPF, yet be appropriate for this site, especially given that the mature landscape around the site boundaries would be retained, thereby providing instant visual screening to the proposal. Given this appropriate density and generous space available for soft landscaping, the development is not considered to be an overdevelopment of the site, but rather the development would assimilate suitably with the locality.
83. Many objections have been received owing to density of the development, which is a calculation made based on site area and number of dwelling, however this should not be confused with the quantum of dwellings, which is the amount of dwellings proposed. The above analysis demonstrates that the proposed density is commensurate with those of surrounding developments, compliant with policy TB05 and the BDG recommendations.

Scale, Appearance and Impact on the street scene

84. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy requires development to be of an appropriate scale, bulk and mass as the prevailing character of the area. Policy D1 of the FNDP generally only supports the development of 3 storey (and above) housing within the area of the Strategic Development Location (that part within Finchampstead Parish) and the Gorse Ride regeneration area. However, Policy D1 also states that building heights should reflect the character and appearance of the parish. The supporting text to the policy goes on to advise that there may be circumstances elsewhere in the parish where well-designed 3 storey houses may be appropriate. As such, Policy D1 does not represent a blanket ban on 3 storey dwellings outside of the areas specified above. .
85. It is noted that given the existing extensive tree coverage within the site boundaries, particularly west and south, most of which will be retained, the development would have limited views from wide ranging street scenes, although it is acknowledged that it would be perceived in views from users of the PROW and Lower Sandhurst Road to the east. Nonetheless, the proposed dwellings would be two-storey brick-built houses, thus complying with the aims of Policy D1 of the FNDP and CP3 in this regard.
86. In terms of appearance, the proposal suggests two character areas; those dwellings on the northern edge will echo the architectural styles of the adjacent buildings to the

north, including those located off Wood Moor to the north, with the use of pale buff brick with weatherboarding accents on their facades, whilst dwellings towards the southern side would feature primarily a red brick exterior broken up with the introduction of black boarding, drawing inspiration from classic rural architecture combined with a contemporary design. Overall, the appearance will resemble that of dwellings within the village with a high-quality design that is compatible with and complimentary to the character of the local area. An example of the proposed street scene within the site is provided in Fig. 5 below.



Fig. 5: Extract of proposed street scene elevations (Applicant's submission)

87. Details of materials to be used will be conditioned to ensure the development will suitably assimilate with surrounding built form. A material schedule has been submitted with high quality and detailed materials being used and will be conditioned.

Boundary Treatment

88. Policy CC03 of the MDD states that development should make a positive contribution in terms of boundary treatment on site frontages. Policy D2 of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan focuses on appropriate and traditional boundary treatments being incorporated into development to complement the characteristics of the landscape.
89. The proposed boundary treatments are shown on the submitted Boundary & Dwelling Material Layout (Ref. BDML01 B). It is proposed that close board fencing will only be used between the rear gardens of the proposed dwellings. Publicly visible boundaries will comprise either hedgerow planting or 1.8m high boundary walls with either a buff multi-stock brick with a light mortar or a red multi stock brick. The use of brick will be appropriate to an edge of settlement site and would be softened with trees and vegetation. The WBC Trees and Landscape Officer raises no objections to these but has recommended that trellis tops are included to the close board fencing between gardens and to the front between houses to appear more open in the narrow space between dwellings, and that significant landscaping (i.e. roses) are planted outside of brick walls, to resemble cottages rather than urban style homes. This is agreeable to the applicant and details can be secured by condition.

Residential Amenity:

90. Core Strategy policy CP3 requires that new development should be of a high quality of design that does not cause detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users. Separation distance standards for new residential development are set out in section 4.7 of the Council's Borough Design Guide (BDG). These include a requirement for a minimum back-to-back distance of 22m; front-to-front 10m; flank-to-boundary 1m;

and flank-to-rear 12m; to maintain privacy and limit the sense of enclosure. R15 of the BDG states that buildings must be designed to provide reasonable levels of visual privacy to habitable rooms.

91. It is important to note that amenity requirements for future occupiers of the proposed development and existing neighbours near to a development site both need to be considered.

Internal Amenity Standards

92. Policy TB07 of the MDD Local Plan states that proposals for new residential units should ensure that the internal layout and size are suitable to serve the amenity requirements of future occupiers. This is reiterated in R17 of the BDG which requires adequate internal space to ensure the layout and size achieves good internal amenity for future occupiers. R18 of the BDG also requires sufficient sunlight and daylight to new properties, with dwellings afforded a reasonable dual outlook and southern aspect.
93. The Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standards 2015 (as amended) sets out minimum standards for different types of accommodation. In terms of bedroom sizes, the Technical Housing Standards requires that a dwelling with more than one bedroom should have a main bedroom (double), which is to have a minimum area of 11.5sqm. Secondary or single bedrooms should have a minimum area of 7.5sqm, and there should be provision for storage.
94. In this respect, the proposed dwellings would exceed space standards and all habitable rooms would be served by regular windows. No objections are therefore raised in this respect.
95. In addition, within the proposed development plot layout, the dwellings would not be overbearing or cause loss of light to one another due to generally having a similar building line (front and rear) to their immediate neighbour with satisfactory separation distances also being incorporated in every instance.

External Amenity Space of future occupiers

96. The BDG establishes principles for provision of private external amenity space for dwellings: the size of garden should relate to the house type and number of proposed occupants and provide a degree of privacy. In suburban areas gardens should be of sufficient size to allow a variety of activities (level areas for sitting, play, clothes drying, outside storage), which requires a roughly rectangular, useable space of at least 11 metres in length which receives direct sunlight for at least part of the day. There should also be secure external cycle storage.
97. The proposed site layout makes appropriate provision for outdoor amenity space for each dwelling. Whilst it is acknowledged that some of the proposed gardens depths are less than the minimum 11m recommended in the BDG (i.e. plots 6, 7, 10-13), it is noted that all the plots with substandard garden depths are still approximately between 9m and 10m in depth and wider, so that overall they are still of an adequate size to accommodate typical garden activities, in line with the principles of the BDG. No objections are therefore raised in this respect.

Amenity of Existing Occupiers of Wood Moor and Cricket Hill

98. The application site is flanked by residential development of Wood Moor to the north and those accessed from Cricket Hill to the north-east. The separation distances from the proposed dwellings on the northern plots (i.e. 4-6, 13-17, 22 & 32) to the rear elevations of the nearest neighbouring properties on Wood Moor and Cricket Hill are in excess of 22m (i.e. circa 24.8m minimum distance), and thus compliant with the requirements of the BDG.
99. These adequate separation distances combined with suitable landscaping and screening/ boundary treatments are to be secured by conditions, and will ensure that the proposed development will not result in a detrimental loss of light, overbearing or overlooking impacts upon the living conditions of adjoining properties.
100. The main access road to the proposed development would be located towards the northern side of the application site, but at a distance of approximately 15m from the boundary of the nearest property no. 53 Longwater Road, so that it is unlikely there would be any significant harm caused due to noise nuisance.
101. Measures for protecting nearby residents during the construction phase, including noise, are detailed within the Environmental Health section of the report and will be secured by condition.

Access and Movement:

Vehicle and Cycle Parking

102. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off street car parking standards, including provision for charging facilities. Policy GA1(5) of FNDP states that development proposals should provide adequate off-road parking to avoid access restrictions on the urban and rural roads.
103. It is proposed that each dwelling would have on-site space to park 2 cars and the proposed level of parking exceeds the borough standards and is acceptable. The submitted parking plan shows all the unallocated spaces as visitor spaces and the dimensions of the parking spaces are in line with the borough standards. The WBC Highways Officer has raised concerns that the parking spaces for plots 1, 2 and 3 would require the neighbouring parking spaces for manoeuvring, however, is content for details of parking to be secured by condition.
104. Cycle parking spaces are proposed in rear gardens with direct access which is considered acceptable. Details will be secured via condition.
105. It is also welcome that each dwelling would have a charging point which is in line with Building Control Regulations Approved Document S.
106. Subject to the above conditions the WBC Highways Officer raises no objection on parking grounds.

Traffic Generation/ Impact

107. Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP6 require consideration of the travel impacts of development. Policy GA1(1) of the FNDP requires development proposals to demonstrate how they integrate with arterial routes in a way that does not impede traffic flow or lead to unacceptable congestion.
108. The trip rates for this site have been calculated using the TRICS data. However, no comparative assessment has been carried out to assess whether or not these represent this site. Notwithstanding, the WBC Highways Officer has carried out an assessment using the Borough's approved trip rates which are based on nationally approved TRICS statistics, concluding that for this proposed development, during the morning peak there would be 23 cars exiting the site (less than one car per two minutes) whereas at evening peak there would be 20 cars entering the site which is also under one car per two minutes. Both peak trip rates would not constitute significant congestion, nor suggests that any highways safety issue would arise from the proposal. The WBC Highways Officer is satisfied that the traffic generated from this development would not have an adverse impact on the highway network.

Access, Visibility and Internal Site Roads

109. It is proposed that the site will be accessed from Longwater Road via a priority junction to the south of the entrance into the PROW. This new access road would measure 5.5m in width, with 2m wide pavements on both sides and connecting onto Longwater Road. It is proposed that there would be dropped kerbs and tactile paving as part of the access which is in line with highways technical guidance and provides a shielded walkable route even in peak hours of usage.
110. Several objections have been received from local residents and the Parish Council noting that Longwater Road transitions from 30mph to 60mph at the site's entrance. As part of this application it is proposed to extend the 30mph speed limit 50m further south of the road, which is considered acceptable as an improvement to highway safety. The WBC Highways Officer indicates this will need to be through the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process and the funding of this would be secured through the S106 agreement. The applicant agrees to comply with this obligation.
111. Visibility splays for the proposed access have been designed to actual 85th percentile speeds. The lengths of the splays have been calculated using the equation contained within the Manual for Streets (MfS) which is acceptable. Visibility splays for the internal junction have been submitted for a 20mph design speed which is acceptable. Forward visibility splays are also provided and these will be protected by either the provision of a footway or grassed areas. Any landscaping within the visibility splay would need to be maintained to less than 0.6m in height and this can be secured by condition. No objections are raised by the WBC Highways Officer on this aspect.
112. The development will incorporate internal site roads. A S106 obligation will be secured to ensure that internal site roads are properly managed. The roads will be required to be built to Council adoptable standards. If the site road is to remain private, the legal agreement will secure details of management company set up to look after the maintenance of the road, level of money set aside for maintenance, alongside the Borough's inspection fee and the APC bond.

113. If the site roads are to be adopted, these would need to be delivered through s38 agreement with the Borough. The Borough would also require agreement on inspection fees and commuted sums. The adoption plans, fees and commuted sums would need to be included in the s106 agreement.

Swept Path Assessment

114. Swept paths of a refuse lorry with acceptable dimensions have been provided as part of the Refuse Collection Plan. These have been assessed and are acceptable. The plan also identifies other vehicles including a fire tender, however due to the manoeuvring requirements of the refuse vehicle being more onerous than the fire tender, WBC Highways Officer is content that each dwelling can be accessed by a fire tender.

Travel Plan

115. A Travel Plan Statement has been submitted in support of the application. Due to the size of the development proposed, the WBC Highways Officer has indicated that there is no requirement for targets or monitoring. A Travel Plan co-ordinator will be appointed prior to occupation which is welcome.
116. The statement includes action plans for walking and cycling which is welcome.
117. Funding will be made available for administration of the statement and for implementation of initiatives which is also welcome.
118. The WBC Highways Officer raises no objection on this aspect and is content to secure this document through a planning condition.

Locational Sustainability

119. Paragraph 110 of the NPPF (2024) acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making. This principle was considered in recent appeals allowed for much larger residential developments at Trowes Lane, Land North of Bath Road and Watmore Lane, along with a comparative scaled development at School Road, Hurst.
120. Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy states that 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;*
 - c) Improve the existing infrastructure network, including road, rail and public transport, enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including provision for those with reduced mobility, and other users;*
121. The appropriateness of the site for residential development in relation to key sustainable transport modes is assessed below.

Walking

122. The Borough Design Guide SPD states 'if places are to be sustainable then the aim should be to create: Walkable neighbourhoods, with a range of facilities within 10 minutes walking distance of residential areas, which encourage people to travel on foot or by bicycle.' Walkable neighbourhoods are defined in the MfS as those typically characterised by having a range of facilities within 10 minutes walking distance from residential areas. MfS clarifies that 10 minutes walking distance is approximately 800 metres.
123. 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. The document clarifies that the suggested walking distances are for pedestrians without mobility impairment. These distances are also cited in the Wokingham Highways guidance Living Streets.
124. There is a 2m pedestrian footway on the eastern side of Longwater Road (along the site frontage) which facilitates access north into the centre of the village and south towards Eversley Cross. It is acknowledged that within the vicinity of the site, Longwater Road is unlit so for journeys outside of daylight hours some pedestrians may feel less confident using it. Nonetheless, Longwater Road directly connects to the nearest primary school Finchampstead Church of England school which is approximately 650m from the site. This is an acceptable walking distance. There is also the Greyhound PH some 450m north of the site and Goswell & Birds Farm Shop and Coffee house selling various farm produce.
125. It is acknowledged that the majority of the local services are outside of an acceptable walking distance, however there are still some services within accessible walking distance which means the site is not wholly unsustainable for walking to nearby facilities. It is common practice in the borough that settlements forming limited development location's needs are often catered for by higher ranking settlements such as Finchampstead north in this instance, the MDD Local Plan acknowledges this point, and so does the NPPF. Furthermore, the site would be no less sustainable in this regard than other peripheral parts of the Limited Development Location, including those immediately adjacent to the site along Longwater Road.

Buses

126. The supporting text to policy CP6 of the Core Strategy sets out the requirement of a good bus service: a) At least a thirty-minute service frequency during peak times (7:00 to 9:00 and 16:00 to 19:00 Monday to Saturday); and b) At least an hourly service frequency during off-peak hours (9:00 to 16:00 and 19:00 to 22:00 Monday to Saturday and between 7:00 and 22:00 on Sundays).
127. The nearest bus stops to the proposal site are located approximately 250m north of the site. These serve the bus route 145 which operates 1 return journey every Tuesday. There is one school service 406 which runs between California Cross Roads to Yateley and Farnborough from a stop some 600m away from the site. There is one service in the morning at 07:46 and 2 in the afternoon arriving back at 15:51 and 17:21 which runs only during the term time.

128. It is acknowledged that the bus service does not meet the criteria set out above and cannot be considered as a 'good service'.
129. Notwithstanding, the application proposes that the current route 145 bus service is supplemented to cater for working weekday commuters to/from Bracknell, Reading and London, as well as Wokingham itself, through connections at Wokingham Interchange and train services at the adjacent railway station. The WBC Highways Officer indicates that a financial contribution for bus service improvements to serve the site will allow flexibility in terms of either enhancing the existing service or adopting the applicant's proposal. The applicant is agreeable to this approach. The contribution will be secured via the S106 agreement.

Cycling

130. There are no official cycleways within Finchampstead, however Longwater Road is a relatively straight road and therefore is deemed suitable for the principle of cycling. A Travel Plan has been submitted in support of the application which includes action plans for walking and cycling to improve connectivity between the development and local services and facilities, and this will be secured by condition.

Summary on locational sustainability

131. WBC Highways Officer raises objection to the application in light of the site being an unsustainable location with poor walking and bus services. Notwithstanding, it is recognised that there are still day-to-day facilities and services within proximity of the site, and while some alternative transport modes are not optimal and below standards at present, it would offer some realistic options to some residents of the proposed development. In some instances, Finchampstead village offers more accessible facilities to its residents than some existing residential development on the outskirts of Finchampstead North and other larger settlement locations.
132. Through appropriate conditions and planning obligations including to secure improvements to the local bus services, it is considered the sustainability/accessibility of the site would improve.
133. The impacts of the proposed development in accessibility terms will factor into the overall planning balance made at the end of this report.

Impact on Trees:

134. Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan seeks to protect existing trees and promote opportunities for new soft landscaping.
135. Policy IRS6 of the FNDP states that development proposals should seek to retain mature or important trees, groups of trees or woodland on site. If trees are to be removed, a similar replacement should be provided in terms of local species and keeping with the character of the area.
136. The arboricultural character of the site is found chiefly to the site boundaries with the eastern boundary containing open grown mature Oak trees on, and off site that still influence the site setting. The southern site boundary is marked by a neglected hedgerow that covers a water filled ditch in which some of the trees are

growing and some growing on the bank. The western boundary is a native hedgerow with Oaks growing within it. To the northern boundary is a hedge to the back of the dwellings which is mostly ornamental conifers.

137. The application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (edp, Ref. edp4070_r013a, June 2024), as well as an Addendum Arboricultural Note (edp, Ref. edp4070_r015a, November 2024) following initial comments from the WBC Trees & Landscape Officer and revisions to the proposed site layout. The AIA shows that trees are mostly confined towards the site boundaries. It is noted that all trees within the site are subject to a Tree Preservation Order (Ref. 1596/2017).
138. The WBC Trees and Landscape Officer has reviewed the revised proposal and advises that the Addendum Note addresses their original comments (with regard to impact on trees), and whilst the applicant's arboricultural consultant does not recognise T2 and T5 as "Veteran" trees, the revised Site Layout has accounted for a "Veteran" tree buffer zone for trees T2 and T5 of circa 19.2m and 18m respectively, applying the guidance in the PPG on Veteran trees, and the protection area for these two trees will now comply with paragraph 186c of the NPPF.
139. The submitted Tree Protection Plan identifies the removal of 4 Oak trees (T22-T25) on the western site boundary to facilitate the site access. Whilst it is clear that trees need to be removed for this purpose, the WBC Trees and Landscape Officer questions the need to remove T22 and T23 as they appear to be on the line/edge of the visibility splay. Further clarification has been received from the applicant on this point, who has indicated that it may be possible to retain one additional tree previously identified for removal; however the ability to retain this tree will be subject to further surveys of Longwater Road and Section 278 discussions with the WBC Highway Authority, therefore confirmation on whether additional trees on the western site boundary can be retained can be secured as part of a detailed landscaping condition. The WBC Trees & Landscape Officer also indicates that the Tree Protection Plan would need to be updated were the tree to be retained, and this can also be secured by condition.
140. Notwithstanding, additional tree planting is proposed throughout the site as part of the landscape strategy that will make up for any trees lost as a result of the proposals. The WBC Trees and Landscape Officer is of the view that more native trees should be used to the north of the site replacing non-native trees specified, and trees can be planted on the south side of the access road. There is also further scope for more trees within the proposed north-south routes. This again can be secured by condition for an updated detailed landscaping scheme.
141. Overall, with the exception of the four trees on the western boundary, all existing trees on site are proposed to be retained, with additional tree provision proposed, so that the proposal would comply with policies CC03 of the MDD Local Plan and IRS6 of the FNDP.

Ecology:

142. Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network. Policy CP7 of the Core Strategy states that sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an

international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted.

143. The application site itself is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations.
144. The application is accompanied by an Ecological Appraisal (The Environment Dimension Partnership, ref: edp4070_r009b version 009b, July 2024). This has been reviewed by the WBC Ecology Officer who is of the view that sufficient information has been submitted to be able to consider the impact of the proposed development on protected species and habitats and species of principal importance.

Bats

145. The Ecological Appraisal includes an assessment of bat activity on the site (and adjacent field to the east). The WBC Ecology Officer indicates that from species numbers alone, the site could be assessed as of county importance. However, they also advised that this would be a naïve approach as it does not look at the size of the proposal and the activity levels of the rarer species. The Officer agrees that the activity levels are indicative of occasional foraging through a site on the periphery of a wider valley of good habitat. The quantum of grassland habitat area loss is unlikely to be significant in proportion to the core sustenance zone requirement for these species and will be somewhat mitigated on a landscape scale through biodiversity net gain.
146. The Ecological Appraisal has identified tree T23 as having a potential roost feature. This tree is proposed to be removed to facilitate access. Mitigation and feature compensation proposals are outlined in the appraisal, as well as to secure the detail and implementation of this mitigation through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) condition. The WBC Ecology Officer considers that this is an appropriate course of action and therefore raises no objection subject to the CEMP being secured by condition.
147. Likewise, the WBC Ecology Officer also considers that the use of the site for commuting, some foraging, and potentially mating behaviour could be retained through the application of lighting mitigation and securing positive management for biodiversity of the created ancillary public open space. The Officer therefore recommends a lighting for light sensitive species condition and a habitat management and monitoring plan (HMMP) condition to relate to the non-private garden open space. On the basis that these conditions are applied, no objections are raised on this ground, noting that the local favourable conservation status of bats can be maintained.

Badgers

148. A Badger sett has been identified as present on the border of the site. It is not clear from the Ecological Assessment what type of sett this is. It is therefore appropriate to take a precautionary approach and consider it is a main sett at this stage.
149. The WBC Ecology Officer is satisfied that an adequate buffer between the sett and the development footprint can be provided. The Ecological Assessment

recommends further mitigation measures to be applied during construction. The detail and implementation of construction mitigation will be secured through the CEMP condition.

150. Long-term retention of the Badger sett, once the new residential development is occupied, will rely on mitigating the risk of significant disturbance. On this basis, the WBC Ecology Officer recommends some minor tweaks to the soft landscaping to thicken the vegetative barrier with more shrubs in proximity to the sett. This can be secured as part of the detailed soft landscaping condition.

Breeding Birds

151. The breeding bird survey picked up that the schedule 1 species, Barn Owl, is roosting locally and foraging over the site. The WBC Ecology Officer indicates that within the wider landscape there are several Barn Owl nest boxes that are monitored. These nest boxes regularly have successful breeding. The roosting observation is entirely consistent with this. The Officer agrees that the site itself is unlikely to be providing a nesting location for this species and the disturbance risk need not be considered further. The value of the site for this species is primarily for its foraging.
152. Considering the size of the site and the typical foraging territory/range of the species, the WBC Ecology Officer is of the view that the development proposal is unlikely to result in significant loss of foraging habitat to the point where it negatively impacts the local conservation status of this species.

Reptiles

153. The Ecological Assessment includes a reptile survey which identified at least three species of widespread reptile as using the site – with all species being recorded in numbers that indicate a low population level. The survey transects do indicate that these species are occupying the marginal/transition vegetation that is around the perimeter of the site.
154. The WBC Ecology Officer agrees that it is likely that the risk of killing or injuring reptiles during construction could be adequately mitigated using a carefully planned method statement. The Ecological Assessment provides an outline mitigation strategy; however, the concern is that there probably needs to be a bit more thought as to marginal habitat along the northern boundary, where all three species were recorded, as this is close to the proposed access road. However, this can be resolved via a CEMP condition.
155. The long-term local conservation status of these reptile species of principal importance will only be maintained through targeted species specific measures to enhance the retained and created open space habitat. The WBC Ecology Officer recommends the inclusion of reptile hibernacula; grass Snake egg-laying piles, and over-digging of the surface water attenuation basin to provide more permanent pond habitat. All these can be secured through a combination of a species specific biodiversity enhancement condition to secure the detail of what will be constructed and a HMMP condition to secure the ongoing management of those features within the open space. Subject to these conditions the WBC Ecology Officer raises no objections on this aspect.

Great Crested Newts

156. The NatureSpace Ecologist, the statutory consultee for Great Crested Newts, confirmed that there is a low risk to great crested newts being affected by this proposal. The submitted ecological appraisal (Land to the East of Longwater Road, Finchampstead, Ecological Appraisal – EDP, July 2024) has conducted eDNA surveys on accessible ponds and suggested that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is submitted to mitigate any potential risk to great crested newts. The NatureSpace Ecologist is satisfied that this approach is appropriate for the site. As such, subject to the CEMP being secured by condition, no objection is raised by the Officer on this ground.

Species Specific Biodiversity Enhancements and Ecological Permeability

157. The Ecological Assessment makes recommendations for bird and bat boxes to be provided within the development and proposes that they are secured within a Landscape Environmental Management Plan (LEMP) condition. The WBC Ecology Officer is of the view that the detail of what is to be implemented is secured in a separate condition. Some elements, such as integrated bat and bird boxes, will ideally be delivered in locations that will be privately owned and fall outside of the remit of a LEMP/HMMP. It is therefore appropriate to resolve the detail of what is to go where via a separate pre-commencement condition so the HMMP condition can concentrate on maintenance of those features approved to be within the open space. The details can form part of the same condition of the ecological permeability measures (particularly in relation to Hedgehog access to garden spaces) to be provided on-site, in order to satisfy local plan policy TB23.

Biodiversity Net Gain

158. Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan states that development proposals should result in an overall net gain but does not specify an amount. The Council's Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement (2022) updates the Council's sustainability policies in light of the Council's declared climate emergency. It should be noted that the statement is not policy, or part of the statutory development plan, however its purpose is to emphasise that climate change is a material planning consideration. In this document, it states that developments will be expected to investigate opportunities to provide a 10% biodiversity net gain. Policy IRS5 of the FNDP also states that developments should provide a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%. Furthermore, it should be noted that a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain is a requirement of major applications from 12th February 2024.
159. The Ecological Appraisal includes technical information to support a baseline assessment of habitat biodiversity and a corresponding statutory metric (Iteration: v3, Completed 28 November 2024). The WBC Ecology Officer indicates that the local planning authority can accept the survey conducted as part of the Ecological Appraisal as providing a fair and accurate baseline assessment of the site.
160. At the point of determination of the application, the Council is not expected to approve the full detail of the habitat biodiversity post-development scenario – this being a matter to consider via discharge of the mandatory net gain condition. It is, however, relevant to consider the broad strategy proposed by the applicant to achieve the mandatory biodiversity net gain target.

161. The WBC Ecology Officer is in agreement that the proposal is following the biodiversity net gain mitigation hierarchy and has avoided as much as possible the loss of important habitats on-site. The development will result in the creation and enhancement of medium distinctiveness habitats on-site that will contribute to delivery of the biodiversity net gain target. The delivery of these on-site significant measures will need to be secured through a mix of conditions and a planning obligation. A soft landscaping detail condition and separate HMMP condition will secure the detail of the final landscaping and plan for ongoing management. A planning obligation will need to be applied to secure monitoring of the management of these habitats and ensure that they are being provided for the full thirty year period. Subject to this being secured, no objections are raised on ecological grounds.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA)

162. Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy states that where development is likely to have an effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA), it is required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.
163. The site is located within the 5km zone from the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA). The proposal will result in the net increase of 38 dwellings on site. Policy CP8 states that where there is a net increase in dwellings within 5km of the SPA, an Appropriate Assessment is required to be undertaken to ensure that development would not have an adverse impact on the TBH SPA. The Council, as the competent authority, has to ensure that the Appropriate Assessment is passed before a development is permitted.
164. A monetary contribution towards Suitable Alternative Green Space (SANG) is required per dwelling and this is dependent on the number of bedrooms in each dwelling. Each dwelling will also have to pay a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) contribution. The rate per dwelling is contained within the Appropriate Assessment (Refer to Appendix 2 below) and is dependent on the number of bedrooms per dwelling. The total SPA related financial contribution for this proposal is £127,431.93. Such contribution must be secured through a S106 legal obligation. In this case, the applicant has confirmed to enter into the S106 legal agreement with the Council, so that the proposal would not lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA and would comply with SEP Saved Policy NRM6, policy CP8 of the Core Strategy, and the NPPF.

Flood Risk and Drainage:

165. The NPPF and its supporting Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on 'Flood Risk and Coastal Change' provide guidance on how flood risk should be considered within the planning application process and encourages the implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). The NPPF also requires applications to be subject to a Sequential Test, to guide development to areas at the lowest risk of flooding.
166. Core Strategy Policy CP1 and MDD Local Plan Policies CC09 and CC10 are relevant and establish that new development should avoid increasing and where possible reduce flood risk (from all sources) by first developing in areas with lowest

flood risk, carrying out a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) where required, and managing surface water in a sustainable manner. Applications are also required to demonstrate how they have used the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to determine the suitability of the proposal.

167. The application site falls within Flood Zone 1 (i.e. land having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding, with this considered to be low risk). The area immediately adjacent to the south of the site boundary (outside the red line) is located within Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3 (refer to Fig. 6 below). There is a drainage ditch (unnamed ordinary watercourse) that runs along the southern boundary. All development proposed would be located within Flood Zone 1.

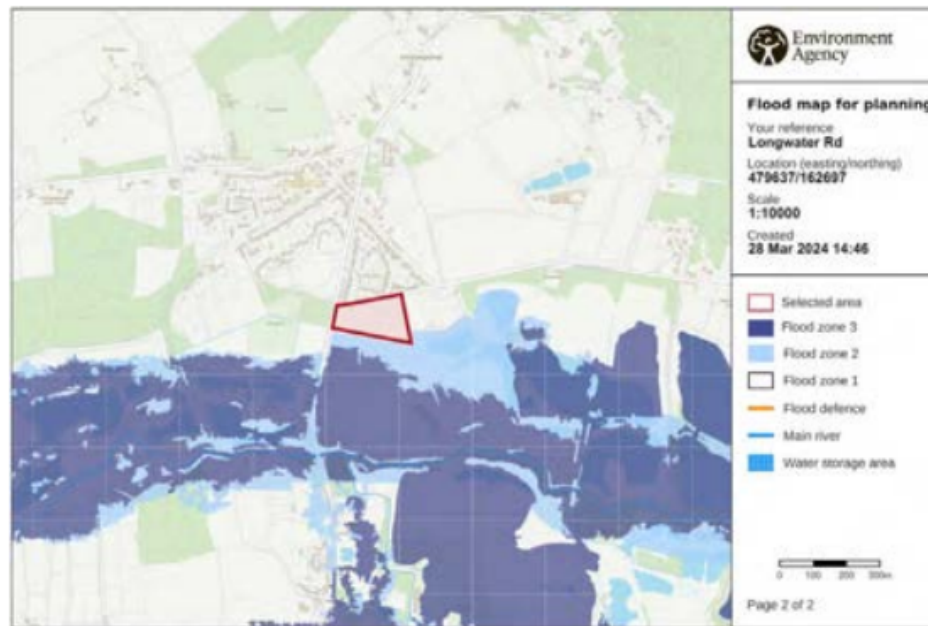


Fig. 6: EA Flooding Map (application site outlined in red)

168. Whilst the proposed end use for residential dwellings is classified in the NPPF a 'more vulnerable' development, such a use is considered appropriate within Flood Zone 1 without the need for either the Sequential or Exception test to be undertaken. Notwithstanding, as the site area is greater than 1Ha, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is required.
169. The application is accompanied by a FRA and Drainage Strategy Addendum (RPS group, Ref. 794-DES-ARC-30429, V2, dated November 2024), which follows and addresses initial comments received from the WBC Flood Risk and Drainage Engineer. The FRA and Drainage Strategy identifies that surface water will be collected and conveyed by a gravity sewer system and attenuated prior to discharge in an attenuation basin located in the south-east corner of the site. Surface water will outfall to an ordinary watercourse located to the southwest of the site at a restricted rate of 4.6l/s", as represented by the drainage strategy drawing in Appendix E.
170. A specialist management company will be identified and appointed to maintain the SuDS features for the lifetime of the development, in accordance with Tables 2-4 of the above report.
171. The WBC Flood Risk and Drainage Engineer raises no objection to this application given the site's location within Flood Zone 1 and that, in principle, a

satisfactory sustainable drainage strategy can be implemented on site. A more detailed design will be secured by condition.

172. The application indicates that surface water will not be discharged into the public network and as such, Thames Water raises no objection in this regard.

173. With regards to foul water sewerage network infrastructure capacity, Thames Water also raises no objection to this application.

Heritage – Archaeology:

174. Policy TB25 of the MDD states that where development is likely to affect an area of high archaeological potential or an area which is likely to contain archaeological remains, the presumption is that appropriate measures shall be taken to protect remains by preservation in situ. Where this is not practical, applicants shall provide for excavation, recording and archiving of the remains.

175. Paragraph 218 of the NPPF which states that local planning authorities should *'require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible'*.

176. There are potential archaeological implications with this proposed development as demonstrated by Berkshire Archaeology's Historic Environment Record and previous investigations, and noted in the desk-based assessment submitted with the application (Archaeological and Heritage Assessment (EDP Ltd, Ref. edp4070_r010a, May 2024)).

177. The development site was subject of previous archaeological work (geophysics and a small trial trench evaluation) in 2017, which established that there are significant archaeology features within the site, including several enclosures and pits, two of which have been dated to the Iron Age or early Roman period. These works evidence the potential of further archaeological investigation to facilitate a better understanding of past activity on the site, enable preservation by record, and mitigate the impacts of the development.

178. Overall the application site falls within an area of archaeological significance and archaeological remains may be damaged by ground disturbance for the proposed development. Berkshire Archaeology has therefore recommended that the following condition is applied to a programme of archaeological work including a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), should permission be granted, in order to mitigate the impacts of development. With this included, the principle of development complies with Policy TB25 of the MDD and with relevant guidance contained within the NPPF. Hence, the proposal is acceptable in this respect.

Environmental Health:

179. Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that development should minimise the emission of pollutants into the wider environment. Pollutants could be in the form of, but not limited to, air pollution, noise pollution and ground contamination. Policy CC06 of the MDD specifically concerns noise impacts of a development.

180. Policy GA1 of the FNDP states that development proposals should demonstrate effective planning to mitigate noise and air pollution from traffic.

Contaminated Land

181. The proposal is supported by a comprehensive Phase 1 Geological Site Desk Study (GRM, Ref. P7995, Issue DS.4, December 2023). The preliminary indicators are that the site is suitable for the proposed development. The recommendation is that a Phase 2 intrusive site investigation is carried out to fully assess the site. The WBC Environmental Health Officer has raised no objections on this ground subject to a condition outlining the above Phase 2 site investigation along with an unexpected land contamination condition.

Noise

182. The application is accompanied by a Noise Impact Assessment Report (RPS group, Ref. 794-ENV-ACO-DES-ARC-30429, REPT-01-R1, June 2024). The WBC Environmental Health Officer has raised no objections, stating the noise assessment is comprehensive and has considered the relevant elements and highlighted any uncertainty in predicted data, the mitigation recommendations are satisfactory. The WBC Environmental Health Officer agrees with the conclusions of the report and has recommended a condition to ensure the recommendations set out in the report are implemented.
183. To protect nearby occupiers from noise disturbance and other environmental health hazards during construction, an hours of work condition will be applied and a construction method statement detailing how the emission of noise, dirt and dust will be controlled during the development. With these stringent measures in place, impact on neighbours during the construction phase would be minimised.

Air Quality

184. The site is not located within a designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). However, the principles of Policy GA1 in the FNDP apply which specifically require mitigation from air pollution. The application is supported by an Air Quality Assessment report (RPS group, Ref. 794-DES-ARC-30429, Rev 1, dated June 2024). The WBC Environmental Health Officer raises no objections and recommends that the recommendations regarding dust suppression during construction should be implemented by the developer. This will be secured by condition.

Odour

185. The application is accompanied by an Odour Impact Assessment (RPS group, Ref. JAP9674, dated June 2017) and an Odour Assessment Technical Note (RPS group, Ref. 4123, dated February 2024). The odour assessment although dating from 2017 is still relevant with the updated technical note that has been added, where there is uncertainty and adverse weather conditions that may affect how odour transmits across the site does not detract from the findings that no adverse effect from odour is likely to be experienced by the new residents of the proposed development. No objections are therefore raised by the WBC Environmental Health Officer.

Waste Provision:

186. Policy CC04 of the MDD Local Plan requires adequate internal and external storage for the segregation of waste and recycling as well as provision for green waste and composting and an appropriate area for ease of collection.
187. The application is accompanied by a Refuse Collection Plan (RCP01 Rev B) which shows bin storage for each property to be located within the rear gardens with kerbside collection, as well as maximum distances for residents carrying refuse (30m max) and operators travel routes (25m max). These are considered acceptable carrying distances. No objections are therefore raised on this ground. Details of waste storage will be secured via condition.

Housing Sustainability:

188. Core Strategy Policy CP1 requires development to contribute towards the goal of achieving zero carbon development by including on-site renewable energy features and minimising energy and water consumption. This is amplified by MDD Local Plan policies CC04: Sustainable design and construction and CC05: Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks and the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (May 2010). As the proposal is for residential of over 1000sqm, Policy CC05 also advises that planning permission will only be granted for such proposals that deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology.
189. Policy ES1 of the FNDP outlines environmental standards for residential development. It specifies that major residential development should be designed to achieve carbon neutral homes where this is both practical and viable. It also makes a provision for electric vehicle charging points.
190. It should be noted that the above policies (aside from the FNDP) are out of date and were written before the Council's declared Climate Emergency. For this reason, the Council produced a Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement (CCIPPS) (2022) which outlines what is expected of development proposals in light of the climate emergency.
191. In relation to policy requirements outlined in CC04, it should be noted that the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 has now been withdrawn, and now applicants must meet the interim Future Homes Standard (as required by Building Regulations) of a minimum 31% reduction in emissions, in line with the CCIPPS.
192. Paragraph 167 of the NPPF states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements through installation of heat pumps and solar panels.
193. The application is accompanied by Sustainability & Energy Statement and Addendum prepared by consultants Icen Projects alongside the Design and Access Statement authored by Thrive Architects and associated drawings. The WBC Sustainability Officer has assessed this application and supporting Sustainability Statement and raises no objections, noting that the commitment to deliver a reduction

in regulated operational GHG emissions of 64.3% for the development overall through the use of air-source heat-pumps and improved building fabric performance confers a significant benefit and is favourably viewed. Conditions are recommended to secure a 10% reduction in carbon emissions above the minimum requirements of Part L: Building Regulations and provision for domestic water consumption.

194. Electric vehicle charging points are secured as standard by Building Regulations.

195. As such, it is recognised that the development meets the requirements set out in policy CC04, contributes to the Council climate change goals and fulfils the national sustainability objectives. This is afforded weight in the overall planning balance.

Employment and Skills Plan:

196. Policy TB12 of the MDD Local Plan requires an Employment Skills Plan (ESP) for this development. ESP uses the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) benchmark based on the value of construction. This is calculated by multiplying the total floor space (3,657m²) by £1025, which is the cost of construction per square metre as set out by Building Cost Information Service of RICS and the methodology as set out in the Council's Employment and Skills Guidance. In this case, it totals £3,748,425.

197. Based on the CITB benchmarks the ESP for this site would require the following:

Project value	£3,748,425
Community Skills Support E.g. work experience	5
Apprenticeship starts	2
Jobs created	2

198. If for any reason the applicant is unable to deliver the plan or elects to pay the contribution, the employment outcomes of the plan will be borne by the Council at a contribution of £3,750, which is the cost to WBC to oversee and support each employment target. In this case, a total of £15,000 (£3,750 x4) would be required in lieu of an ESP on this application. The requirements of the ESP (and any contribution in lieu) will form part of the S106 legal agreement. Given the applicant has agreed to an ESP planning obligation, the proposal complies with policy TB12 of the MDD Local Plan.

199. This is a recognised benefit that should be afforded weight in the planning balance.

Infrastructure:

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

200. 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.

201. The application is liable for CIL payments because it involves 38 new residential dwellings on site. It is payable at £365/m² index linked. Based on the proposed 40% market provision, this would equate to a potential CIL contribution of approx. £774,502.69, albeit this could be subject to change.
202. A number of public objections received have raised concerns regarding the lack of existing infrastructure within Finchampstead and that existing local services and amenities (i.e. roads, schools, doctors/dentist surgeries, etc.) would not be able to accommodate the increase in population.
203. As stated above, the application would include CIL payments of £365/m² (index linked) which will be used to cover the cost of infrastructure it will rely upon, such as roads and schools. Town and Parish Councils will also receive a meaningful proportion of the money raised. This can be up to 25 percent of receipts in areas with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, such as Finchampstead. Individual parish websites can be checked in order to see the parishes individual annual CIL statement setting out the amount of CIL received, how much was spent and what it was spent on. As such, through the payment of CIL, the development will notably contribute to local amenities which the Parish have control over. Furthermore, the future occupants of the 38 dwellings would pay council tax which would fund public services.
204. The application will also include monetary contributions towards bus service improvement within the area as well as a TRO for speed reduction on Longwater Road.
205. The application also includes Heads of Terms for the S106 legal agreement (Refer to first page of this Report). The legal agreement will secure the coordinated delivery of the infrastructure necessary to support the development, including but not limited to highway infrastructure, ESP, Affordable Housing, SANG/SAMM, NHS Services. It is noted that the CIL 1, 2, 3 regulations are no longer applicable and s106 contributions are required.

NHS Contributions:

206. The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (ICB) have been consulted for this proposal. They indicate that the closest GP practice to the application site is Finchampstead Practice, which currently has a patient list size of 18,497 (as at July 2024) and is already over-capacity and does not have capacity to accommodate any new patients from the proposed development. On this basis, they have requested that a financial contribution is made towards primary health infrastructure to support capital projects.
207. Officers are required to justify this contribution against local planning policy and against the tests for such obligations. Paragraph 101 of the NPPF (2024) states that significant weight should be placed on the importance of new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure when considering proposals for development, and that local planning authorities should also work proactively and positively with promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to plan for required facilities, to ensure faster delivery of other public service infrastructure, including health facilities. In terms of local policy, there are no specific policies or supplementary planning guidance that relates to development and healthcare. Policy CP3 (h) discusses that

proposals should contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities of the Within the supporting text of Policy CP1 it states that *“Development within the borough should enhance the overall sustainability of the area through minimising impact on the environment, including access to facilities..”*

208. As this development will result in increased pressure on this community health facility, the contribution would be justified to make the scheme functional in that it will be self-sufficient in helping alleviate the pressure and therefore will not be detrimental to the health wellbeing of the existing community.

209. The ICB has a standard formula to work out the amount of financial contribution based on the number of dwellings proposed which is used to define an additional patient yield. In this case, the total financial contributions for this application would be £32,760.00. The applicant is agreeable to this contribution and this will be secured as part of the S106 agreement.

Planning Balance:

210. The Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing supply and therefore the development must be assessed in line with Paragraph 11d(ii) and against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. The three overarching objectives contained within paragraph 8 of the Framework seek to balance growth and local community needs against protection of the natural, built and historic environment. The benefits and disbenefits are therefore considered against these three broad topic areas below.

211. Whilst the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date by virtue of the absence of a 5 year housing land supply, that does not mean the policies carry no weight. The weight attached to the development plan policies is a matter for the decision maker(s).

Economic

212. As with all major housing development of this scale in this location, the proposal would result in notable economic benefits. This is broadly set to arise from the short-term economic contribution of the construction of 38 dwellings via construction industry jobs that would facilitate enhancements in employments skills to be secured via the ESP. In the longer term, future residents of the new dwellings will contribute to the viability and vitality of businesses within the village and the wider Finchampstead area and nearby towns. CIL payments, Council Tax Receipts and New Homes Bonus would also be an economic benefit of the proposal.

213. Although these are not unique to this scheme, the size of the development means these benefits are not insignificant and the development is therefore considered to perform a positive economic role in this part of the borough, and considered to hold moderate weight in the planning balance in favour of the development.

Social

214. The provision of 38 new dwellings, including 60% affordable dwellings in this part of the borough would deliver a number of social benefits. The proposal would provide homes for a sector of the population for which there is an acute identified

need and, in an area where the delivery of affordable housing has failed to meet these needs. This responds to the NPPF requirement to significantly boost the supply of new homes and the Secretary of State's Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) entitled "Building the homes we need", published on 30 July 2024 (which is a material consideration) and this focuses on boosting housing provision.

215. Although the Council has a strong record of past over delivery, given the Council's current HLS position, the provision of market and affordable homes above requisite policy thresholds overall would be a social benefit weighing in significantly in favour of the proposal. Furthermore, the current housing land supply shortfall will likely remain until the new LPU is adopted.
216. The provision of an adequate range of dwelling sizes will ensure this site contributes to the identified need over the local plan period.
217. It would see a limited development that forms an extension to Finchampstead Village, as opposed to an isolated countryside development remote of any nearby settlement or facilities. It will provide the opportunity for existing residents of the village and the wider Parish area to maintain and reinforce existing social ties and family connections, either through an opportunity to upsize or downsize locally, and these have been reflected in some of the letters of support received from local residents. Significant infrastructure contributions including towards the NHS primary health care will also off-set any pressure on local services which may arise from the development, which are not believed to be significant given the overall modest scale of the development. A number of the highways measures proposed will have benefits not only for the residents of the proposed development but will also benefit existing residents in the area. The provision of an informal open space to the south of the site would be available primarily for the benefit of future residents but would also be open to other villagers to enjoy. Overall, the development is considered to perform a very positive social role, and the social benefits, namely the provision of a large proportion of affordable housing, is afforded very substantial weight in the planning balance.

Environmental

218. It is acknowledged there would inevitably be a degree of urbanising effect and visual harm to the immediate character and appearance of the surrounding landscape as the proposal would see the loss of a undeveloped site. The degree of resultant harm to landscape character, however, is considered limited in this instance and acceptable within the context of paragraphs 135 and 187 of the NPPF, acknowledging that these provisions do not prohibit any urbanising effects and seek to ensure that development is otherwise of a suitable scale, layout and design to its respective landscape context as considered to be the case in this instance. Furthermore, the bulk of the development is concentrated towards the northern side of the site, retaining an effective green buffer of usable greenspace which would preserve the site's verdant character when viewed from surrounding land. This also provides access to nature. The site is also well contained given the existing landscaped boundaries, with the localised impact on the character of the area able to be adequately managed through a detailed landscaping scheme at an early stage of development.
219. It is recognised that the proposal would not be located in the most sustainable location as required by the local plan, however the consequential harm caused by

this is reduced due to the basic facilities and services that are already available in the village and would be available to new residents. Furthermore, the Framework is clear that decision making should take account of variation in the ability to maximise sustainable transport solutions between urban and rural areas. Finally, appropriate opportunities will be secured to promote the limited sustainable transport modes that are available. For those reasons, limited weight is afforded against the proposal in this regard.

220. The application would not adversely impact protected species and planning conditions/obligations are able to secure suitable biodiversity mitigation and protection, including provisions towards an overall biodiversity net gain. Furthermore, the proposed sustainability strategy for the site is also to achieve a reduction in CO2 emissions well above the current policy requirements, in light of the Council's declared Climate Emergency, which is also considered a further benefit of the scheme. Therefore, the proposal is considered to perform a neutral environmental role.

Conclusion:

221. The most important policies for determining the application are out of date by virtue of the absence of a 5 year housing land supply. Paragraph 11 of the Framework therefore states that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of granting permission would need to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes.
222. As outlined, the proposal would provide several material benefits that weigh in favour of the application. Whilst past over-delivery remains a moderating factor, the provision of new housing and 60% affordable housing above the requisite 40% threshold required by the Local Plan, makes a material contribution to meeting the acute housing needs of the borough. This weighs substantially in favour of the scheme.
223. Those less than desirable impacts of the development, namely loss of an open field, inevitable visual harm to the immediate landscape character and sustainability credentials of the location, are considered to be adequately dealt with or off-set via conditions/obligations and careful management of the construction phase.
224. In light of the above and with due regard to matters raised, it is considered that the adverse impacts of the proposed development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework when taken as a whole, including the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan . The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions and legal agreement set out in this report.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)
<i>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, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from</i>

consultation on the application) that the protected groups 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 upon protected groups as a result of the development.

APPENDIX 1 - Conditions / Informatives

APPROVAL subject to the following conditions and informatives:

Conditions:

1. Timescale

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. Approved details

This permission is in respect of the plans numbered:

Location Plan	LP.01 A
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Received by the local planning authority on 02/07/2024;

Site Layout	SL.01 B
Coloured Site Layout	CSL.01 B
Affordable Housing Layout	AHL.01 B
Boundary and Dwelling Material Layout	BDML.01 B
Refuse Collection Plan	RCP.01 B
Street Elevations	CSE.01 B
House Type A1.2 - End Terrace - Floor Plans and Elevations	HT.A1.2-END.pe B
House Type A1.2 - Mid Terrace - Floor Plans and Elevations	HT.A1.2-MID.pe A
House Type A2.2.2 - End Terrace - Option 1 - Floor Plans and Elevations	HT.A2.2.2-END-1.pe A
House Type A2.2.2 - End Terrace - Option 2 - Floor Plans and Elevations	HT.A2.2.2-END-2.pe A
House Type A2.7 - Detached - Floor Plans and Elevations	HT.A2.7-DET.pe A
House Type A2.7 - End Terrace - Option 1 - Floor Plans and Elevations	HT.A2.7-END-1.pe B
House Type A2.7 - End Terrace - Option 2 - Floor Plans and Elevations	HT.A2.7-END-2.pe B
House Type A2.7 - End Terrace - Option 3 - Floor Plans and Elevations	HT.A2.7-END-3.pe B
House Type A3.3 - End Terrace - Floor Plans and Elevations	HT.A3.3-END.pe B
House Type A3.6 - Detached - Option 1 - Elevations	HT.A3.6-DET-1.e B
House Type A3.6 - Detached - Option 2 - Elevations	HT.A3.6-DET-2.e B
House Type A3.6 - Detached - Floor Plans	HT.A3.6-DET.p B
House Type A3.6 - End Terrace - Option 1 - Floor Plans and Elevations	HT.A3.6-END-1.pe B
House Type A3.6 - End Terrace - Option 2 - Floor Plans and Elevations	HT.A3.6-END-2.pe B
House Type P4.13 - Elevations	HT.P4.13.e B
House Type P4.13 - Floor Plans	HT.P4.13.p B

Garden Shed 01 - Floor Plans and Elevations	GS.01.pe A
Garden Shed 02 - Floor Plans and Elevations	GS.02.pe A

Received by the local planning authority on 03/12/2024.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. Ground and building levels

No development shall take place until a measured survey of the site and a plan prepared to scale of not less than 1:500 showing details of existing and proposed finished ground levels (in relation to a fixed datum point) and finished roof levels shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, and the approved scheme shall be fully implemented prior to the occupation of the building(s).

Reason: In order to ensure a satisfactory form of development relative to surrounding buildings and landscape. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB21.

4. Land Contamination

Prior to commencement of development other than that required to carry out remediation of the site, a Phase 2 intrusive site investigation is to be carried out to further analyse the soil across the site in a series of trial pits. Where necessary, a remediation scheme is to be submitted to the local planning authority for written approval. The remediation scheme shall include all works to be undertaken, proposed remediation objectives and remediation criteria, timetable of works and site management procedures. The scheme should ensure that the site will not qualify as contaminated land under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in relation to the intended use of the land after remediation.

Reason: To ensure that any contamination of the site is identified at the outset to allow remediation to protect existing/proposed occupants of property on the site and/or adjacent land. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) and Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3.

5. Unexpected Land Contamination

If land contamination is found at any time during site clearance, groundwork, and construction the discovery shall be reported as soon as possible to the local planning authority. A full contamination risk assessment shall be carried out and if found to be necessary, a 'remediation method statement' shall be submitted to the local planning authority for written approval.

Reason: To ensure that any contamination of the site is identified at the outset to allow remediation to protect existing/proposed occupants of property on the site and/or adjacent land. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) and Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3.

6. Hours of Work

No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations or deliveries to the site, shall take place other than between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 13:00 Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays.

Reason: To protect the occupiers of neighbouring properties from noise and disturbance outside the permitted hours during the construction period. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

7. Parking (to be approved)

No development shall commence above foundation level until details of parking shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, details of off-street parking space within the site. The development shall not be occupied until the parking space so-approved has been provided in full accordance with the approved details. The parking space shall thereafter be retained in accordance with the approved details and shall remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times.

Reason: To ensure adequate on-site parking provision in the interests of highway safety, convenience and amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

8. Cycle Parking

The cycle storage/ parking shall be implemented in accordance with the details as shown on plans GS.01.pe A & GS.02.pe A, before occupation of the development hereby permitted and shall be permanently retained in the approved form for the parking of bicycles.

Reason: In order to ensure that secure weather-proof bicycle parking facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 4 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

9. Access

Prior to commencement of the development, there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, details of the proposed vehicular access on to Longwater Road to include visibility splays of 43m x 2.4m. The access shall be formed as so approved, and the visibility splays shall be cleared of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height prior to the occupation of the development. The access shall be retained in accordance with the approved details and used for no other purpose and the land within the visibility splays shall be maintained clear of any visual obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

10. Visibility Splays for private drives

Dwellings hereby approved shall not be occupied until visibility splays of 2.0 metres by 2.0 metres, have been provided at the intersection of the driveway and the adjacent footway. (Dimensions to be measured along the edge of the drive and the

back of the footway from their point of intersection). The visibility splays shall thereafter be kept free of all obstructions to visibility above a height of 0.6 metres.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

11. Highways construction details

Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the construction of roads and footways, including levels, widths, construction materials, depths of construction, surface water drainage, lighting, swept paths and visibility splays shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The roads and footway shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details to road base level before the development is occupied and the final wearing course will be provided within 3 months of occupation, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that roads and footpaths are constructed to a standard that would be suitable for adoption as publicly maintainable highway, in the interests of providing a functional, accessible and safe development. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

12. Parking Management Strategy

Prior to the occupation of the development a Parking Management Strategy for the management of the parking arrangements within the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The submitted Parking Management Strategy shall include details of the management of all parking spaces.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory development in the interests of amenity and highway Safety. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

13. Travel Plan Statement (to be approved)

Prior to the occupation of the development a Travel Plan Statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The travel plan statement shall include a programme of implementation and proposals to promote alternative forms of transport to and from the site, other than by the private car and provide for periodic review. The travel plan statement shall be fully implemented, maintained and reviewed as so approved.

Reason: To encourage the use of all travel modes. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 4 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policy CP6.

14. Construction Method Statement

No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:

- i) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors,
- ii) loading and unloading of plant and materials,
- iii) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development,
- iv) the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate,
- v) wheel washing facilities,

- vi) measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction,
- vii) a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works.

*Reason: In the interests of highway safety & convenience and neighbour amenities.
Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.*

15. Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP shall include the following.

- a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
- b) Identification of "biodiversity protection zone"
- c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
- d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
- e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
- f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
- g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.
- h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs
- i) the control of noise and vibration from any piling
- j) types of piling rig and earth moving machinery to be utilized
- k) the control of dust
- l) the control of surface water run-off
- m) measures to control vibration and the emission of dust and dirt during construction
- n) Schedule of works

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: to ensure that the proposal is in accordance with Section 41 NERC Act re. UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species (Species of Principal Importance), and complies with Planning Policies for wildlife including CP7 and TB23

16. Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP)

A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) shall be submitted to and be approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to occupation of the development. The content of the HMMP shall include the following:

- a) Description and evaluation of features to be managed.
- b) Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management.
- c) Aims and objectives of management.
- d) Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives.
- e) Prescriptions for management actions.
- f) Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period).
- g) Details of the body or organization responsible for implementation of the plan.
- h) Ongoing monitoring and reporting.

- i) Sensitive management of the aged trees on site
- j) maintenance requirements for the attenuation basin
- k) long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, other than privately owned, domestic gardens.

The HMMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery. The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the HMMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The approved plan will be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To secure significant on-site biodiversity net gain as per regulations and integrate with measures to protect and enhance relevant habitats and species as appropriate, and to ensure that provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved in accordance. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP7 and TB23, and policy CC03 of the MDD.

17. Biodiversity Enhancement and Permeability

Prior to commencement of development above slab level, a strategy for ecological permeability (especially with regard to reptiles and hedgehogs) and species specific biodiversity enhancements to the site shall be provided to the local planning authority for its approval. The biodiversity enhancements shall include:

- i) 1x bat and 1x bird box per dwelling
- ii) 1x reptile hibernacula
- iii) 1x Grass Snake egg-laying pile
- iv) 1x log pile / stag beetle pyramid
- v) 1x bee bank
- vi) 1x Hedgehog highway hole for each line of fence/wall between two different gardens or a garden and public open space.

The strategy shall be prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist and appropriate to the local ecological context. Once approved the strategy shall be implemented in full unless otherwise agreed by the local planning authority in writing.

Reason: to ensure that the proposal is in accordance with Section 41 NERC Act re. UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species (Species of Principal Importance), and complies with Planning Policies for wildlife including CP7 and TB23, and the National Planning Policy Framework which requires consideration of the potential biodiversity gains that can be secured within developments.

18. Lighting for Light Sensitive Species

Prior to the installation of any light fixtures or fittings, a "lighting design strategy for biodiversity" for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:

- a) identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and badgers and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and

b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

Reason: To secure mitigation for protected species as appropriate under ODPM Circular 2006/05 and local plan policies CP7 and TB23.

19. Noise

The development hereby approved shall be implemented fully in accordance with the recommendations in the Noise Impact Assessment Report (RPS group, Ref. 794-ENV-ACO-DES-ARC-30429, REPT-01-R1, June 2024), including:

1) All properties facing Longwater Road (B3106) are to be fitted with an alternative means of ventilation to open windows. In addition, where dwellings overlook the Longwater Road (B3106), a higher sound insulation performance of 46 dB Dn,e,w is required for ventilation openings.

2) Closed board (acoustically attenuating) fencing is to be fitted to all properties facing or backing on to Longwater Road (B3106),

Unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

Reason - To protect the occupiers of the proposed dwellings from unreasonable noise levels and to ensure satisfactory noise attenuation measures are installed. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment), Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

20. Archaeology WSI

A) No development shall take place/commence until a programme of archaeological work, including a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been submitted to, and approved by, the local planning authority in writing.

The WSI shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and:

1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording
2. The programme for post investigation assessment
3. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording
4. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation
5. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site Investigation
6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the WSI.

B) The Development shall take place in accordance with the WSI approved under condition (A).

The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set

out in the WSI approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been secured.

Reason: The site lies in an area of archaeological potential, particularly for, but not limited to, Prehistoric remains. The potential impacts of the development can be mitigated through a programme of archaeological work. This is in accordance with national and local plan policy.

21. Communications Plan

Development shall not commence until a Communications Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall specify methods for communicating with local residents, including the creation of a liaison group to meet in accordance with an agreed schedule. The Plan shall be carried out as approved until the final completion of the development.

Reason: In order to minimise disturbance to neighbours during construction works in accordance with CP3 of the Core Strategy (2010).

22. Domestic water consumption

Prior to the occupation of development, a scheme achieving a maximum domestic water consumption of 110L per capita per day for the residential portion of the scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first occupied and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), WBC Climate Emergency Action Plan, Core Strategy policy CP1, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC04 & the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document.

23. Low and zero-carbon technology

Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme for achieving a 10% reduction in the predicted carbon emissions arising from operation of the development through the use of decentralised renewable and/or low carbon sources (as defined in the glossary of Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change (December 2007) or any subsequent version) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The minimum 10% reduction shall be achieved in addition to the levels of reduction in carbon emissions required through the Building Regulations in force at the time of the submission of planning application. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first occupied and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development in accordance with NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), WBC Climate Emergency Action Plan, Core Strategy policy CP1, MDDL policy CC05 & the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document.

24. Hard and Soft Landscaping Proposals

Notwithstanding the details submitted, prior to the commencement of the development above slab level, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals

shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The details should allow for the tree buffer zones to be planted and managed in a way that is in accordance with the Government Standing Advice on Veteran Trees. The details shall include, as appropriate, proposed contours, means of enclosure with mammal links, details of refuse or other storage units, lighting, external services, detailed design proposals (cross sections) for the Attenuation basin no steeper than 1:3. Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, detailing species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities and implementation timetable. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of ten years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

Reason To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of biodiversity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP7 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB23.

25. Protection of trees

a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until a scheme (including an updated Tree Protection Plan) which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority (the Approved Scheme); the tree protection measures approved shall be implemented in complete accordance with the Approved Scheme for the duration of the development (including, unless otherwise provided by the Approved Scheme) demolition, all site preparation work, tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery.

b) No development (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence until the local planning authority has been provided (by way of a written notice) with a period of no less than 7 working days to inspect the implementation of the measures identified in the Approved Scheme on-site.

c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.

d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed

from the site, unless the prior approval of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

26. Retention of trees and shrubs

No retained tree shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be topped or lopped other than in accordance with the approved plans and particulars, without the written approval of the local planning authority. If within a period of five years from the date of the planting of any tree that tree, or any tree planted in replacement for it, is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place, unless the local planning authority gives its written consent to any variation.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site which are of amenity value to the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

27. Restriction of permitted development rights – Classes A and E

Notwithstanding the provisions of Classes A and E of Part 1 of the Second Schedule the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no outbuildings, enlargement, extensions, or alterations permitted shall be carried out without the express permission in writing of the local planning authority.

Reason: To safeguard the character of the area and neighbouring amenities and to prevent harm to the ecological and landscape qualities of the area including protected trees on site. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03, TB21 and TB23.

28. Waste Storage

No dwelling shall be occupied until details of bin storage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The bin storage area and facilities shall be permanently so retained and used for no purpose other than the temporary storage of refuse, recyclable and compost materials.

Reason: In the interests of visual and neighbouring amenities and functional development. Relevant policy: Core Strategy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC04.

29. Drainage

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out fully in accordance with the provisions set out in the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Addendum report 794-DES-ARC-30429 v2 dated 29/11/2024.

Reason: This is to prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off. Relevant policy: NPPF (2024) Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10.

Informatives:

1. This permission should be read in conjunction with the legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act dated (*date to be added*), the obligations in which relate to this development.
2. The applicant is reminded that this approval is granted subject to conditions which must be complied with prior to the development starting on site. Commencement of the development without complying with the pre-commencement requirements may be outside the terms of this permission and liable to enforcement action. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once the details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details.
3. The applicant is reminded that should there be any change from the approved drawings during the build of the development this may require a fresh planning application if the changes differ materially from the approved details. Non-material changes may be formalised by way of an application under s.96A Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
4. Adequate precautions shall be taken during the construction period to prevent the deposit of mud and similar debris on adjacent highways. For further information contact the Highway Authority on tel.: 0118 9746000.
5. Whilst it would appear from the application that the proposed development is to be entirely within the curtilage of the application site, the granting of planning permission does not authorise you to gain access or carry out any works on, over or under your neighbour's land or property without first obtaining their consent, and does not obviate the need for compliance with the requirements of the Party Wall etc. Act 1996.
6. The development hereby permitted is liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy. The Liability Notice issued by Wokingham Borough Council will state the current chargeable amount. A revised Liability Notice will be issued if this amount changes. Anyone can formally assume liability to pay, but if no one does so then liability will rest with the landowner. There are certain legal requirements that must be complied with. For instance, whoever will pay the levy must submit an Assumption of Liability form and a Commencement Notice to Wokingham Borough Council prior to commencement of development, failure to do this will result in penalty surcharges being added. For more information see the Council's website – Community Infrastructure Levy advice page. Please submit all CIL forms and enquiries to developer.contributions@wokingham.gov.uk.
7. The applicant is reminded that, under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), it is an offence to (amongst other things): deliberately capture, disturb, injure, or kill great crested newts; damage or destroy a breeding or resting place; intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a resting or sheltering place. Planning

permission for a development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation. Should great crested newts be found at any stage of the development works, then all works should cease, and a professional and/or suitably qualified and experienced ecologist (or Natural England) should be contacted for advice on any special precautions before continuing, including the need for a licence.

8. Fire service access should comply with B5 of ADB Volume 2 2019 with additional local requirements below under the Berkshire Act 1986: Fire service vehicles currently operated by Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service exceed the requirements stated in the current edition of Approved Document B. The applicant should be made aware of the following amendments: The minimum carrying capacity for a pumping appliance is 16 tonnes. The minimum carrying capacity for a high reach appliance is 26 tonnes. Structures such as bridges should have the full vehicle carrying capacity. Any structural fire precautions and all means of escape provision will have to satisfy Building Regulation requirement. These matters are administered by the local authority Building Control or approved inspectors, who you are advised to contact in this regard.
9. There are water mains crossing or close to your development. Thames Water do not permit the building over or construction within 3m of water mains. If you're planning significant works near Thames Water mains (within 3m) they will need to check that your development doesn't reduce capacity, limit repair or maintenance activities during and after construction, or inhibit the services we provide in any other way. The applicant is advised to read our guide working near or diverting our pipes. <https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thameswater.co.uk%2Fdevelopers%2Flargerscaleddevelopments%2Fplanningyourdevelopment%2Fworkingnearourpipes&data=05%7C01%7Cplanning.enquiries%40wokingham.gov.uk%7C92f84d1fef8949390d3d08dbe5bbe8f0%7C996ee15c0b3e4a6f8e65120a9a51821a%7C0%7C0%7C638356367458250210%7CUnknown%7CTWFPbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ikl1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=2ZScP1cD%2BE7uE4sYqf%2Bqi6PcLP7539bi4ucA53iIMf0%3D&reserved=0>
10. The Corporate Head of Environment at the Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham should be contacted for the approval of the access construction details before any work is carried out within the highway. This planning permission does NOT authorise the construction of such an access.
11. If it is the developer's intention to request the Council, as Local Highway Authority, to adopt the proposed access road etc. as highway maintainable at public expense, then full engineering details must be agreed with the Corporate Head of Environment at the Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham. The developer is strongly advised not to commence development until such details have been approved in writing and a legal agreement is made with the Council under S38 of the Highways Act 1980.
12. The council advises that the developer produces a strategy to install superfast broadband infrastructure for future occupants of the site. The strategy should ensure that upon occupation of a dwelling the new home owner has access to a superfast broadband service through a site-wide network. It is also advised that the developer keeps occupants fully informed of any delays to superfast broadband connection in before they purchase/occupy their new homes.

13. Future occupants of the development should be provided with occupant information relating to the operation of any heating systems that serve it to ensure they are informed about the correct operation of the buildings and systems performance.
14. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

APPENDIX 2 – Appropriate Assessment

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 Screening Assessment and Appropriate Assessment

In the light of the “Sweetman Judgement” (People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta, April 2018), the comments below comprise an Appropriate Assessment which includes advice on necessary avoidance and mitigation measures which is consistent with the advice provided to the Planning Inspectorate on such matters.

Summary of Response

WBC, in consultation with Natural England, has formed the view that any net increase in residential development between 400m and 5km straight-line distance from the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) is likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. An Appropriate Assessment has been carried out which includes regard to mitigation requirements.

This site is located approximately **2.78 km** (measured from the access road to the application site) from the boundary of the SPA and therefore is likely to result in an adverse effect on the SPA, unless it is carried out together with appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures.

On commencement of the proposed development, a contribution (calculated on a per-bedroom basis) is to be paid to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) towards the cost of measures to avoid and mitigate against the effect upon the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, as set out in WBC’s Infrastructure Delivery Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The strategy is for relevant developments to make financial contributions towards the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) in perpetuity as an alternative recreational location to the SPA and financial contributions towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures.

In this instance, the proposed development would result in a net increase of **2 no 4 bedroom dwellings, 20 no 3 bedroom dwellings, 13 no 2 bedroom dwellings and 3 no 1 bedroom dwellings** within 5km of the SPA which results in a total SANG contribution of **£92,260.93**.

The proposed development is required to make a contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) which is also calculated on a per bedroom basis. Taking account of the per bedroom contributions this results in a total SAMM contribution of **£35,171.00**.

The total SPA related financial contribution for this proposal is **£127,431.93**. The applicant **must agree** to enter into a S106/s111 agreement to secure this contribution prior to occupation of each dwelling. Subject to the completion of the S106 agreement, the proposal would not lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA and would comply with SEP Saved Policy NRM6, policy CP8 of the Core Strategy, and the NPPF.

1. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended

In accordance with The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended, Regulation 63, a competent authority (in this case Wokingham Borough Council (WBC)), before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which—

- a. is likely to have a significant effect on a European site...(either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and

b. is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site.

must make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives.

A person applying for any such consent, permission or other authorisation must provide such information as WBC may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment or to enable it to determine whether an appropriate assessment is required.

WBC must for the purposes of the assessment consult Natural England (NE) and have regard to any representations made by that body. It must also, if it considers it appropriate, take the opinion of the general public, and if it does so, it must take such steps for that purpose as it considers appropriate. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, and subject to Regulation 64 (Considerations of overriding public interest), WBC may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

In considering whether a plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of the site, WBC must have regard to the manner in which it is proposed to be carried out or to any conditions or restrictions subject to which it proposes that the consent, permission or other authorisation should be given.

2. Stage 1 Screening for Likely Significant Effects

WBC accepts that this proposal is a 'plan or project' which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site. The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is a European designated site which affects the borough, and WBC must ensure that development does not result in an adverse impact on the SPA. The potential adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA include recreational activities from inside the SPA and air pollution from inside and outside the SPA.

At this stage WBC cannot rule out 'likely significance effects' on the SPA (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) because the proposal could undermine the Conservation Objectives of these sites. This is because the proposal lies within approximately **2.78 km** of the SPA and:

- represents a net increase in dwellings within 400m - 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) which will lead to an increase in local population and a potential increase in recreational activity on the SPA

As the 'likely significance effects' cannot be ruled out at this stage an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken.

3. Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment

Based on the information proposed by the applicant, WBC must decide whether or not an adverse effect on site integrity (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) can be ruled out. Mitigation may be able to be provided so that the proposal is altered to avoid or reduce impacts.

The following policies and guidance set out WBC's approach to relevant avoidance and mitigation measures which have been agreed with Natural England. For the majority of housing developments this will comprise the provision of (or contribution towards) Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and a contribution towards the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project. The financial contributions towards SANG would be either through an obligation in a s106 agreement that requires WBC to allocate an appropriate amount of the development CIL receipt towards the provision of SANG, or through an obligation in an agreement under s111 of the Local Government Act, that requires the developer to make an appropriate financial contribution towards the provision of SANG (to be used in the event that the developer

successfully seeks CIL relief). Developers will be required to secure an appropriate financial contribution to the SAMM project through an obligation in a s106 agreement.

For SDL development (and occasionally some other larger non SDL developments) within 5km of the SPA, SANG is required at a minimum of 8 ha per 1,000 new residents, constructed and delivered to Natural England's quality and quantity standards and a contribution towards pan SPA access management and monitoring (as advised by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board). For SDL development (and occasionally some other larger non SDL developments) between 5 and 7km, the proposals will need to be individually assessed but it is likely that SANG will be required on site in line with Natural England's quality and quantity standards, although the exact requirement will be agreed having regard to evidence supplied.

a. Policies and Guidance

For this proposal the following guidance and policies apply:

- South East Plan (May 2009) Policy NRM6 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area) <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100528160926/http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/planning/regionalPlanning/815640/>
- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) Policy CP8 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area) sets out the approach WBC will take in order to protect the TBH SPA <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Final%20adopted%20Core%20Strategy%20inc.%20cover.pdf>
- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) Policy CP7 (Biodiversity) sets out the approach WBC will take in order to protect national and international nature conservation sites <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Final%20adopted%20Core%20Strategy%20inc.%20cover.pdf>
- Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) Policy TB23 (Biodiversity and Development) <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Adopted%20MDD.pdf>
- Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD (2011) <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Adopted%20Infrastructure%20De~nd%20Contributions%20SPD.pdf>

The project as proposed would not adversely impact on the integrity of the SPA if avoidance and mitigation measures are provided as stipulated by these policies and guidance.

b. SPA Avoidance and Mitigation Measures

i) The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and its ongoing maintenance in perpetuity.

In accordance with the development plan, the proposed development will be required to provide alternative land to attract new residents away from the SPA. The term given to this alternative land is Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

As this development is not part of an SDL, the developer may make a payment contribution towards strategic SANGs in line with schedule below (most likely this will be at Rooks Nest Wood SANG although it is subject to SANGs capacity in the right location within Wokingham borough). An occupation restriction will be included in the Section 106 Agreement in order to ensure that the contribution has been made prior to occupation of the dwellings. This gives the certainty required to satisfy the Habitats Regulations in accordance with South East Plan Policy NRM6 (iii) and Core Strategy Policy CP8.

The development will result in a net increase of **38 no dwellings**, broken down as follows: **2 no 4 bedroom dwellings, 20 no 3 bedroom dwellings, 13 no 2 bedroom dwellings and 3 no 1 bedroom dwellings**. Depending on the dwelling mix, the level of SANG payments are set out as follows:

No. of bedrooms	SANG Contribution 5km	Aggregate SANG Contribution
1 bedroom	£1,567.98	3 x £1,567.98 = £4,703.94
2 bedrooms	£2,049.59	13 x £2,049.59 = £26,644.67
3 bedrooms	£2,690.93	20 x £2,690.93 = £53,818.60
4 bedrooms	£3,546.86	2 x £3,546.86 = £7,093.72
5 bedrooms	£4,240.62	£0
Total SANG Contribution		£92,260.93

ii. Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Contribution

The proposed development will also be required to make a contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM). This project funds strategic visitor access management measures on the SPA to mitigate the effects of new development on it.

From 1st April 2023 SAMM contributions have been updated across the 11 Local Authorities affected by the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Following engagement with Natural England, the Joint Strategic Partnership Board agreed this change is necessary to ensure sufficient income is raised to cover the costs of the SAMM project in perpetuity. Without this change the SAMM project would be at risk of being unable to deliver the objectives of the SAMM project, and therefore secure positive outcomes for the SPA

The level of contributions are calculated on a per bedroom basis. The development will result in a net increase of **38 no dwellings**, broken down as follows: **2 no 4 bedroom dwellings, 20 no 3 bedroom dwellings, 13 no 2 bedroom dwellings and 3 no 1 bedroom dwellings**. Depending on the dwelling mix, the level of SAMM payments are calculated as follows:

No. of bedrooms	SAMM Contribution 5km	Aggregate SAMM Contribution
1 bedroom	£563.00	3 x £563.00 = £1,689.00
2 bedrooms	£784.00	13 x £784.00 = £10,192.00
3 bedrooms	£1,042.00	20 x £1,042.00 = £20,840.00
4 bedrooms	£1,225.00	2 x £1,225.00 = £2,450.00
5+ bedrooms	£1,400.00	£0
Total SAMM Contribution		£35,171.00

Prior to the permission being granted the applicant must enter into a Section 106 Agreement based upon the above measures.

4. Conclusion

An Appropriate Assessment has been carried out for this development in accordance with the Habitats Regulations 2017. Without any appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures the Appropriate Assessment concludes that the development is likely to have a significant effect upon the integrity of the SPA with the result that WBC would be required to refuse a planning application.

Provided that the applicant is prepared to make a financial contribution (see above) towards the costs of SPA avoidance and mitigation measures, the application will be in accordance with the SPA mitigation requirements as set out in the relevant policies above.

WBC is convinced, following consultation with Natural England, that the above measures will prevent an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA. Pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 63(5) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended, and permission may be granted.

If the applicant does not agree with the above mitigation and does not enter into a Section 106 Agreement to secure the measures, then the application must be refused using the following reason for refusal.

5. Example Reason for Refusal

In the absence of a planning obligation to secure suitable avoidance and mitigation measures and access management monitoring arrangements, in terms that are satisfactory to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), the LPA is unable to satisfy itself that the proposals include adequate mitigation measures to prevent the proposed development from having an adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, in line with the requirements of Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended and Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43/EEC. The proposal would be contrary to Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan, Policies CP8 and CP4 of the Core Strategy.

Date:

Signed:

APPENDIX 3 – Parish Council Comments

Finchampstead Parish Council object to this application for the following reasons:

1. Application is inconsistent with the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan, specifically on policies GA1, IRS2, IRS4, IRS5, GA2 and AHD1
2. Unsustainable location
3. Outside of the settlement boundary contrary to local plan policies
4. Street lighting having an urbanising effect and impact on wildlife
5. Sufficient provision of affordable housing from other developments within Finchampstead (i.e. Gorse Ride and Arborfield SDL)
6. No mitigation measures proposed for Thames Basin Heaths SPA
7. Cemex quarry adjoining the site is in Flood Zone 3, uncertainty whether this extends not the application site due to restoration levels
8. Unsafe footpaths to immediate facilities
9. Traffic and speed limits as Longwater Road changes from 30mph to 60mph speed limit at the proposed point of access.