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planning

Planning Statement

**Land at The Nursery and No. 53, New Road,
Ruscombe, Twyford, RG10 9LN**

Detailed planning application for the phased erection of 18 dwellings, with associated access / highway works, tree works and landscaping, following demolition of existing dwelling and buildings / structures.

Prepared for:
Westbourne Group Ltd.

Prepared by:
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1. Introduction and Summary

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a detailed planning application for phased erection of 18 dwellings, with associated access / highway works, tree works and landscaping, following demolition of existing dwelling and buildings / structures on land at The Nursery and no. 53 New Road, Ruscombe, Twyford, RG10 9LN. All existing buildings on the site are to be demolished.
- 1.2 This Statement sets out the characteristics of the site and surrounding area, provides information on the planning history for the site, and sets out an analysis of the proposal against the relevant planning policy context.
- 1.3 The application is accompanied by a number of supporting reports including:
- a) Design & Access Statement
 - b) Tree Survey, Arboricultural Method Statement, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan
 - c) Archaeological Desk-based Assessment
 - d) Ecology reports including Ecological Impact Assessment and BNG metric
 - e) Landscaping drawings
 - f) Ground Investigation
 - g) Transport Statement
 - h) Drainage Strategy
 - i) Sustainability and Energy Statement
 - j) Viability Assessment.
- 1.4 The site, surroundings and its context are summarised in Section 2. Section 3 describes the application proposal. Section 4 sets out the relevant planning policy and material considerations. A planning assessment of the proposal is then detailed in Section 5.
- 1.5 Engagement with the community has undertaken prior to the submission of the application. This is summarised in section 7 of the Design & Access Statement. There is not therefore a need for a standalone Statement of Community Involvement in support of the application as it is covered in the Design & Access Statement.

Summary

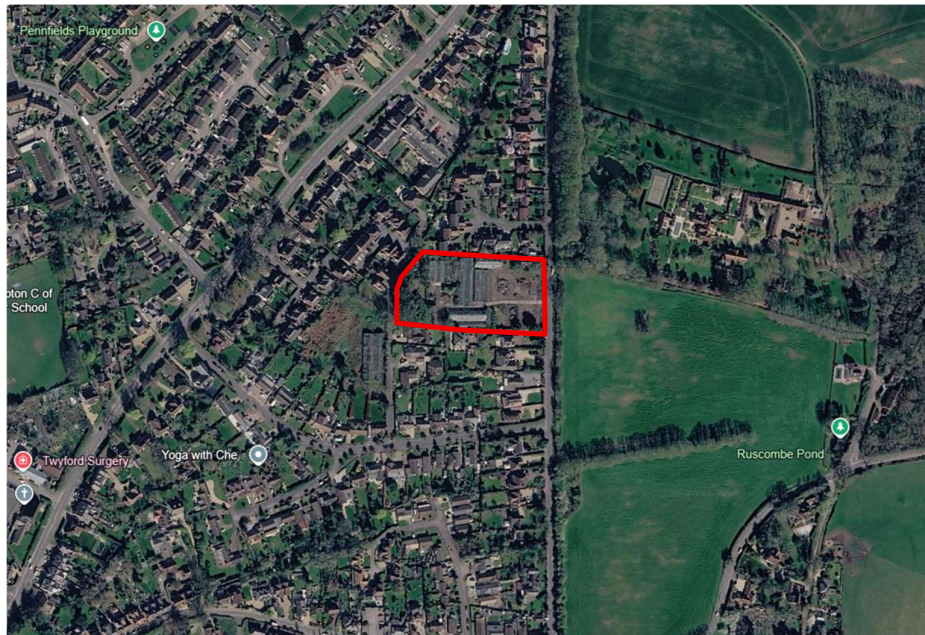
- 1.6 Planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise (Section 38(6)). The NPPF (August 2026) is a material consideration of "critical importance" in this case. Irrespective of a 5 year housing land supply deficit, the application is consistent with the guidance in the NPPF (August 2026) which confirms that development in settlements is acceptable (Policy S4), especially as none of the exclusions listed in the policy apply. This is reinforced by the presumption in favour of sustainable development pursuant to NPPF Policy S3 alongside the application's consistency with the Development Plan Policies as detailed in sections 4 and 5.

- 1.7 With the acknowledged engagement of the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in NPPF Policies S3 and S4, planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would substantially outweigh the benefits. This statement confirms that there are no substantial adverse effects arising from the proposal to come even close to significantly and demonstrably outweighing the benefits of the proposal. This is especially the position given that the scheme is consistent with the Development. On this basis, the proposal delivers “sustainable development” within the terms of the NPPF, and planning permission should therefore be granted.

2. Site Description and Planning History

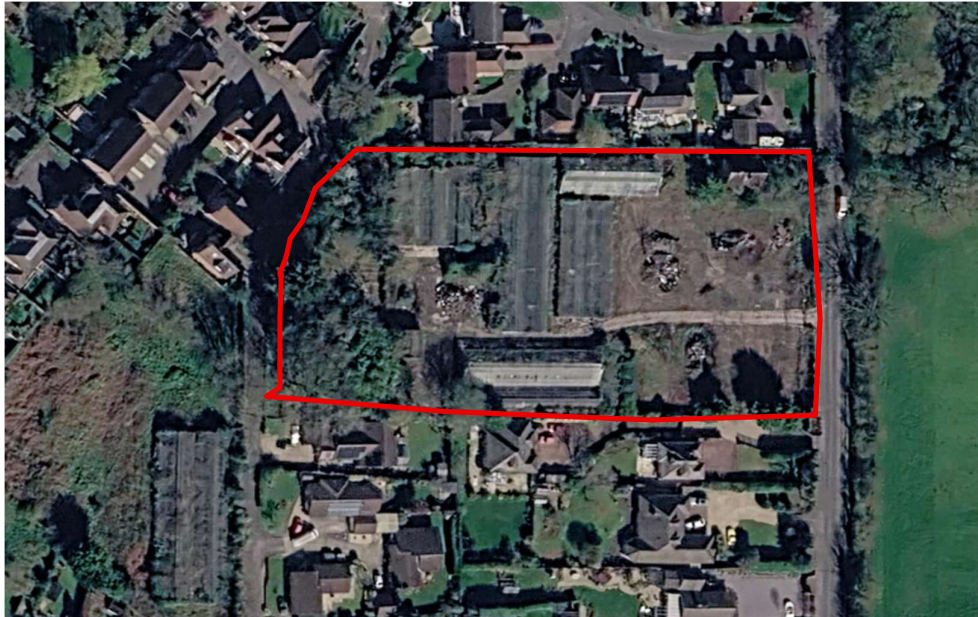
General

- 2.1 The site is located on the western side of New Road, Ruscombe (between the dwellings at nos. 39/39a and 55). It includes the site of The Nursery and number 53 New Road. As the extract from the aerial photo indicates, the site lies within the wider extent of the established residential area which extends along the western side of New Road, Ruscombe. The land to the east of New Road is in agricultural use and forms part of the wider metropolitan Green Belt which encircles Greater London. The site's location is illustrated below on the aerial photo extract taken from Google Maps.



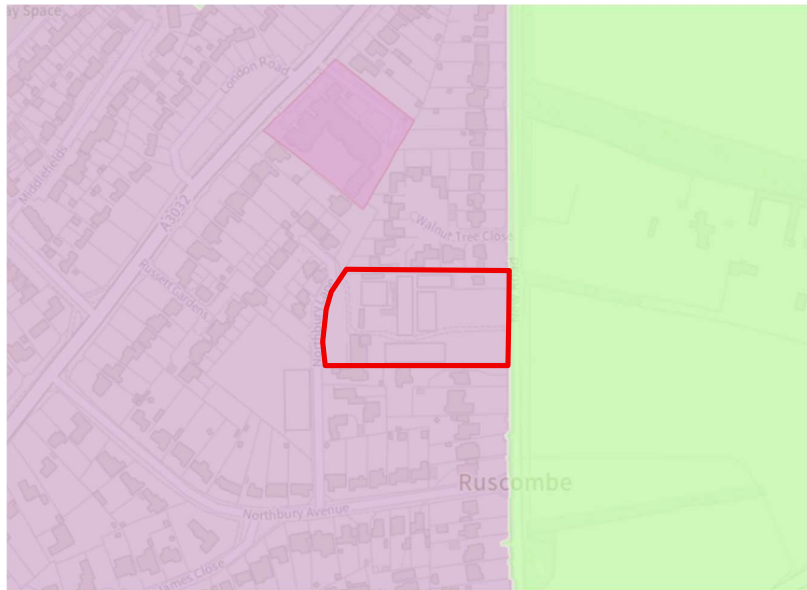
**Extract from Google Maps, 2026, showing New Road, the wider Ruscombe area and application site
(boundary is approximate)**

- 2.2 The application site is located to the west of New Road, enclosed by existing residential development on three sides. To the north, west and south lie established residential areas which are accessed via the distributor roads which cross Ruscombe. Within Ruscombe, there are also numerous cul-de-sacs from which the dwellings across the area are accessed. The aerial photos illustrate the variety of dwelling forms across Ruscombe included terraced, semi-detached and detached homes. The aerial photos also illustrate the variation in plot sizes throughout Ruscombe.
- 2.3 As the aerial photos indicate, the application site is directly adjoined by cul-de-sac development form with Walnut Tree Close lying immediately to the north of the site and Garraway Close to the west. The land to the east is in agricultural use and lies in the Green Belt. The image below is an enlarged aerial photo of the site which illustrates the extent that the site is enclosed by the existing development of the area.



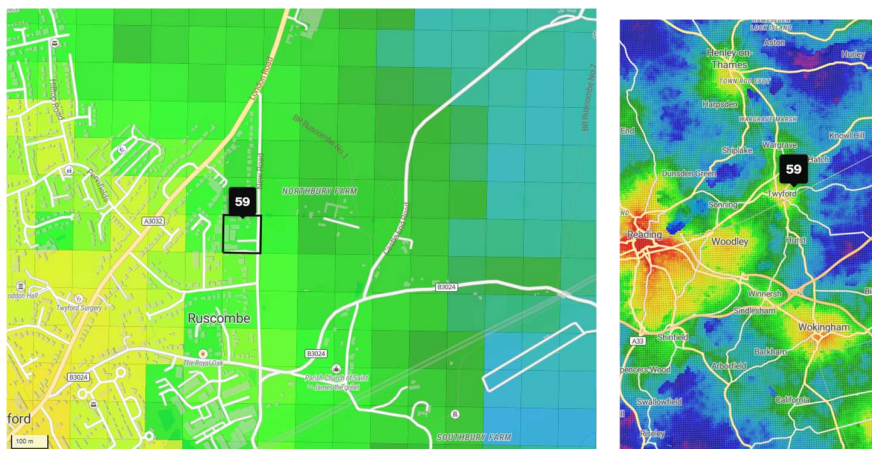
Enlarged extract of aerial photo of the site (source: Google)

- 2.4 The majority of the site was used as a commercial nursery with a dwelling located in its north-eastern corner – no. 53. The aerial photo illustrates the extensive coverage of buildings on the site, including green houses and barns/packing sheds, especially in the central and western parts of the site. It also shows the limited extent of vegetation along the site boundaries, except for the tree/hedgerow belt along the western edge (adjoining Garraway Close).
- 2.5 Ruscombe is notated with a Settlement Policy Boundary in the adopted Local Plan. The application site is shown as located within the defined modest development location as shown on the policy map. The land to the east of New Road is within the Green Belt as also shown on the policy map.



Extract from the online Local Plan Policies Map with application site edged red

- 2.6 As detailed in the Transport Statement accompanying the planning application, the site has access to the facilities in Ruscombe and Twyford with the surgery, a public house and church within a 800m walking distance and Twyford centre, Twyford Railway Station, community hall, youth centre, library and a primary school (Polehampton Junior) within cycling distance (1.5km). Bus stops on the frequent services (routes 127, 129, 227 and 850) which link to Reading, Maidenhead and High Wycombe are available by the surgery and are consequently within 800m (10 minute walk) of the site. The railway station has frequent services operated by GWR and TFL towards London Paddington and Reading.
- 2.7 The extensive range of services within walking and/or cycling distance of the site confirm the sustainability of the location consistent with the DfT Connectivity tool. The Connectivity tool shows that the site has a current score of 59 (as shown below) which is comparable to other parts of the Borough as also illustrated.



Extract from the DfT Connectivity lite tool – assessment of site

- 2.8 The Council mapping confirms that there are no statutorily or locally listed buildings on or near the application site¹. Further, the site is not within a Conservation Area nor area there any Scheduled Ancient Monuments on or near the site.
- 2.9 The site is situated within flood zone 1, according to the Environment Agency flood maps, meaning a low probability of flooding.

Planning History

- 2.10 A review of the Council's Planning Register indicates that on the nursery part of the site (i.e. excluding 53 New Road), an application for a two storey 66 bed care home was made (LPA ref 240990). Although this was recommended for approval at the Council's Planning Committee on 9th October 2024, the scheme was refused on 10th October 2024. An appeal was submitted which was dismissed on 20th August 2025 (PINS ref APP/X0360/W/24/3358120).
- 2.11 The Council in refusing the care home application on 10th October 2024, detailed 5 reasons for refusal. These were:
- 1) **The proposal by virtue of bulk, mass and height would significantly harm the residential character of the street scene which is contrary to Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3 and the Wokingham Borough Design Guide 2012.**
 - 2) **In the absence of a completed legal agreement, the proposed development fails to secure opportunities for training, apprenticeships and other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills contrary to MDD Local Plan policy TB12.**
 - 3) **In the absence of a completed Legal Agreement, the development fails to secure a schedule of sustainable travel improvements and measures contrary to Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP6 and MDD Local Plan policy CC03 and the NPPF (2023).**
 - 4) **In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure biodiversity net gain monitoring, the proposed development fails to demonstrate and secure that there would be no long term biodiversity net loss as a result of the proposal by either on-site mitigation or off-site compensation and how this would be managed, contrary to Core Strategy policy CP3 and CP7, MDD Local Plan Policy TB23 and the NPPF (2023).**
 - 5) **In absence of sufficient survey effort or relevant licensing the applicant has failed to mitigate potential harm against great crested newts, a**

¹ Closest is 140m as explained in section 5

protected species. This is contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP7, MDD Local Plan Policy TB23 and the NPPF (2023).

- 2.12 The appeal decision recognises (paragraph 2) that reasons 2 to 5 were addressed through the provision of a legal agreement and the demonstration that potential harm to newts could be mitigated. However, the Inspector concluded that the scheme was not acceptable (paragraphs 1 and 31). This was notwithstanding the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development given the Council's inability to show a five year supply of housing land (paragraphs 24 and 25).
- 2.13 The layout and elevations of the 66 bed care home are set out below together with the Inspector's assessment of the scheme in the context of the acknowledged housing land supply shortfall alongside the policies of the Development Plan.



Proposed Site Plan for Care Home



Proposed north and east (front) elevations for Care Home

- 2.14 The Inspector as detailed in paragraph 3 of the appeal decision, recognised that the main issue arising **"is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area with**

particular regard to the effect of the proposal on the street scene". This is explored in great detail within paragraphs 4 to 16 of the decision. These state:

- 4. The appeal site is a former plant nursery within Ruscombe adjacent to New Road and is allocated for housing within the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan (2024). The site has been redundant for a number of years and I noted the very poor condition of the existing structures on site on my visit, particularly with regard to the shattered and decaying glasshouses which occupy a large proportion of the site.**
- 5. The character of the area is low density residential, with gaps between properties which range in design and scale from bungalows through to two storey dwellings. Their set offs from each other often allow views between them which often afford the area an open and spacious appearance, which aids the transition from the more suburban areas to the west to the countryside to the east. There are two established general building lines fronting New Road to either side of the site. Properties on and the entrance to Walnut Tree Close sit to the north.**
- 6. The care home would be formed of two linked blocks of similar design. The forwardmost of those blocks would front onto New Road and would span the majority of the width of the site. Whilst the design appears to have been amended to incorporate hipped roofs, the ridgeline of the main buildings would be continuous and set 2m higher than the nearby tallest properties.**
- 7. The two storey feature to the centre of the front facade would have only a slight forward projection and a limited projection above the eaves level. The very small projecting two storey features on the side of the block would be visually lost as features which could serve to break up the bulk and mass of the building, given their limited height, width and projection.**
- 8. Despite the proposed use of alternating materials and the set back from New Road, the main facade of the building fronting New Road would offer little visual relief on what would be a building of substantial bulk and mass.**
- 9. The largely unbroken form of the building on the site along with its height and width would severely restrict through views at the site and along with its substantial bulk and mass, would mean that it would contrast sharply with the surrounding form of development.**
- 10. It would not adopt either of the existing building lines and this would only serve to add a sense of visual difference to the building within the street scene. Further, the building by reason of its bulk, mass and**

limited articulation would afford it a commercial appearance, which would contrast sharply with the broadly established residential appearance of the area.

11. To conclude on the main issue, for the above reasons, the proposal would significantly detract from the street scene and would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area.
12. I note that there are proposals for hedgerow planting to the front of the site, however this would be likely to take some time to mature and the building would remain visible from the street through the wide central access point in any event when any planting had matured.
13. The proposal would therefore conflict with policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Core Strategy (2010) (CS). Amongst other things these policies state that planning permission will be granted for proposals that maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment and which are of an appropriate mass, built form, height and character to the area with a high quality of design.
14. There would also be conflict with the Borough Design Guide² at R7 which advises that for each street, building frontages must define the street space with a coherent building line that relates to existing building lines where they form a positive characteristic of the area. There would be further conflict with R11 which advises that new housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes including with reference to scale and height in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.
15. The National Design Guide³ (NDG) advises that well designed development should amongst other things respond positively to the positive elements of the local character including form which encompasses height, bulk and massing. However, the proposal fails to respond positively to local identity and context which form two of the ten characteristics that contribute to well-designed places. The proposal is therefore in conflict with the NDG.
16. There would also be conflict with the Framework on design grounds which states at Paragraph 139 that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design. The government guidance on design includes the NDG.

² Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document June 2012

³ National Design Guide – Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places – Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government January 2021.

- 2.15 The Inspector's analysis of the scheme's impact upon the character of the area and street scene, especially with respect to the bulk, form and height of the building has therefore informed the preparation of this application. This is set out in section 5 of the Statement.

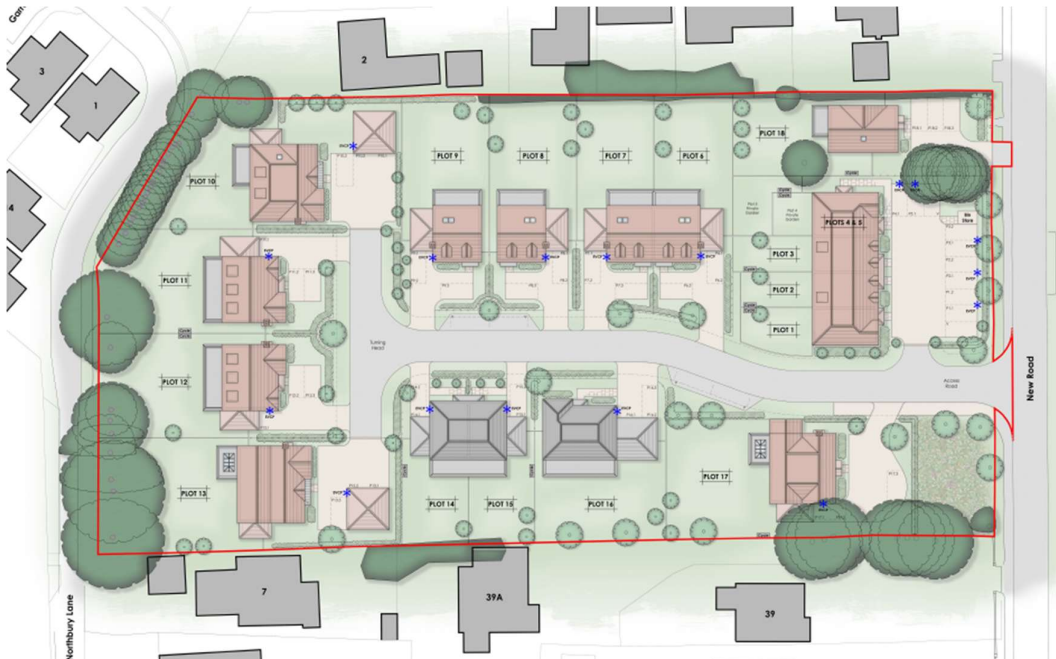
3. The Proposal

- 3.1 The proposal is a detailed scheme for the erection of 18 dwellings, with access and landscaping details included. All existing buildings on the site are to be demolished.
- 3.2 The scheme includes a mix of dwellings reflecting local needs consistent with the approach of Core Strategy Policy CP5 and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (LP) Policy TB05. This is shown in the Table below.

Info	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed +	Total
No.	2	3	6	7	18
%	11%	17%	33%	39%	100%

Housing Mix

- 3.3 Although Core Strategy Policy CP5 indicates that 40% of the dwellings should be affordable as the site lies in a modest development location, the submitted Viability Report confirms that the proposal cannot provide any affordable housing provision. The applicant awaits the Council's quotations to undertake an independent review of viability during the application process.
- 3.4 Details of the scheme are set out in the technical reports submitted in support of this planning application. The application is supported by a Site Plan that illustrate how the scheme will be delivered sympathetically in its setting.



Extract of Proposed Site Layout

4. Planning Policy Context

- 4.1 For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the development plan against which the application proposal will be determined comprises the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (adopted 29 January 2010), the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD LP) (adopted 21st February 2014) and the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan (made 18 January 2024). Consistent with the Part 5 of Section 38 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as the Neighbourhood Plan is the most recently adopted document, any conflicts between the policies of the respective Plans are resolved in favour of this one.
- 4.2 The Core Strategy and the subsequent MDD LP were both prepared to detail the approach to development in the Borough from April 2006 to March 2026 and although they remain part of the development plan, they do not take account of changes in Government policy which have arisen since. These have most recently been updated with the issuing of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in August 2026.
- 4.3 Relevant development plan policies against which the application will be considered are set out in the table below.

Relevant Development Plan policies for the application

Plan	Subject
Core Strategy	
CP1	Sustainable development
CP2	Inclusive communities
CP3	General principles for development
CP4	Infrastructure
CP5	Housing mix, density and affordability
CP6	Managing travel demand
CP7	Biodiversity
CP9	Scale and location of development
CP17	Housing Delivery
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 de-centralised energy targets
CC06	Noise
CC07	Parking
CC09	Development and Flood Risk
CC10	Sustainable Drainage
TB05	Housing Mix
TB07	Internal Space Standards

Plan	Subject
TB08	Open Space, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development
TB21	Landscape and character
TB23	Biodiversity and development
TB25	Archaeology
Ruscombe NP	
RU1	Development Limit for Ruscombe
RU2	Ruscombe Housing Design Code
RU4	Community Engagement in Planning
RU8	Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity
RU9	Managing Traffic
RU10	Car Parking

- 4.4 The Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (January 2010) alongside the Managing Development Delivery (“MDD”) Local Plan (February 2014) provide the spatial approach to development across the Borough, including the focusing of growth to towns (Major development locations), large villages (modest development locations) (includes Ruscombe) and small villages (limited development locations). It seeks minimal development in areas outside of the settlements in the countryside generally and Green Belt specifically. However, the Core Strategy was prepared in the mid 2000’s and within a different planning context, given the requirement at that time was to accord with the South East Plan (the Regional Spatial Strategy)⁴, it is fundamentally out of date for modern development manage purposes.
- 4.5 Core Strategy Policy CP17 required the delivery of at least 13,230 dwellings across the Borough between 2006 and 2026 (an annual average of 661 dwellings). However, that target was prepared in the mid 2000’s and planned for a spatial strategy that extend until March this year. The housing target and the associated development plan policies have not been updated to reflect the far greater levels of need now identified under the standard method. Consistent with the methodology required by the 2026 NPPF and PPG, the Council’s base housing need comprises 1,317 dwellings per annum⁵. The Council accepts that it is unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing, with the information published in August 2025 showing a maximum of 2.5 years over the 5 year period April 2025 through to March 2030. The presumption in favour of sustainable development is therefore very much engaged, consistent with NPPF Policy S4.
- 4.6 As discussed later in this statement, very limited weight must be attached to certain existing development plan policies where they are materially inconsistent with national decision making policies of the NPPF (2026)⁶. Paragraph 1 of the NPPF (2026) confirms that the NPPF includes **“the government’s policies for plan-making and decision-taking. It is a material consideration of critical importance in both contexts.”**

⁴ See Core Strategy (figure 1.2 and paragraphs 1.9 & 2.1-2.3).

⁵ Taking account of the median workplace based affordability ratios published on 26th March 2026 and the dwelling stock data (unrounded) released on 21st May 2026

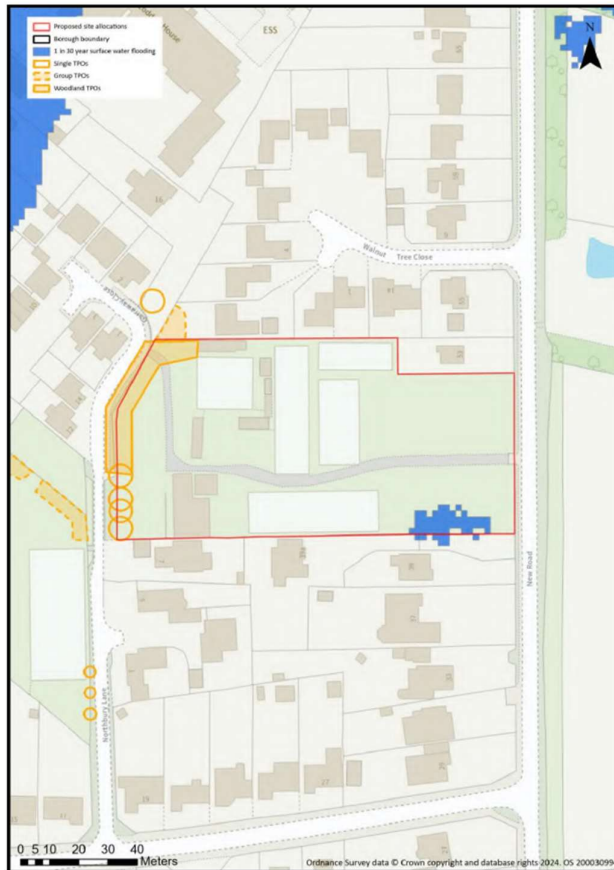
⁶ As set out in paragraph 2 of Annex A.

- 4.7 Of key relevance is the approach of NPPF Policies S3 and S4 which in the first instance “**apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development**” and secondly affirm that “**development proposals within settlements should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by adverse effects**”. As explained, the site is located within the settlement of Ruscombe and consequently the expectation that the application will be approved applies by virtue of NPPF Policies S3 and S4.
- 4.8 In the context of other relevant policies in the Development Plan are summarised below.
- 4.9 Policy CP1 provides the framework for achieving sustainable development.
- 4.10 Policy CP5 seeks at least 40% of homes on sites outside of settlements (including previously development land) as affordable housing, where at least 5 dwellings are proposed (or the site extends to at least 0.16ha). The policy is clear that this requirement is subject to viability and as confirmed by the Viability Report submitted with the application, no affordable homes can be provided in the scheme. The exception as set out in the policy therefore applies to the scheme.
- 4.11 Policies CP5 and TB05 promote a range of housing types and tenures which reflect the demand for market housing and need for affordable housing, as well as specialised housing need. This is amplified by Policy TB07 in referring to internal space standards.
- 4.12 Policy CP6 highlights the need to manage travel demand in the Borough and is supported by Policy CC07 which outlines the parking standards. In Ruscombe, these objectives are further supported by Policies RU9 and RU10.
- 4.13 Policy CP4 aims to ensure that sufficient physical, social and community infrastructure is provided alongside developments.
- 4.14 Policy CC03 aims to strengthen the role of the Green Infrastructure Network and promote accessible and integrated green infrastructure through the Borough with Policy TB08 setting the standards for open space.
- 4.15 Policy CP7 seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity within the Borough. For Ruscombe, this is supported by Policy RU8.
- 4.16 Policy CP3 considers that development will be acceptable where it can achieve certain design principles and reflects area specific design and character features. Detailed requirements for the character areas within Ruscombe are provided in Policy RU2.
- 4.17 Policies CC09 and CC10 aims to manage flood risk and reduce the volume and rate of surface water run-off.
- 4.18 The made Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan identifies development limits for Ruscombe. Policy RU1 identifies that development will normally be acceptable providing they accord with the policies of the development plan where within those development limits. The site is firmly

identified as inside the Ruscombe development limits. In addition, Appendix A to the Neighbourhood Plan forms a design code that identifies a set of design principles for "site 1", known as "Land off New Road". This forms the application site and further identifies the opportunity for a residential development upon the subject application site, consistent with its emerging Local Plan allocation. It follows that the principle of development on the site is not only supported by its location within the settlement boundary but also through its direct identification within the Neighbourhood Plan itself.

New Local Plan

- 4.19 The Council submitted their new Local Plan for Examination on 28th February 2025. Hearing sessions chaired by the Inspectorate have been arranged with sessions scheduled in two stages from 18th November 2025 through to 10th July 2026. The timings for the Inspector's publication of their findings and the extent that the Plan will need revisions is unknown.
- 4.20 The submitted new Local Plan seeks the delivery of a minimum of 12,763 dwellings from April 2023 through to March 2040 (an average of 751 dwellings annually). Whilst the Plan is being examined for consistency with the December 2023 edition of the NPPF, the December 2024 alongside the subsequent August 2026 versions have fundamentally changed the methodology for determining housing need. This therefore results in the current requirement for 1,317 dwellings annually, 75% higher than the 751 dwellings sought each year by the submitted Plan.
- 4.21 Within the Submitted Local Plan, the application site is identified as an allocation for 20 dwellings (Policy ref SS14.9). The supporting text (Appendix E) provides further guidance on the development of the 0.86ha site allocated under Policy ref SS14.9. This further guidance is:
- **New vehicle access point preferred from New Road**
 - **Retain, where possible, onsite mature and protected trees**
 - **That appropriate groundwater monitoring is carried out over the winter months (1 October – 31 March) to inform site development**
 - **That areas of surface water flooding within the site are left free of development**
 - **Sensitivity of new development to the setting of Grade II listed buildings**
 - **Undertake a desk based archaeological impact assessment to better understand the archaeological potential of the site.**
- 4.22 The extent of the allocation (which excludes 53 New Road, unlike the application site) is shown below.



Extent of allocation ref SS14.9 – 39-53 New Road, Ruscombe

- 4.23 As indicated, given the uncertainties over the Inspector's conclusions with respect to the numerous objections at the Regulation 19 stage which will not be known until they report, the emerging plan benefits from only limited weight as a material consideration. This includes the guidelines in the draft Plan which inform the preparation of proposals on the application site. The scheme nonetheless details how the matters have been considered in this submission, even-though its policies have limited weight.
- 4.24 Alongside the ongoing examination of the Local Plan (2023-2040) submitted on 28th February 2025, the Council have (30th June 2026) published their Notice to Commence the work on the successor document which will address the higher LHN of 1,317dpa. The successor Local Plan will provide a strategy through to 2045 and the published timetable⁷ indicates that consultation is scheduled during November/December 2027 (Local Plan content and evidence) and August/October 2028 (Proposed Local Plan). Adopted is expected on 31st July 2029.

Conclusions

- 4.25 A key consideration arising from the publication of the December 2024 and subsequent August 2026 editions of the NPPF is the revision to the Borough's housing requirements. Whilst the Core

⁷ <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan-2045/timetable>

Strategy sought the provision of at least 13,230 dwellings from 2006 to 2026 (average of 661dpa), the current NPPF now requires at least 1,317 dpa⁸ which is more than double that set in the Development Plan. The substantial increase in the Borough's housing target has impacted upon the Council's ability to demonstrate the minimum five year supply of housing as required by paragraph 9 in Annex D of the NPPF (2026).

- 4.26 Wokingham Borough's most recent assessment of housing land supply⁹ examined the period from April 2025 to March 2030 and indicated that over these five years, the Council could only show a 2.5 years supply with a shortfall of 3,456 dwellings. This is based upon the imposition of a 5% buffer consistent with the requirements of paragraph 9 in Annex D of the NPPF and the Council's delivery performance through the Housing Delivery Test¹⁰. The annual requirement shown by the Council was 1,316dpa which is marginally below that currently applicable.
- 4.27 Although the Council have submitted a Local Plan for Examination, its housing target of 751dpa equates to 57% of the latest LHN (1,317dpa). Therefore, once adopted, a 20% buffer will apply in determining housing land supply pursuant to paragraph 9 in Annex D of the NPPF. This is only relevant however once the Plan has been adopted, which as indicated above will not be until 2027.
- 4.28 The Council's inability to demonstrate a five year supply does not diminish the clear guidance in the NPPF (2026), whereby Policies S3 and S4 imposes the presumption in favour of development alongside the expectation that the application should be approved since it relates to a site within a settlement.
- 4.29 The site is located within the extent of the modest development location of Ruscombe as defined in the Development Plan. The collective policies from the Borough and Neighbourhood Plan support residential development on sites like that covered by the application. The development of the site is therefore consistent with the policies of the Development Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026)

- 4.30 As explained above, the National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration of critical importance for assessing the application as confirmed by paragraph 2. The NPPF is underpinned by a presumption (Policy S2) in favour of sustainable development, with three overarching, but interlinked objectives as reaffirmed in paragraph 17. Both Policy S2 and paragraph 17 are relevant to the application as the proposal would help to deliver each of the strands of sustainable development:

- a) "An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth..."**

⁸ Taking account of the median workplace based affordability ratios published on 26th March 2026 and the dwelling stock data (unrounded) released on 21st May 2026.

⁹ Published August 2025

¹⁰ Most recently issued in August 2026

b) A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations;

c) An environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land..."

- 4.31 The proposal will help to deliver each of these objectives, thereby responding to the requirement in NPPF Policy DM3 that development is pursued in a positive way, reflecting the presumption in favour of sustainable development which sits at the heart of the Framework through Policy S3.
- 4.32 NPPF Policy S3 sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Criterion 1c of Policy S3 notes that development proposals that accord with both an up-to-date development plan and the August 2026 version of the NPPF should be approved without delay.
- 4.33 Most relevant to this proposal is the emphasis in NPPF Policy S4 that for sites like the application proposal lying in a settlement **"should be approved unless the benefits of approving development are likely to be substantially outweighed by the adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework"**.
- 4.34 NPPF Policy HO13 includes the objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. NPPF Policies HO1 and HO7 are clear of the importance that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed. In this context, it is clear that Council's should take every opportunity to boost the supply of housing within their administrative areas.
- 4.35 NPPF Policy HO6 acknowledges that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be allocated where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. This is confirmed in clause b which states the Local Plans should:

"Allocate sites which will support and enhance the vitality of rural communities and enable villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services."

- 4.36 With regard to transport, Policies TR1 and TR3 of the NPPF reference the importance of locating development in sustainable locations and advocates the use of the Government's Connectivity Tool to assist in the assessment and selection of sites. In the context of the application site off New Road, Ruscombe, the connectivity tool indicates that the site has a score of 59 as illustrated below.



Extract of the DFT Connectivity Tool centred on the application site.

Summary

- 4.37 The presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF Policy S3 is firmly engaged. This is reinforced by the expectations that applications on sites in settlements will be approved as stated in NPPF Policy S4. As envisaged in NPPF Policy S4, in the event that any adverse effects were to arise from the proposal, these would need to be weighed against the benefits arising from the proposal. Provided any adverse effects do not substantially outweigh the clear benefits of the scheme, the presumption in favour of sustainable development should apply, and planning permission should be granted. The benefits that would arise from the scheme should be weighed into the planning balance when considering the impact of the proposal and its benefits. The weight of these in the planning balance is discussed in the conclusion section of this Statement.

5. Main Issues

Principle of Development

- 5.1 The Planning Act (and related case law) confirms that applications for development are to be considered in accordance with the development plan when considered as a whole, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF (2026) is a material consideration of critical importance in determining applications as confirmed by paragraph 1. Further, where development plan policies are materially inconsistent with the national decision-making policies of the Framework they should be given very limited weight as stated in paragraph 2 of Annex A of the NPPF (2026).
- 5.2 The settlement of Ruscombe is notated with a settlement policy boundary. This boundary was defined in the 2014 MDD Local Plan (and reaffirmed in the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan). As indicated, the site lies within the defined settlement policy boundary for Ruscombe to which NPPF Policy S4 applies. It is also important to note that the site is not subject to any type of other planning or landscape designation which could include areas within settlements (e.g. Areas of Special Character¹¹, Local Green Space, Sites of Urban Landscape Value¹², National Landscape etc.) nor is it within a Conservation Area.
- 5.3 It is recognised that guidelines in the submitted Local Plan relating to the site reference the need to consider impacts upon the setting of Listed Buildings. The closest to the site are the three Grade II structures at Northbury Farm¹³. The closest of the Listed Buildings to the site is Northbury Farmhouse which is approximately 145m away. The development of the site would not cause harm to the setting of these buildings, especially as although it has been in a nursery use, this was separate to the wider agricultural activities at the farm. Furthermore, the land east of New Road is still in agricultural use and this still provides the context for the appreciation of the value of the Listed Buildings, including from their inter-relationship.
- 5.4 The Neighbourhood Plan is clear that development within the defined settlement area is acceptable (Policy RU1). The application scheme accords with this principle. As detailed, this principle is also reflected in NPPF Policy S3.
- 5.5 The Core Strategy (Policy CP17) indicates that development proposals within modest development locations such as Ruscombe should generally not exceed 100 dwellings. Whilst this threshold has been exceeded through the approval of schemes within the Borough¹⁴, it is nonetheless relevant that the application proposal is significantly below this guideline in that only

¹¹ MDD Policy TB26

¹² MDD Policy TB22

¹³ Northbury Farmhouse (ref 1118194), Granary at Northbury Farmhouse (ref 1319075) and Barn at Northbury Farmhouse (ref 1154601). The Farmhouse was added to the list on 1st August 1952 with the other two joining on 23rd December 1983.

¹⁴ 126 dwellings on land north of The Manor, Brookers Hill, Shinfield (LPA ref O/2011/0204 or PINS ref APP/X0360/A/12/179141), up to 120 dwellings on land west of Beech Hill Road, Spencers Wood (LPA ref O/2013/1221 or PINS ref APP/X0360/2209286) and 116 dwellings on land west of Old Wokingham Road, Crowthorne (LPA ref F/2014/1561).

18 dwellings are advanced (including one custom build on plot 18). This is an illustration of the acceptability of the development in this location.

5.6 The suitability of the site for residential development is further illustrated by its inclusion as an allocation for 20 dwellings in the submitted Local Plan (site ref SS14.9). Whilst limited weight is attached to the draft Local Plan, its identification of the site is recognition of its suitability, especially given this is consistent with the current policy approach relating to it.

5.7 Further to the acceptability of the scheme given its location within the settlement boundary/development limits for Ruscombe together, there are further detailed matters which are pertinent to the scheme. These are explored below:

- 1) Affordable Housing;
- 2) Housing Mix;
- 3) Impact on the character of the area (including landscape & visual considerations);
- 4) Design & open space;
- 5) Residential Amenity;
- 6) Highways, Accessibility and Parking;
- 7) Natural Environment (Including Trees, Ecology and Biodiversity Conservation);
- 8) Conservation of Historic Environment;
- 9) Flooding and Drainage;
- 10) Energy Efficiency;
- 11) Community Infrastructure Requirements / S106 Requirements; and
- 12) Economic, Social & Environmental Considerations

5.8 Each of these matters are now addressed in turn:

1) Affordable Housing

5.9 Core Strategy Policy CP5 requires the provision of 40% affordable housing as part of new residential development. In this regard, based upon the proposed development of 18 dwellings, compliance with the policy would require 7.2 affordable homes on site. However, as indicated, a Viability Assessment is submitted with the application that confirms that no affordable housing can be provided in the scheme. Part of the reason for this viability position, is due to the very substantial CIL payment that will be forthcoming through the proposals.

5.10 Since the Policy allows for exemptions from the provision of affordability where viability challenges are demonstrated, the application is therefore acceptable in this instance.

2) Housing Mix

5.11 Housing Mix Policy TB05 requires that where developments contain market housing, these should contain a range of house types and sizes to address local requirements, with the mix to be appropriate to the size, location, density and character of the site and surrounding area.

- 5.12 In response, the application promotes a scheme that is designed to reflect the character of the area as well as market requirements. In this regard, the Site Layout shows a scheme which accommodates a range of detached, semi-detached and terraced dwellings. The mix is outlined in the Design & Access Statement and repeated in the table below.

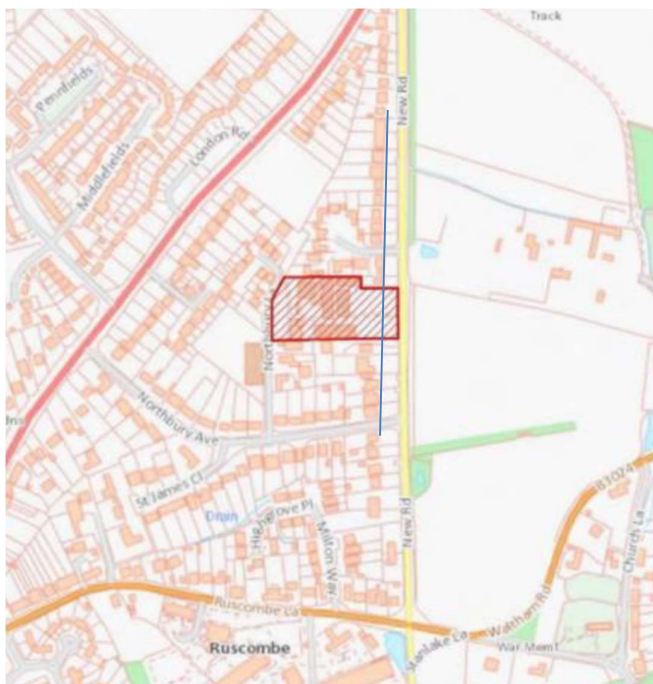
Info	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed +	Total
No.	2	3	6	7	18
%	11%	17%	33%	39%	100%

Housing Mix

- 5.13 The mix reflected on the submitted layout includes a range of house types and sizes and is focused in part upon larger detached dwellings so to ensure a low density scheme that is appropriate to the established character and density of this site in Ruscombe. Equally, a genuine range of house types and sizes are achieved. The scheme complies with Policy TB05.

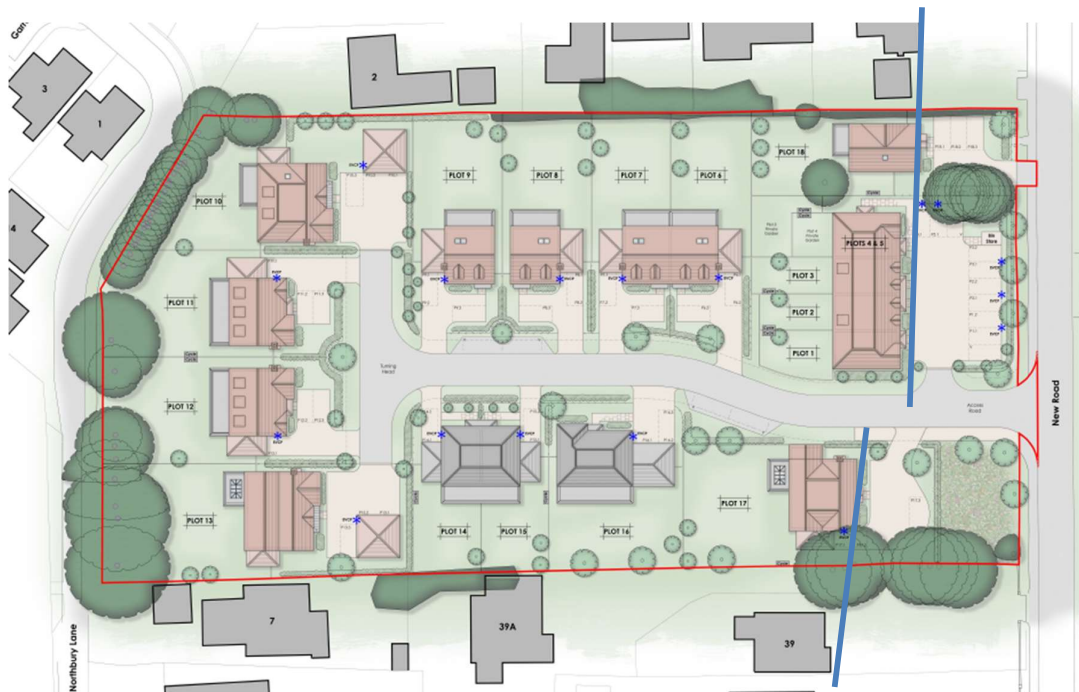
3) Impact on the character of the area (including landscape & visual considerations)

- 5.14 The application is supported by a comprehensive landscaping design prepared by ACD Environmental. The site is not subject to any landscape related designation and is therefore at the lower end of the NPPF value scale.
- 5.15 The appeal decision on the site referred to the existing building lines along New Road. The Plan in the Neighbourhood Plan illustrates this as shown below.



Extract from Plan G in the Neighbourhood Plan (with general building line shown)

- 5.16 Whilst the appeal decision indicated that the care home scheme was set back from the building line, this was insufficient to off-set the impact upon the street scene particularly as a result of the building extending across the site. In contrast, the application as shown on the proposed layout shows dwellings (Plots 1-5 and 18 which lie north of the access road) which reflect the building line of the existing buildings located to the north of 55 New Road. The dwellings south of the access road, are angled with a gradual set back to again reflect the building line for the dwellings immediately south of the site (39 New Road). This is shown in the extract taken from the site layout below with the building line south of the access road set back further compared to the part north of the road. Importantly, the building line lies behind the prevailing building line of the properties to the north of the site and is staggered as one travels southward to reflect the set back nature of the property to the immediate south of the site.



Extract of Proposed Site Layout with rough building lines shown

- 5.17 The alignments of the dwellings compared to the building line that informed the dismissed appeal scheme forms a substantive change to the proposed scheme. The importance of according with the building line is referenced in the Housing Design Code¹⁵ which applies to the site as part of the Policy RU2 of the Neighbourhood Plan. The part of the site adjoining New Road is within character area 1 (New Road) with the western part in character area 7 (Highgrove Place, Russett Gardens, Walnut Tree Close, Garraway Close and St Michael's Court), as shown below.

¹⁵ See Appendix A of the Neighbourhood Plan



Extract of the defined character areas in the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.18 As a site being brought forward through the emerging Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan includes specific design principles relating to it (page 67). An analysis of the application's consistency with these principles is detailed below.

Specific design principles for the site specified in the Neighbourhood Plan

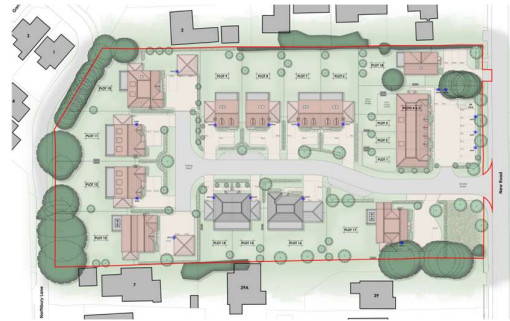
Code No.	Design Standard specified in NP for site	Compliance of application
R11	<u>Wokingham Borough Design Guide</u> : New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.	The Design & Access Statement submitted with the application details the compliance of the application with these factors. Importantly, the scheme now comprises a family led character, focusing predominantly on detached housing but with some semi detached and terraced plots included so to enable mixed development that enables a density consistent with the emerging local plan. Materials are of high quality and include varied architectural detailing. The scale is 2 to 2 1/2 storeys again consistent with the prevailing heights and scales found in the area.

Code No.	Design Standard specified in NP for site	Compliance of application
R11.33	<u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements</u> Four plots of 13m width fronting onto New Road with building forms as per New Road code.	The plots widths fronting New Road are narrower to provide a mix of homes across the site and to reflect the transitional character of the site, with lower density to the rear. The plot arrangements are reflective of those in Walnut Tree Close as advocated in R11.34.
R11.34	Plot arrangement and depths as per Walnut Tree Close, but narrower widths of 5-6m for a mix of two storey, 2/3 bed detached and semi-detached houses.	
R14	Open space and Landscape <u>Wokingham Borough Design Guide:</u> Development proposals should provide space for and include well designed hard and soft landscape to create a high quality setting for new housing that is appropriate to the character of the area	The Design & Access Statement explains how a high quality setting is provided on the site, with well designed hard and soft landscaping. Further, tree planting is proposed along the main access road and within the gardens and an area of wildflower meadow planting provided on the front of the site so to provide a green frontage adjacent to New Road.
R14.4	Retain mature cluster of trees on Northbury Avenue boundary and mature trees on site 1, retain and bolster northern boundary hedging and create new hedging to southern boundary.	The cluster of trees on the Northbury Avenue boundary are retained. Northern and southern boundaries bolstered.

- 5.19 Character area 7 defined in the Neighbourhood Plan includes the various cul-de-sacs between New Road, London Road and Northbury Avenue. These developments are at a higher density than the homes which front onto these roads. This variation is reflected in the application proposal albeit given the context and arrangement of the site, the scheme includes a consistent philosophy for the arrangement and density of dwellings.
- 5.20 The scheme, in contrast to the care home proposal dismissed on appeal provides clear breaks in the built form and layout, especially associated with the road which serves the dwellings on the western part of the site. The enhanced separation is illustrated in the comparisons of the layout and street scene from New Road below.



Layout for care home



Proposed Layout



New Road elevation of care home

- 5.21 The below comparison street scene illustrates the differences between the previous appeal and the subject application. It illustrates the reduction in overall height and importantly, the reduction in overall scale and mass generated through breaking the overall built form on the site up into a more domestic housing lead scale rather than an institutional care home. The result is a scheme that firmly complies with the Neighbourhood Plan and emerging Local Plan allocations of the land. Indeed, the proposed capacity is slightly below that anticipated in the emerging Local Plan but is counterbalanced through the scheme forming a character led housing proposal.



Comparison street scene between dismissed previous appeal and subject application scheme

- 5.22 For the reasons described above and within the Design & Access Statement, the density of development is purposely low to medium so to reflect the housing led character of the area. In addition, the scheme is designed so to enable a landscape led development. This is illustrated on the Illustrative Landscape Strategy.
- 5.23 Overall, the proposal respects the existing site features and landscape containment resulting in a development with landscape impacts of a localised nature to the site without a detrimental impact upon the wider landscape character beyond Ruscombe. The layout shows how the proposal would assimilate appropriately with the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape. As such the proposals accord with Local Plan Policies CP1 and CP3, the Design Guide SPD and the guidance contained in the NPPF.

4) Design & open space

- 5.24 The layout proposes development in individual detached, semi-detached, maisonette and terraced forms which are arranged along the road serving the site.
- 5.25 As indicated, the scheme is consistent with the pattern and orientation of development within Ruscombe and the guidelines set out in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.26 Noting that the Council has a 5 year housing land supply deficit, the proposed development strikes the right balance between making efficient use of the land as required by NPPF Policy L1 and L3 and Local Plan policies CP1 and CP3 and respecting the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area.
- 5.27 This is explored further in section 4 of the Design and Access Statement which sets out the rationale for the site with specific consideration of the characteristics of Ruscombe especially from dwellings around the site.

5) Residential Amenity

- 5.28 The scheme has been designed to ensure that all dwellings will meet and exceed internal space standards. Further, all properties benefit from large areas of private amenity space and will have access to communal open space. Good separation between dwellings is provided and is further broken up with soft landscaping. Relationships with immediate neighbours are set at a good distance from shared boundaries (consistent with development management standards) and behind retained existing screening. The properties on the New Road frontage benefit from a conventional side to side relationship with the site's neighbours. It follows that the scheme complies with Core Strategy Policy CP3, the Council's Design Guide alongside the requirements in the Neighbourhood Plan.

6) Highways, accessibility and parking

- 5.29 The main site access uses the existing access from New Road which is to be remodelled to provide a route for the scheme. A service road is then provided as a spine through the scheme, with the dwellings arranged along it. The access road will be a private driveway, maintained by the management company. The management company itself will be owned by the residents for the lifetime of the development. Further details on the access arrangements, including vehicular tracking diagrams demonstrating its suitability for the expected traffic are provided in the Transport Statement. The site access junction and route through the site have been tracked and visibility splays checked by the project's highway consultant. Parking provision accords with adopted standards.
- 5.30 A range of dwellings are provided, including maisonettes, semi-detached and detached houses. Further, tree lined streets and a meandering access road through the site are proposed, consistent with good urban design principles.

- 5.31 SuDS has been incorporated in order to effectively manage surface water drainage. The drainage strategy includes permeable paving and attenuation tanks.

7) Natural Environment

Trees

- 5.32 The application is supported by comprehensive tree survey, arboricultural impact assessment, arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan. It is confirmed that no proposed main houses are located within canopy spreads or root protection areas. Limited tree removal and incursion into RPA's through the car ports are acceptable in arboricultural terms subject to mitigation by way of replacement planting and sensitive construction methods. Across the site, a substantial increase in tree planting is achieved through the proposals. An area of trees to the rear of the site have been allowed to grow largely due to an absence of ability to access them. The removal of these trees is justified in conjunction with new tree planting on the site and agreed off-site BNG mitigation measures. The removal of the self-seeded trees will improve the setting of the retained protected trees. The scheme is acceptable in arboricultural respects.

Ecology and Biodiversity Conservation

- 5.33 The scheme is supported by ecological reports and a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (with supporting metric). The conclusions (Chapter 10) contained within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal are extracted below.

10.1. The Application Site comprises a disused plant nursery that has been colonised by ruderal vegetation, bramble scrub and woodland. Several buildings/greenhouses and associated hardstanding are present at the Application Site.

10.2. Any clearance of grassland or scrub habitats on-site will be carried out sensitively under the supervision of an ecologist to ensure there is no harm to reptiles. A district level licence for great crested newt would be required prior to works commencing on site. Alternatively eDNA surveys of all ponds within 500m could be undertaken.

10.3. Precautionary measures are required to protect nesting birds during construction. The scattered trees will be subject to a nesting bird check prior to any works or will be carried out outside of the nesting bird season (March - August inclusive).

10.4. A sensitive lighting strategy will be implemented to protect suitable foraging and commuting features for bats on-site and maintain dark corridors for bats during the construction and operational phases of the development.

10.5. A confirmed roost of brown long eared bat has been identified. A bat licence should be sort from Natural England prior to works to the dwelling commencing. Further details are provided within the Supplementary Bat Report by AA Environmental.

10.6. The Application Site has potential to support commuting and foraging mammals such as hedgehogs. Measures will be implemented to protect mammals from harm during the construction phase of the proposed development.

10.7. The proposed development will result in a -31.74% loss in habitat units and a 149.78% net gain in hedgerow units. This will involve several habitat creation and enhancement measures that are outlined in the habitat creation plan in Appendix 3. Details regarding long-term management and maintenance of these habitats will be outlined in a LEMP report. An offsite provider has been identified that will provide the necessary biodiversity credits.

10.8. Assuming the implementation of the mitigation and enhancement measure set out in this report, the proposed development would conform to Policies CP7 and CP8 the Wokingham Borough Local Plan and would deliver biodiversity enhancements in accordance with the NPPF.

10.9. The proposed mitigation includes measures to ensure compliance with the legislation relating to protected species and invasive non-native plant species. A route for licensing the works relating to great crested newts and bats has been identified.

- 5.34 The Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment using the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric finds that based on the Proposed Layout, a development of this size on the site is capable of delivering a quantifiable net gain for biodiversity in relation to habitats. Whilst there is a 31.74% reduction in habitat units, there is a 149.78% gain in relation to linear habitats. The 10% obligation can be met through off-site contributions. In addition to these quantifiable net gains, a range of qualitative ecological enhancements can also be delivered on site. The application is therefore acceptable having regard to ecological and biodiversity considerations.
- 5.35 Finally, the applicant has engaged with Biofarm, who have confirmed that they have suitable habitat mitigation available and have agreed a price for this mitigation with the applicant. Once planning is granted the mitigation will be formally secured (and the statutory BNG condition discharged).

8) Conservation of the Historic Environment

- 5.36 The NPPF requires that, when determining applications, account should be taken of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of assets.

- 5.37 The application site does not lie within or adjacent to a Conservation Area. The closest Listed Buildings are the three Grade II Buildings at Northbury Farm¹⁶, the closest of which (the Farmhouse) lies 140m to the east of the site. As confirmed in the desk based archaeological assessment, the distance in between the site and heritage assets is such that development of the site will not result in any harm to designated heritage assets.
- 5.38 Alongside this conclusion is the recognition that heritage impacts were not identified as a matter of concern with respect to the earlier care home proposal. This was notwithstanding the materially different built form and associated relationships within the wider area.

9) Flooding and Drainage

- 5.39 The application is supported by a comprehensive Drainage Strategy. This confirms that the site is located within flood zone 1 and is at low risk from all sources of flooding. The report demonstrates that with the proposed approach, the occupiers and users of the proposed development would remain safe from current and future surface water flood risk for the lifetime of the development. The proposed indicative drainage strategy seeks to use sustainable drainage systems, including permeable paving and underground soakaways so to reduce the runoff from the site whilst discharging all surface water flows directly to the ground via infiltration. The proposed drainage strategy seeks to use sustainable drainage systems, including permeable paving and soakaways to reduce the runoff from the site whilst discharging all surface water flows directly to the ground via infiltration. A Flood Risk Assessment is not necessary due to the site being under 1 hectare and not at risk from sources of flooding.

10) Energy Efficiency

- 5.40 The application is by comprehensive Sustainability & Energy Statement. This details of how selected energy efficiency, low carbon and renewable energy measures can be incorporated into the development at reserved matters stage and achieve a substantive reduction in site carbon dioxide emissions. The application scheme is acceptable in respect of an energy efficient and sustainable form of development consistent with the Development Plan.

11) Community Engagement

- 5.41 In accordance with Policy RU4, the applicant held a meeting with Ruscombe Parish Council in February 2026. Circa 20 residents also attended. The proposed scheme was presented by the applicant and questions answered. Key points that came up during this engagement are summarised below:
- The proximity of the car ports at plot 13 to the boundary. It was agreed that this could be moved 1m away from the boundary to reduce any impact.

¹⁶ Northbury Farmhouse listed on 1/8/1952 (ref 1118194), Granary at Northbury Farmhouse listed on 23/12/1983 (ref 1319075) and Barn at Northbury Farmhouse listed on 23/12/1983 (ref 1154601).

- Roof rooms in the buildings. It was explained that, as an allocated site, efficient use of the land is essential (and required by policy), whilst respecting the character of the area. The scheme transitions from 2.5 storey to 2 storey from north to south, so to respond to the chalet bungalows located to the south of the site.
- A correct reflection of No. 1 Walnut Tree Close and its associated annex on the plans was requested. This is reflected on the submitted Site Layout Plan.
- Some comments were made regarding the separation distances with neighbouring properties. Section drawings were subsequently provided to the individual.
- Comments were made regarding some of the buildings having dormer windows at roofscape level. It was explained that a conventional 2 storey scale was proposed on the southern side of the scheme, due to the reduced scale of existing development to the south. However, on the northern side of the scheme, the dormer windows would be south facing (into the scheme itself, rather than towards the north (where rooflights only are proposed)).
- Issues were raised with the social issues of vandalism, drug and alcohol use on site. The applicant has since at their own expense, boarded up the entrance to the house, put a new close boarded fence across the rear of the site, and put up site hording across the whole of the front of the site.
- Concerns were raised about rats on the land. The applicant has at their own expense paid for rodent control to be put in place.
- Protected trees at the rear of the site were referenced. It was confirmed the scheme would not affect them, but some of the self-seeded trees to the rear would have to be removed to facilitate the development.
- It was noted that there was significant opposition to the previous application for the large care home and generally, residents were happier with a proposed residential housing scheme, especially one that focussed upon family sized homes.
- The proposed density was questioned. It was explained that the proposals were still below the proposed capacity in the emerging Local Plan and the scheme enabled an appropriate balance between optimising the use of this settlement location and one that respects the housing led character of the area.
- Overall, the meeting was positive. Generally, responses were positive that the scheme is no longer being forward as a care home scheme and it was explained that the built form was being kept as far away from shared boundaries as possible so to respect neighbouring residential amenities.

5.42 It follows that meaningful community engagement (in accordance with Policy RU4) has occurred in advance of submission.

12) Community Infrastructure Requirements / S106 Requirements

- 5.43 The application scheme will attract Community Infrastructure Levy payments. In addition, a Section 106 agreement can secure obligations, where any obligations can be justified within the context of the CIL Regulations.

13) Economic, Social & Environmental Considerations

Economic Benefits

- 5.44 The economic benefits can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Increased house building in an area where there is a demand for new housing drives economic growth further and faster than any industry. In this regard, the proposals would contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is being made available in the right place and at the right time to support growth.¹⁷
- 2) The provision of 18 homes in Wokingham Borough where there is an established need for such new homes. This is particularly so as the housing requirement is set as a minimum, and there is a substantial shortfall in 5 year housing land supply.
- 3) The application scheme is immediately available and can deliver much needed housing now.
- 4) Meeting general housing needs is a benefit, consistent with the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of housing.
- 5) Create or support between 43 and 56 direct, indirect and induced jobs from the homes built on the site.¹⁸
- 6) Helping to deliver a significant boost to the local economy through 'first occupation' expenditure of £140,000¹⁹.
- 7) In terms of household expenditure, data from the ONS Family Expenditure Survey 2024-25²⁰ shows that the 'average UK household spend' is £622.60 per week (Table A33) (or £32,464 per year), whereas in South East England it is 16.3% higher than the UK average (Table A33). This means average weekly spend per household is £724.20 (or £37,762 per annum). For the application proposal, the total gross expenditure is estimated to be around £679,800 per year

¹⁷ The 2021 Census indicated that the proportion of Wokingham Borough's population aged 16-64 year olds at 62.1% is below that for England (63%). Nonetheless the proportion of the population who were economically active is also higher at 64.4% compared to 58.6%. The proportion with a level 3 or above qualification is also higher in the Borough at 62.5% compared to 50.8% in England as is the proportion of people in employment who are managers, directors & senior officials (17.7% compared to 11.2.9%) or in professional occupations (28.5% compared to 20.3%). This highly skilled workforce is demonstrated by median gross annual residence based earnings at £52,222 compared to £39,243 for England in 2025 (33% higher). The Land Registry indicates that average house prices in Wokingham Borough (May 2026) were £495,261 compared to £292,095 in England (69.6% higher).

¹⁸ See page 13 of the Homes Builders Federation "Economic Footprint of UK Housebuilding" (July 2018) - https://www.hbf.co.uk/documents/7876/The_Economic_Footprint_of_UK_House_Building_July_2018LR.pdf

¹⁹ Research carried out by OnePoll on behalf of Barratt Homes (August 2014; <https://www.barratthomes.co.uk/the-buying-process/home-buying-advice/>) indicates an average spend of £5,462 per dwelling. Taking account of inflation using the Bank of England's calculator which updates the figures to June 2026, this equates to £7,778 per dwelling.

²⁰ Family spending workbook 3: expenditure by region - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk), published 11th June 2026.

to the economy. A proportion of this household expenditure is anticipated to be spent in local shops and services and will help sustain the existing services in Wokingham Borough including those local to the application site in Twyford. The expenditure per household will include a proportion of that spent weekly on areas including food & non-alcoholic drinks (£74.40); alcoholic drinks (£12.00); recreation and culture (£93.30 per week), household goods and services (£40.00) and miscellaneous goods and services i.e. hairdressing & beauty treatments (£51.90).²¹ Given the current economic challenges facing the UK these are significant economic benefits.

- 8) Increased expenditure in the local area will support FTE jobs.
- 9) The application scheme would also secure financial contributions, to be spent on local infrastructure provision that, in turn not only support the local community but also generate economic activity including jobs.

5.45 Substantial weight can be attached to the long-term economic benefits arising from the scheme.

Social Benefits

5.46 The social benefits have been emphasised throughout this planning statement. These include:

- 1) Provides high-quality residential accommodation.
- 2) Provides a market housing mix that matches identified needs.
- 3) Increases opportunities for home ownership in the area.
- 4) The new populous resulting from the scheme will help sustain the existing key services in the area.
- 5) Comprehensive and positive redevelopment of a site that has suffered from significant antisocial behaviour for a significant period of time.

5.47 Substantial weight can be attached to the social benefits arising from the scheme:

Environmental Benefits

5.48 The environmental benefits can be summarised as follows:

- 1) The achievement of 10% biodiversity net gain (through a part on and part off site solution).
- 2) A landscape led development that results in tree planting across the site.
- 3) A positive SuDS system, appropriately managed by a future management company.
- 4) A high quality design on a site that presently offers a dilapidated and detracting influence upon the New Road street scene.

²¹ Figures based upon SE Regional data in Table A33

6. Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 6.1 The Council cannot demonstrate a minimum 5 year housing land supply. The application must therefore be considered in accordance approach of the NPPF given it is a material consideration of critical importance (paragraph 1). Of particular relevance is the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in NPPF Policy S3 and the further emphasis on the general acceptance of development in settlements as set out in Policy S3. The application site is not subject to any constraints specified in criterion ii of part 2a of Policy S4 and consequently there are no clear reasons for refusing the application.
- 6.2 This Planning Statement has identified and addressed a comprehensive set of issues. These are identified and summarised below with **consistencies** or **conflicts** identified.
- 1) Settlement policies consistent with LP Policies CP9 and CP17.
 - 2) Affordable housing **consistent** with Local Plan Policy CP5, given the policy allows for viability considerations to negate any provision;
 - 3) Housing Mix **consistent** with Local Plan Policy TB05;
 - 4) Accessibility and Adaptable homes **consistent** with Local Plan Policies CP3 and TB07;
 - 5) Impact on the character of the area (including visual amenity) **consistent** with Local Plan Policy CP3;
 - 6) Design (including density and public open space provision) **consistent** with Local Plan Policies CP1 and CP3;
 - 7) Residential Amenity **consistent** with Local Plan Policy CP1 and Design Guide;
 - 8) Highways and Parking **consistent** with Local Plan Policies CP6 and CC07;
 - 9) Accessibility (including Pedestrian and Cycle Access and Transport) **consistent** with Local Plan Policy CP6;
 - 10) Natural Environment (Including Trees, Ecology and Biodiversity Conservation) **consistent** with Local Plan Policies CP7 and CC03;
 - 11) Conservation of Historic Environment **consistent** with Local Plan Policy TB24;
 - 12) Flooding and Drainage; **consistent** with Local Plan Policies CC09 and CC10;
 - 13) Energy Efficiency **consistent** with Local Plan Policy CC04;
 - 14) Community Infrastructure Requirements / S106 Requirements **consistent** with Local Plan Policy CP4;
 - 15) Economic Considerations **consistent** with NPPF paragraph 17a; and
 - 16) Social Considerations **consistent** with NPPF paragraph 17b.
- 6.3 It is evident that the proposal represents one that is compliant with all relevant, up to date development plan policies.
- 6.4 Should the converse be concluded, it is important to emphasise that the weight to be attached to these conflicts is to be afforded only limited weight owing to the inability of the development plan to provide a minimum 5 year supply of housing land. The degree of any conceivable harm is very limited, especially having regard to its provisional allocation for 20 dwellings in the submitted Local Plan. The harm is also reduced owing to the high-quality nature of the proposed development and its compliance with the character, pattern and grain of development associated with Ruscombe.

- 6.5 The development will result in significant economic benefits through both the construction phase and then by the occupiers of the dwellings.
- 6.6 The social benefits would come from the contribution to the range and choice of homes available locally, alongside the contribution that these dwellings would make to the Borough's 5 year housing land supply. This social benefit is a significant benefit in favour of the application.
- 6.7 There will be environmental benefits. The site lies in a location beyond any designated landscape areas with access to services comparable to other locations which have been accepted as sustainable, as well as the site providing a net gain of biodiversity. High quality and well located public open space is to be provided. A high-quality landscaped residential environment will be created.
- 6.8 As indicated, it is clearly evident that the proposal is acceptable but where a conflict or harm arises, this is limited in extent and nature, whilst the weight to be attached to that harm is substantially reduced owing to the inability of the Council to meet the minimum 5 year housing land supply requirement. The relevant assessment for the determination of the application is set out within Policies S3 and S4 of the NPPF. For an application to be refused the adverse impacts must significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. It is clear from the assessment in this statement that the benefits of the scheme are very substantial and on no interpretation could any conceivable adverse impacts of the proposed development significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits taking the policies within the NPPF when considered as a whole. Accordingly, the development represents sustainable development such that it can be approved.



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