

PLANNING REF : 251421
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Willowcroft
: Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire
: RG41 1HY
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Sarah Izquierdo
DATE SUBMITTED : 14/02/2026

COMMENTS:

I write to formally register a strong objection to the proposed development of 53 dwellings, including two three-storey apartment blocks, on land directly to the rear of my property at Willowcroft Old Forest Road.

The proposal represents an excessive and inappropriate form of development that would cause material harm to neighbouring residential amenity, erode the established semi-rural character of the area, fail to adequately safeguard the adjacent Berkshire (Millennium) Arboretum woodland, and increase traffic on unsuitable local roads.

1. Unacceptable Overlooking and Loss of Privacy

The proposed three-storey apartment blocks include balconies and windows overlooking the established rear gardens along Old Forest Road, including my own garden.

The inclusion of elevated balconies materially increases overlooking compared to standard windows. This would result in:

- Direct and intrusive overlooking
- Substantial loss of privacy
- Harm to the reasonable enjoyment of private amenity space

- A persistent perception of being overlooked

I have had sight of the pre-application consultation response that WBC sent to the applicant under a recent Freedom of Information request. On page 15 it is noted that R23 of the Borough Design Guide states side walls must not contain windows, the apartment blocks put forward in the development have windows on all elevations and thus do not comply with the Borough Design Guide. In the pre-application response WBC should not reasonably have stated that the BDG was compliant. Windows are planned on all four elevations (front, rear and both sides) of the apartment blocks at every level. WBC should now determine that the design does not comply.

Existing trees within the site boundary do not provide adequate screening from the proposed dwellings. This would result in:

- Direct and intrusive overlooking
- Substantial loss of privacy
- Harm to the reasonable enjoyment of private amenity space
- A persistent perception of being overlooked

2. Overbearing Height, Scale and Incongruous Form

The surrounding properties along Old Forest Road are predominantly 1960/70s detached dwellings, generally two storeys in height, set within generous plots with long rear gardens contributing to a spacious and semi-rural character.

The introduction of two three-storey apartment blocks represents:

- Visually dominant and overbearing built form
- A stark departure from the prevailing scale and massing of development
- An incongruous addition to the low-density character of the area

This proposal is inconsistent with Wokingham Borough's design and character policies.

3. Clear Overdevelopment and Excessive Density

The introduction of 53 dwellings, including apartment blocks, entails a significant intensification compared to the established low-density pattern of the locality along Old Forest Road and Emmbrook village.

The development would:

- Urbanise a spacious, edge-of-settlement site
- Increase activity, parking, and hardstanding beyond the character of the area
- Fail to respect the existing settlement pattern on Old Forest Road

This constitutes overdevelopment and is contrary to adopted Wokingham Borough planning policy.

4. Harm to the Adjacent Berkshire (Millennium) Arboretum Woodland

The site directly adjoins the Berkshire (Millennium) Arboretum woodland, an established area of publicly accessible woodland comprising mature trees and functioning habitat forming part of the Borough's wider green infrastructure network.

Paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires planning decisions to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains. Wokingham Borough's adopted policies similarly require the protection and enhancement of ecological assets and green corridors.

The application fails to demonstrate how the introduction of 53 dwellings including three-storey buildings with elevated windows, balconies, and associated external lighting will intensify urban edge effects including:

- Light spill into the woodland canopy
- Noise and disturbance
- Increased recreational pressure

- Domestic encroachment and predation from pets

In the absence of a robust ecological assessment, a detailed lighting mitigation strategy, and clear evidence that Biodiversity Net Gain is achieved without adverse impact on the woodland, the proposal conflicts with national and local policy.

5. Long-Established Rear Pedestrian Access

My property has benefited from a rear gate providing pedestrian access onto the land behind the garden for over 40+ years. While this gate does not confer direct access to the Arboretum, it provides a well-used shortcut that contributes to local pedestrian connectivity, consistent with neighbouring properties that maintain similar access points.

The application fails to acknowledge this established access or the impact of its removal and represents a failure to consider effects on local movement patterns and neighbour amenity, contrary to principles of sustainable, well-connected development.

6. Unsuitable Traffic Impact

The proposed development of 53 dwellings will generate a significant increase in vehicular movements along Old Forest Road and surrounding local roads, which are residential streets not designed for through-traffic. The establishment of the distribution road was to prevent traffic load on Old Forest Road.

CP20 of the Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document states:

" it is important that development north of the town is accessed from a distributor road through the SDL to connect satisfactorily into the strategic transport network "

I note that whilst this development is not strictly within the North Wokingham SDL, the North Wokingham Distributor Road (NWDR) was built in accordance with CP20 and the planning application submitted by WBC for the NWDR in this area contained the following statements:

" The road will be key to providing access to the new dwellings and services developed over the next 10 years "

" The highways study concluded that a distributor road would be the most effective means to mitigate the impacts of new development and provide access to new development areas "

" the [NWDR] will provide significant traffic relief for local residents as well as mitigation for the anticipated traffic impacts of development within the North Wokingham "

The use of Old Forest Road therefore contradicts the planning application submitted by WBC for the NWDR.

Additional traffic on Old Forest Road would increase congestion, raise the risk of accidents, and compromise pedestrian and cyclist

safety, particularly for children and vulnerable road users. Old Forest Road is already overloaded with traffic issues and safety concerns due to the rat run from Reading Road to Toutley Road and the increase in use of the Lowther Road sports facility.

On Wokingham and Emmbrook match days/training sessions/community events parking along Old Forest Road restricts access to and from driveways and road parking prevents sight lines for passing traffic and pedestrians. The application fails to provide sufficient assessment of the impacts of additional traffic or demonstrate that the local road network can safely accommodate the additional vehicles, contrary to Wokingham Borough Council's policies on highway safety and sustainable development.

7. Unsuitable access

The proposed access via a single track from Old Forest Road is unsuitable for two way traffic and larger vehicles to access the new development.

The access route proposed has trees with preservation orders.

The access will have poor visibility at the junction proposed on Old Forest Road. The proposed access point sits a few meters from a bus stop and sits between two existing junctions.

On Wokingham and Emmbrook FC match days/training sessions/community events parking along Old Forest Road restricts access to and from driveways and road parking prevents sight lines for passing traffic, pedestrians and existing junctions. The location of this access point will further exasperate this safety concern.

I reiterate again in relation to the proposed access that whilst this development is not strictly within the North Wokingham SDL, the North Wokingham Distributor Road (NWDR) was built in accordance with CP20 and the planning application submitted by WBC for the NWDR in this area contained the following statements:

" The road will be key to providing access to the new dwellings and services developed over the next 10 years "

" The highways study concluded that a distributor road would be the most effective means to mitigate the impacts of new development and provide access to new development areas "

" the [NWDR] will provide significant traffic relief for local residents as well as mitigation for the anticipated traffic impacts of development within the North Wokingham "

Therefore the use of an access point to this new development from Old Forest Road contradicts the planning application submitted by WBC for the NWDR.

8. Overall Conclusion

The proposed development:

- Causes unacceptable overlooking and loss of privacy

- Introduces overbearing three-storey built form
- Represents clear overdevelopment
- Contradicts R23 of the Borough Design Guide where it states side walls must not contain windows,
- Erodes the semi-rural character of the area
- Fails to adequately safeguard the adjoining woodland and biodiversity interests
- Disregards long-established pedestrian connectivity
- Will exacerbate traffic for local residents contradicting the application submitted by WBC for the NWDR.
- Has an unsuitable and unsafe access point contradicting the planning application submitted by WBC for the NWDR.

For these reasons, the application should be refused.

Should the Local Planning Authority be minded to approve the scheme, substantial amendments would be required, including:

- Removal of over looking balconies and removal of windows on the side elevations
- Reduction of apartment blocks to two storeys
- Additional screening for existing properties along Old Forest Road
- Provision of a substantial ecological buffer to the woodland
- A robust lighting and biodiversity mitigation strategy
- Retention or mitigation of the long-established pedestrian access
- Comprehensive traffic mitigation measures ensuring safe use of the local road network
- Access to be provided from the North Distributor Road

As currently proposed, the scheme is fundamentally inappropriate in scale, form, and environmental impact.

Please note we were not aware of the original application submission in June 2025; we received a developers leaflet in May 2025 but have only received an official neighbour notification from WBC for the first time this February (2026) hence why my comments are being sent now.