



National Planning Policy Framework Addendum

Land off Blakes Lane, Wargrave, RG10 9TA

Planning application ref. 261825

August 2026



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This National Planning Policy Framework Addendum has been prepared by hgh Consulting ("hgh") on behalf of Nicholas and Emma Herbert ("the Applicant") in support of full planning application ref. 261825 at land off Blakes Lane, Wargrave, RG10 9TA ("the site").
- 1.2 The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the existing buildings and structures and the erection of one detached residential dwelling, including means of access, landscaping, drainage and associated infrastructure ("the proposed development").
- 1.3 The application was submitted with a Planning Statement dated August 2026 ("the Planning Statement"). Paragraph 4.17 of that Statement anticipated publication of the final revised National Planning Policy Framework and expressly reserved the Applicant's position to provide an addendum once the new national policy framework came into effect.
- 1.4 The Government published the new National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") on 17 August 2026. It replaced the December 2024 Framework and its national decision-making policies took immediate effect. The application must therefore be determined having regard to the August 2026 NPPF as a material consideration of critical importance.
- 1.5 This Addendum should be read alongside the Planning Statement and the other submitted documents. It does not repeat the assessments of design, residential amenity, landscape, trees, ecology, drainage, highways, energy or other technical matters where the conclusions remain unchanged. Its purpose is to update the national policy basis for the principle of development and the planning balance.
- 1.6 Where the Planning Statement refers to superseded paragraph numbers or tests from the December 2024 NPPF, those references should be read together with, and where necessary superseded by, the analysis in this Addendum. This Addendum also updates the weight to be given to the relevant Development Plan policies in light of Annex A to the August 2026 NPPF. The factual description of the site and proposals remains as set out in the Planning Statement.

2.0 THE AUGUST 2026 NPPF

Status and Structure

- 2.1 The August 2026 NPPF separates plan-making policies from national decision-making policies. The Framework confirms that the latter are material considerations in determining planning applications and should be read alongside the Development Plan. It also states that plan-making policies should not be applied to individual development proposals.
- 2.2 Policy S3 retains a presumption in favour of sustainable development but expresses it through separate routes for sites within and outside settlements. For Green Belt proposals, policy S5(5) directs the decision-maker to policies GB6, GB7 and, where relevant, GB8.

Green Belt Decision Making Policies

- 2.3 Policy GB6 states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it falls within one of the categories in policy GB7. Where a proposal does fall within GB7, it is not inappropriate, should not be regarded as harmful to the Green Belt and is not required to demonstrate very special circumstances.
- 2.4 The updated definition of grey belt includes previously developed land and/or other Green Belt land which does not strongly contribute to any of Green Belt purposes (a), (b) or (d) in policy GB2. Those purposes concern unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, the merging of neighbouring towns, and the setting and special character of historic towns.
- 2.5 Annex E now places the assessment criteria for those three purposes within the NPPF itself. It confirms, among other matters, that villages are not large built-up areas for purpose (a); that purpose

- (b) concerns the merging of towns rather than villages; and that purpose (d) concerns historic towns rather than villages.
- 2.6 Policy GB7(1)(g) provides that development on grey belt land is not inappropriate where four requirements are satisfied:
- (a) the development would use grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area;
 - (b) there is an evidenced unmet need for the development proposed;
 - (c) the development is in a sustainable location, with particular reference to policy TR3; and
 - (d) for major housing development, the proposal complies with the Golden Rules in policy GB8.
- 2.7 Footnote 41 confirms that, for housing applications, evidenced unmet need exists where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, including the relevant buffer, or where the Housing Delivery Test result is below 75 per cent.
- 2.8 The Golden Rules apply only to major development involving housing. A proposal for one dwelling on a 0.42 hectare site is not major development, so policy GB8 is not engaged.
- 2.9 Policy S5(5) establishes the decision-making balance once development in the Green Belt is found not to be inappropriate under policy GB7. In that circumstance, permission should be granted unless the benefits are substantially outweighed by adverse effects when assessed against the national decision-making policies as a whole.

Other Relevant Changes

- 2.10 Policy HO7 requires substantial weight to be given to the benefits of providing homes which contribute towards meeting evidenced accommodation needs. Policy L2 likewise requires substantial weight to be given to the benefits of making better use of vacant and underutilised land and buildings. Policy DP3 requires proposals to respond to their context and integrate with and enhance their surroundings, while allowing innovation and change where appropriate. Policy TR3 adopts a proportionate approach to sustainable location, expressly taking account of the type, scale and location of development and recognising the different opportunities available in rural areas.
- 2.11 Annex A applies from the date of publication. It provides that Development Plan policies, or parts of policies, which are materially inconsistent with the national decision-making policies should be given very limited weight, unless they were examined and adopted against the August 2026 NPPF. This is directly relevant to the weight to be given to older spatial restraint and Green Belt policies in the Wokingham Development Plan.

Table 2.1: Principal updated national policies

Policy	Relevance to the application
S3 / S5(5)	Presumption and approval balance for development which is not inappropriate in the Green Belt.
GB6	Controls inappropriate development and directs the assessment to GB7.
GB7(1)(g)	Primary policy route for development on grey belt land.
GB8	Golden Rules; not applicable because the proposal is not major development.
L2	Substantial weight to effective use of vacant and underutilised land.

Policy	Relevance to the application
TR3	Proportionate assessment of sustainable location and movement.
DP3	Context-led, high-quality design and placemaking.
H07	Substantial weight to homes meeting evidenced accommodation needs.
Annex A	Very limited weight to materially inconsistent Development Plan policies.

3.0 APPLICATION OF THE UPDATED GREEN BELT POLICIES

Grey Belt Status

- 3.1 The primary national policy route is policy GB7(1)(g). The Council's pre-application response of 17 June 2026 accepted that the site qualified as grey belt and that residential development would not be inappropriate in the Green Belt. The August 2026 NPPF reinforces that conclusion.
- 3.2 The site contains lawful built form, extensive hardstanding and a lawful storage use associated with a nursery business. It is enclosed by Blakes Lane to the north, established residential properties to the east and west, and dense vegetation to the south. It is therefore a small, contained and already developed parcel, subject to clear urbanising influences, rather than an open or strategically important part of the wider Green Belt.

Purpose (a): unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

- 3.3 Annex E confirms that purpose (a) relates to large built-up areas and that villages should not be treated as large built-up areas. Wargrave is a village. The site is not adjacent or near to a large built-up area and its development could not represent unrestricted sprawl from one.
- 3.4 In any event, the site is physically contained by Blakes Lane, neighbouring residential development and established boundary vegetation. It contains existing development and urbanising influences. Those are features which Annex E identifies as weakening a site's contribution to purpose (a). The site does not contribute strongly to this purpose.

Purpose (b): merging of neighbouring towns

- 3.5 Annex E confirms that purpose (b) concerns the merging of towns, not villages. The site does not form a substantial part of a gap between towns and its development would not lead to the loss of visual separation between towns. The proposal is limited to one dwelling within an enclosed site between existing residential properties. The site does not contribute strongly to purpose (b).

Purpose (d): setting and special character of historic towns

- 3.6 Annex E confirms that purpose (d) relates to historic towns rather than villages. The site does not form part of the setting of a historic town and has no visual, physical or experiential connection with the historic aspects of one. Wargrave is a village and the application site lies approximately 1.6 kilometres from Wargrave Conservation Area. The site does not contribute strongly to purpose (d).

Conclusion on Grey Belt

- 3.7 The site does not contribute strongly to any of purposes (a), (b) or (d). It therefore falls squarely within the August 2026 NPPF definition of grey belt. This conclusion does not depend solely upon whether every part of the red-line site falls within the definition of previously developed land; the site qualifies through its weak contribution to the relevant Green Belt purposes in any event.

Effect on the Remaining Green Belt

- 3.8 The development of one dwelling on a 0.42 hectare, visually contained site cannot fundamentally undermine the five Green Belt purposes taken together across Wokingham Borough. The test is directed to the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan, not merely to a localised change in built form on the application site.
- 3.9 The proposal would not cause the outward sprawl of a large built-up area, merge towns or affect the setting of a historic town. Its contained layout would not materially alter the wider pattern of development or weaken the Green Belt at a strategic level. The proposal therefore satisfies policy GB7(1)(g)(i).

Evidenced Unmet Housing Need

- 3.10 Wokingham Borough Council's latest published Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement records a deliverable supply of 2.5 years at 31 March 2025, against a requirement of five years. That shortfall is substantial and is expressly acknowledged by the Council.
- 3.11 Footnote 41 to policy GB7 confirms that the absence of a five-year supply constitutes evidenced unmet need for housing. The proposed dwelling would make a direct, deliverable contribution to addressing that need. The scale of the contribution does not disapply the policy: small sites and individual dwellings form part of the overall supply and can be delivered quickly. Policy GB7(1)(g)(ii) is satisfied.

Sustainable Location and Policy TR3

- 3.12 Policy TR3 requires the assessment to reflect the vision for the site, the type of development and its location. This is a proposal for a single dwelling, not a development capable of generating a significant amount of movement. A proportionate rural assessment is therefore required.
- 3.13 The Tag Lane bus stops, served by the no. 127 service, are approximately 350 metres to the west. Further stops at Hare Hatch Grange, served by the 127, 227 and 227A services, are approximately 650 metres to the south-east. Day-to-day facilities include Wargrave pharmacy and Costcutter approximately 1.3 to 1.4 kilometres away, Wargrave GP surgery approximately 1.5 kilometres away and local education and recreation facilities. Wargrave railway station is approximately 2.7 kilometres away and is within a realistic cycling distance, providing connections to the wider rail network.
- 3.14 The proposal includes secure cycle storage and electric vehicle charging. It would also replace the lawful storage use confirmed by Certificate of Lawfulness ref. 152003, which could resume and generate commercial vehicle movements and operational activity. The residential use would generate only a limited number of daily trips and would not have a significant effect on the transport network or highway safety.
- 3.15 The site is therefore suitably located for the modest development proposed. It lies between established residential properties and forms part of an existing group of houses; it would not create an isolated home in the countryside. The proposal reflects the principles of policy TR3, including its express recognition that the assessment must be proportionate to the type, scale and location of development and that sustainable transport opportunities differ in rural areas. Policy GB7(1)(g)(iii) is satisfied.

Golden Rules

- 3.16 The proposed development comprises one dwelling and the site area is below 0.5 hectares. It is not major development. Policy GB7(1)(g)(iv) therefore does not require compliance with the Golden Rules in policy GB8.

Conclusion Under Policies GB6 and GB7

- 3.17 All applicable elements of policy GB7(1)(g) are met. The proposal is therefore not inappropriate development, should not be regarded as harmful to the Green Belt and is not required to demonstrate very special circumstances. This confirms and strengthens the conclusion reached in the Planning Statement and in the Council's pre-application advice.

4.0 OTHER RELEVANT NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING POLICIES

Development Plan and Policy Weight

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The August 2026 NPPF is a material consideration of substantial importance and Annex A expressly addresses the weight to be given to existing Development Plan policies.

- 4.2 Even if the decision-maker identifies a technical conflict with the literal settlement-restraint wording of policy CP11, that conflict would be limited. The proposal satisfies the policy's underlying objectives by avoiding settlement coalescence and securing environmental improvement, and the inconsistent restraint carries very limited weight under Annex A.
- 4.3 Policies CP9 and CP11 were adopted in 2010 to deliver an obsolete spatial strategy and housing requirement. Policy TB01 was adopted in 2014 and reflects earlier national Green Belt policy. Insofar as those policies would prevent development which the current national decision-making policies expressly identify as not inappropriate and direct to be approved through policy S5(5), they are materially inconsistent with policies S3, S5, GB6 and GB7. Annex A therefore requires those inconsistent parts to be given very limited weight.
- 4.4 This conclusion is reinforced by appeal decision APP/X0360/W/25/3361360, dated 9 March 2026, concerning a separate housing site elsewhere in Wokingham Borough. The Council accepted in that case that rigid application of policy CP11 would thwart the provision of a five-year housing land supply, that greenfield sites were essential to meeting housing needs, and that the Borough then had only 2.5 years' supply with a shortfall of 3,454 dwellings. The Inspector gave very significant weight to the provision of market housing and only limited to moderate weight to the dated spatial strategy policies under the former NPPF.
- 4.5 That appeal was dismissed because the Inspector found substantial design and character harm from the outline scheme. The present application is materially different: it is a detailed proposal for one dwelling on a contained site with existing built form and hardstanding; it has been informed by site-specific landscape, arboricultural and ecological work; and the Council's pre-application advice did not identify the scale of development as out of character with the townscape or landscape. The design issue which proved decisive in that appeal does not arise here.
- 4.6 Accordingly, even if a limited conflict with CP11 or the wider spatial strategy is identified, it attracts very limited weight under Annex A. The proposal accords with the relevant environmental, design, amenity, highway and Green Belt objectives of the Development Plan. The current national decision-making policies are powerful material considerations which indicate that planning permission should be granted notwithstanding any residual spatial-policy conflict.

Meeting the Need for Homes

- 4.7 Policy HO7 requires substantial weight to be given to the benefits of providing homes which contribute towards meeting evidenced accommodation needs. The Council can demonstrate only 2.5 years' deliverable housing supply and the shortfall is substantial. The proposed dwelling would be available to contribute to supply promptly and the benefit is not diminished merely because the application is for one home: small sites and individual dwellings are a recognised and important component of housing delivery.
- 4.8 The housing benefit therefore attracts substantial weight under policy HO7, independently of its role in satisfying the evidenced unmet need requirement in policy GB7(1)(g)(ii).

Effective Use of Land

- 4.9 Policy L2 requires substantial weight to the benefits of making better use of vacant and underutilised land and buildings. The site is presently underutilised and characterised by hardstanding, redundant structures and unmanaged vegetation. The proposal would replace that condition with a permanent beneficial use and secure investment in the site's landscape and environmental quality.
- 4.10 The lawful storage use confirmed by Certificate of Lawfulness ref. 152003 is a material fallback. That use could resume without the environmental improvements inherent in the application and could generate commercial vehicle movements, activity and noise. Replacing it with one dwelling would be a more compatible and lower-intensity use adjoining existing homes.

Design and Place-Making

- 4.11 Policy DP3 requires development to respond to its context and integrate with and enhance its surroundings. The submitted Design and Access Statement explains the design evolution, local material palette and landscape-led approach. The dwelling is set back from Blakes Lane, retains substantial boundary vegetation and important trees, and uses a form and materials derived from the surrounding built character.
- 4.12 The Council's pre-application advice did not identify the scale of development as out of character with the townscape or landscape. The detailed separation distances, retained planting and enclosed setting avoid material harm to neighbouring amenity or the wider rural character. The proposal accords with policy DP3.

Environmental and Technical Matters

- 4.13 The application documents demonstrate that the proposal can be delivered without unacceptable effects on highway safety, drainage, trees, ecology, biodiversity, residential amenity or heritage. The site is in Flood Zone 1 and no designated landscape or ecological site would be harmed. Important trees are retained and protected.
- 4.14 The dwelling incorporates a fabric-first approach, a ground source heat pump, photovoltaic panels and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery. The proposals also provide sustainable drainage, landscape enhancement and biodiversity measures. These matters attract positive weight in the assessment of the environmental objective of sustainable development.
- 4.15 Any detailed matters requiring further control can appropriately be addressed through planning conditions. None provides a proper basis for withholding permission, and the conclusions of the Planning Statement on all other technical matters remain sound under the August 2026 national decision-making policies.

5.0 PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The August 2026 NPPF materially strengthens the policy support for this application. The Council has already accepted in pre-application advice that the site is grey belt and that residential development would not be inappropriate in the Green Belt. The final Framework now embeds the relevant assessment criteria in Annex E and provides a clear national decision-making route through policy GB7(1)(g).
- 5.2 The site is grey belt; the development would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area; Wokingham has an evidenced unmet housing need because it can demonstrate only a 2.5-year supply; and the site is a sustainable location for the single dwelling proposed. The Golden Rules do not apply. The proposal is therefore not inappropriate development and must not be treated as harmful to the Green Belt.
- 5.3 Policy S5(5) consequently requires permission to be granted unless the benefits are substantially outweighed by adverse effects when assessed against the national decision-making policies. Policy S5(2) explains that this is likely where a proposal fails to comply with a national decision-making policy which expressly states that development should be refused. No such policy is engaged in this case.
- 5.4 The benefits include:
 - (a) delivery of an additional home in an authority with a substantial housing land supply shortfall, to which policy HO7 requires substantial weight;
 - (b) substantial policy benefit under policy L2 from making effective use of vacant and underutilised land;

- (c) removal of the lawful commercial storage fallback and its potential vehicle, noise and operational effects;
 - (d) removal of redundant structures and hardstanding and an improvement to the appearance and management of the site;
 - (e) retention and protection of important trees, new landscaping and ecological enhancement;
 - (f) sustainable drainage and a highly energy-efficient, low-carbon dwelling; and
 - (g) a high-quality, context-led design which the Council has accepted in principle through pre-application engagement.
- 5.5 Green Belt does not provide an adverse effect in the balance. Compliance with policy GB7 means that the proposal is not inappropriate, should not be regarded as harmful to the Green Belt and is not required to demonstrate very special circumstances. The limited introduction of built form within this small, contained and already developed site does not alter that policy conclusion.
- 5.6 There would be no unacceptable landscape or character harm. The proposal is for a single, detailed and landscape-led dwelling, positioned between existing homes, retaining important trees and substantial boundary vegetation. The Council's pre-application assessment did not identify the scale of development as out of character with the townscape or landscape.
- 5.7 There would be no unacceptable effect on highway safety, residential amenity, heritage, ecology, trees or drainage. The application is supported by proportionate technical evidence and any detailed controls can be secured by condition. The site has realistic access to bus services and local facilities, and policy TR3 requires the location to be assessed proportionately in its rural context and having regard to the very modest transport effects of one dwelling.
- 5.8 No adverse effect, individually or cumulatively, substantially outweighs the benefits. The proposal therefore falls firmly on the approval side of the policy S5(5) balance.
- 5.9 To the extent that a limited conflict with the settlement-restraint wording of policy CP11 or the wider spatial strategy is identified, Annex A requires the materially inconsistent parts of those policies to be given very limited weight. Applying section 38(6), the August 2026 NPPF and the other material considerations set out above decisively indicate that planning permission should be granted notwithstanding that limited conflict.
- 5.10 The Council has already accepted that the site is grey belt, that residential development would not be inappropriate in the Green Belt and that the scale of development is not out of character with the townscape or landscape. The submitted technical evidence identifies no unacceptable impact which would justify refusal. A decision to refuse would therefore require a clear and evidenced explanation of why the Council has departed from its pre-application conclusions, which national decision-making policy requiring refusal is engaged, or which adverse effects substantially outweigh the identified benefits. No such basis is apparent.
- 5.11 Accordingly, the statutory and national policy balance leads clearly and decisively to approval. Applying policies S3, S5(5), HO7, GB6, GB7, L2, TR3 and DP3, together with Annex A of the August 2026 NPPF, there is no sound planning-policy basis for withholding permission. Full planning permission should therefore be granted without delay, subject only to necessary and proportionate planning conditions.