

PLANNING REF : 251486
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Fern House
: Barkham Rd, Wokingham
: RG414TG
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Patrick Turley
DATE SUBMITTED : 19/08/2025

COMMENTS:

I would like to object to this planning application for the following reasons;

1. There have been eight previous applications turned down for this site. One of the major objections being the harm caused to the character and appearance to an important strategic 'Green wedge'
2. Policy CP11 in the Wokingham Borough Core strategy says 'it should protect identity of settlements and quality of environments outside of the development area and developments would not normally be permitted. Although one application has been granted outside of the settlement area it should be the exception not the rule.'
3. This development does not follow guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework to the protection of existing open spaces. As one of the last green spaces along the road from Wokingham to Barkham this should not be built on.
4. In the 'Landscape and Visual Appraisal' it states there will be 'no detrimental impact upon the landscape or scenic beauty'. How can the building of 16 houses and flats on a green area have no impact?
5. It doesn't 'retain and enhance the condition of the existing landscape features' a requirement of the WBC planning framework (TB21)
6. In the planning statement it says 'the site will complement existing pattern of development'. This is clearly wrong as there are no one or two-bedroom houses or flats in the vicinity. Its definitely not 'sympathetic to local character' (NPPF guidelines sect12.135c)
7. In the planning statement it says 'the views from the houses will discharge anti-social behaviour'. On what basis do they make that assumption?
8. In the Statement of Community involvement (2.6 3.2), it states that any concerns have been addressed by substituting 16 houses in the place of 5 self-build houses. If there were concerns about building 5 houses how does building 16 address the issues? What about all the other concerns that the local community have? As far as I am aware there has been no community involvement at all
9. In the Travel plan (4.3) it states that a visibility splay of 2.4mtrs x 43m is achievable and the speed limit on the road is 30mph. Edneys Hill has a speed limit of 60mph. Their splay requirement is also based on a 'minor development'. This development should be

classified as a 'major' as it exceeds 0.5 hectares and 9 dwellings' (as defined by WBC in their local plan - Housing-9.2.9). The Splay requirement can be different for a major development and they have not considered there is a dangerous blind bend to the right of the access road. For these reasons I believe there should be a higher splay requirement. A previous application a short distance away on Edneys Hill has been turned down due to the splay requirement, despite this having a substantially better sight lines.

10. The planning application refers to Edneys Hill as a single carriageway. This is not true as in many parts traffic has to go single file to get past. It's also a rat run for traffic and any increase along this road could increase the chances of accidents, particularly to pedestrians as there are no pavements.

11. The level of traffic at the moment, after the development of Arborfield Green, has already increased substantially. Possible future developments at Barkham Square and Halls Farm will bring the area into further gridlock but at least these will bring substantial benefits in providing the extra housing required in the Borough. The benefits of this development will not outweigh the damage it will cause. This application can hardly be described as a 'windfall' as this applies mainly to brownfield sites or closures of businesses, not a green field!

12. There is increased risk of flooding. The Ground Investigation report states groundwater is apparent in some places less than 0.7 metres from the surface and no such infiltration testing was possible due to this. In fact, it's bad enough to suggest they should not build in the winter! There is also a 9mtr drop on the development and houses on Barkham Rd have already suffered flooding on numerous occasions at the bottom of Coppid Hill. Also, with the predicted hotter summers and wetter winters there will be a significant risk of subsidence as the soil dries in the hotter summers.

13. It states that there is no substantial contamination although of course there is a lot of anecdotal evidence of the old buildings being buried into the ground. Because of their age there is, I believe, a significant possibility that they will contain asbestos and be a danger to workers and neighbours. Even their own survey classifies it as Low to Medium risk.

14. In the Travel Plan it states there is a good pedestrian structure (3.6). The path on Bearwood Rd (access to the village shop) is very poor on both sides. Only walkable singly in a lot of places and contains many trip hazards caused by the roots of trees. This is particularly dangerous for older people and mums with prams and young children. As a disabled person I am unable to get to the shop at all, either with a wheelchair or walker. The crossing of Barkham Rd is on the brow of a hill and very close to a busy junction and is very dangerous. There are no paths turning right out of the proposed entrance to the development at all.

15. It states that Barkham Rd is considered safe for cycling. By whom? If anyone who cycles along this very busy road with no cycleways would think it's very safe, I would be very surprised.
16. There is no crossing facility at the end of Edneys Hill. Once again pedestrians would need to cross at a very busy junction if they want to go towards Wokingham or have to walk in the other direction up a steep hill and down again. Not easy with small children.
17. It states that the application's aim is to minimise single occupancy in cars by maximising other means. How are they doing that? Cycling opportunities are poor or rather dangerous. Nowhere is walkable.
18. It refers to byways nearby for cyclists. One is Aggisters lane which is a very rough unmade rd blocked at the end to traffic and totally unrideable for cyclist. The other basically either leads back on to Edneys hill or to an area unlikely to be of interest to the new residents. Cycling along Bearwood Rd towards Reading would be extremely dangerous
19. It says there is a good bus service. Yes, there is at the moment a half hourly service to Wokingham but this may be cut to hourly in the winter months (as per this winter) and the service into Reading takes over one hour, so no real use to commuters or shoppers. The train station is not walkable on a daily basis (about 4-mile round trip). Its further noted that the Assessment of Baseline Travel Patterns are based on information from 14 years ago (5.4)
20. The Ecology report was carried out in March. This is outside of the recommended period for such surveys to be undertaken and therefore may not show all risk factors to the habitat.
21. TB23 (WBC core strategy) calls for an enhancement of biodiversity. It's also a requirement of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) that all new developments should improve the natural environment by at least 10%. In the Ecology Report it admits there will be a reduction in habitat units by 5%.
22. The site has rare Oxeye daisies growing deemed to be scarce. These will be destroyed.
23. Hedgerow H2 is a priority habitat but part of this will be destroyed when the new access road is created.
24. The application does not meet the required affordable housing stipulation of 40 per cent for Affordable Housing.
25. The development will call for an estimated increase of approximately 5000 litres per day (based on the average usage of 140 litres per day per person). Water pressure is already quite low in a number of residences nearby and this will put too much strain on the water supply.

