

OFFICER REPORT – DRAFT DECISION NOTICE

Expiry Date: 19 July 2016

Application Number: 161412

Parish: Barkham

Location: Land adjacent to Coppid Hill House, Barkham Road, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4TG

Proposal: Outline application for the proposed erection of 8 no custom-build dwellings with associated garages and access off Edneys Hill (access and layout to be considered).

Recommendation: Refused

Reasons List

1. The proposed development is not considered to fall within the limited category of exceptions, set out in Core Strategy policy CP11, where development proposals may be acceptable in the countryside. The proposed dwellings, located within designated countryside and outside of settlement limits are therefore unacceptable in principle. No material considerations are considered to outweigh a development that is contrary to the local plan including the fact the Local Authority can demonstrate a five year supply of housing land. As such, the proposal is contrary to policies CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy and CC02 of the MDD.
2. By virtue of the introduction of new dwellings within a countryside location, the application fails to demonstrate that the proposal would have an acceptable impact on the rural character of the area. The layout and built form would result in a permeant solid feature in the landscape which would have an urbanising effect that is inappropriate in this location and detrimental to the established character of the area. As such, the application is contrary to policy CP3 of the Core Strategy and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan.
3. Due to the size, scale and location of the dwellings, an unacceptable overbearing impact would occur which would be of detriment to future occupiers of the dwellings. Therefore the application is contrary to the NPPF, Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy and inappropriate in terms of the guidance set out in the Borough Design Guide.
4. In the absence of satisfactory ecological information being submitted, it has not been demonstrated that the proposed development has taken into account the possibility of protected species being on the site, and how the impact on them could be mitigated, contrary to Section 11 of the NPPF, Paragraphs 98 and 99 of Circular 06/2005, Policies CP3 and CP7 of the Adopted Core Strategy 2010, and Policy TB23 of the Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014.
5. The proposal fails to secure mitigation for the adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Accordingly, since the Planning Authority is not satisfied that regulation 61(5) of The Conservation of Habitats and

Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) applies in this case, it must refuse permission in accordance with regulation 49 of the 2010 Regulations and Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43/EEC. As such, the proposal conflicts with Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy and NRM6 of the South East Plan Adopted (May 2009).

6. In the absence of a completed Legal Agreement, the scheme fails to make adequate provision for on-site affordable housing, contrary to Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy.

Informatives

1. This decision is in respect of the drawings and plans numbered 'Location Plan' and '1EH - Site layout plan' received by the Local Planning Authority on 24th May 2016.

Recommendation and conditions/reasons agreed: JT

Date: 19/07/16.

REMEMBER - The earliest date for a decision on this application is:

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Site:	Land adjacent to Coppid Hill House, Barkham Road, Barkham, RG41 4TG
Expiry Date:	19 th July 2016
Proposal:	Outline application for the proposed erection of 8no custom-build dwellings with associated garages and access off Edneys Hill (access and layout to be considered).
Property Description:	Field used for equestrian purposes and accessed from Edneys Hill. Bordered by trees along Barkham Road and between residential areas.
Planning History:	Land adjacent to Coppid Hill House: • F/2008/0172 – change of use from Agricultural to Residential use refused on 18th April 2008. Dismissed at appeal on 24th July 2009 • F/2009/0690 – Part retrospective application for the change of use of agricultural land to use for the keeping of horses conditionally approved on 20th July 2009 • F/2010/1006 – erection of 2 no buildings for equestrian use (stables, tack room, feed store and machinery) plus parking and new driveway refused on 28th June 2010 • F/2010/2658 – erection of a building to be used for equestrian use (stables tack room feed store and machinery) plus parking and new driveway conditionally approved on 14th February 2011 • F/2011/0651 – erection of a building for equestrian use refused on 26th May 2011 • A/2012/1311 – Application for advertisement consent for the proposed erection of 2 non illuminated foamex advertisement boards refused on 31st July 2012 Coppid Hill House: • F/2004/1513 - erection of 6 dwellings and demolition of 2 dwellings (Coppid Hill House & Willow Tree Cottage). New access into Barkham Road withdrawn • F/2004/2374 - erection of 4 dwellings conditionally approved on 18th August 2004 • F/2004/3251 - Proposed erection of 4 dwellings. Amendment to consent F/2004/2374 relating to plots 6 7 & 8 refused on 24th December 2004 • F/2005/4130 – Erection of 2 dwellings. Plots 7& 8 altered conditionally approved on 25th April 2005
Planning Constraints:	Countryside Limited development location Green Route Contaminated land consultation zone Special Protection Area – 5 and 7 km Wind turbine safeguarding zone
Relevant Policies:	
National Policy	NPPF National Planning Policy Framework

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Adopted Core Strategy Development
Plan Document 2010

CP1	Sustainable Development
CP3	General Principles for Development
CP4	Infrastructure Requirements
CP5	Housing mix, Density and Affordability
CP6	Managing Travel Demand
CP7	Biodiversity
CP8	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
CP11	Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)

Adopted Managing Development
Delivery Local Plan 2014

CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC02	Development Limits
CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
CC04	Sustainable Design and Construction
CC09	Development and Flood Risk
CC10	Sustainable Drainage
TB05	Housing Mix
TB06	Development of private residential gardens
TB07	Internal Space Standards
TB21	Landscape Character

Supplementary Planning Documents
(SPD)

BDG	Borough Design Guide 2012 – Section 4
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Consultee Comments

Thames Water:	No objection subject to informative
Berkshire Archaeology:	No objection subject to condition
WBC Highways:	No objection subject to conditions
WBC Biodiversity:	Objection
WBC Landscape/Trees:	Objection
WBC Environmental Health:	No objection subject to conditions
WBC Drainage:	No objection subject to condition
WBC Waste Services	Refer to standard advice
Parish/Town Council:	Objection due to the following: • Outside of the settlement boundary. • Attractive green corner of the village which over the years had been nibbled away at with creeping development, to build on this remaining corner would create an urban feel to a rural village. • Wokingham Borough Council already has a 5 year land supply in place and therefore there is no need for this parcel of land to be utilised for housing.
Local Residents:	10 letters of objection (one registered as anonymous) received with regards to the following: • Spoil the country/road side view • Increase in traffic on already busy road

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- Outside of settlement and not a reserve site
- Edneys Hill is a difficult lane and is already busy
- The area is still rural
- Both roads are dangerous
- Would lead to Barkham and Wokingham Without parishes being joined
- Sets a precedent of inappropriate development
- Attractive green corner which should be retained
- A five year supply of housing is in place
- Cumulative impact of traffic from other developments and this one would be harmful
- Additional housing need in Barkham is negligible
- No provision for affordable housing or contribution to infrastructure
- No mention is made of the burying of mixed building/industrial waste

Local Members:

Listing request should be the recommendation be for approval by Councillor Kaiser due to the following:

- Outside of settlement boundary
- Creates an urban feel to the site
- Already have 5 year housing land supply

APPRAISAL

1. Description of Development:

The application is outline with access and layout to be considered and scale, appearance and landscaping remaining as reserved matters. The proposal is for the erection of eight dwellings which would be accessed from Edneys Hill and arranged to follow the building line of properties further along Barkham Road. The properties have either integral or detached garages and are set in wide, long plots. They are also proposed as self-build dwellings.

2. History of Site:

The site used to be designated as agricultural and indeed the land beyond the site to the south retains this use. An application in 2008 relating to the land adjacent to Coppid Hill House (i.e. part of the site in the south west corner) was refused and dismissed at appeal. This related to the unauthorised use of the land for residential purposes with the Inspector noting the harm to the area and Green Wedge at the time. In 2009 however planning permission was granted for the change of use of the land to equestrian (i.e. the site that is being applied for now and the area that was subject to the appeal in 2008). This also involved two further applications for a stable and associated access which was approved in 2010. However, one of these and another in 2012 were refused with the concerns notably surrounding the impact on the countryside and the rural character of the area.

3. Principle of Development:

Accordance with the development plan

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy CC02 of the MDD Local Plan and CP9 of the Core Strategy define development limits across the Borough including a hierarchy of major, modest and limited locations; which typically relates to access to services and the density of the area. Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy relates to proposals outside such development limits. It is a restrictive policy designed to protect the separate identity of settlements

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and maintain the quality of the environment. Additionally, paragraph 17 of the NPPF acknowledges as a core principle the value of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and enhancing the natural environment.

The site is located in the countryside and therefore must be assessed against Policy CP11. The policy states that proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except (summarised):

1. where it contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises; and,
2. where it does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from original buildings; and,
3. buildings appropriate for conversion or environmental improvements for replacement buildings; or,
4. appropriate residential extensions;
5. where replacement dwellings would bring about environmental improvements and not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;
6. provision of community facilities, and
7. affordable housing on rural exception sites.

The policy is worded as such that proposals should meet the first three points. Clearly the scheme would not contribute to rural enterprises and in any case would remove the rural enterprise currently available on the site through the equestrian use. This therefore fails the first point. The proposal would result in a relatively undeveloped rural field being used for permanent residential development moving built form into the countryside. As such it would cause excessive encroachment and expansion of development away from original building and is contrary to the second point. As the proposal is not for the conversion or replacement of buildings, it does not comply with the third point. None of the other points are considered applicable to the application and on this basis; the proposal does not comply with policy CP11. It is therefore contrary to the development plan being outside of development limits and not fitting into any of the exception criteria. As such, the application should be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Site allocation and history of the site

The applicant has stated that the site is a reserve site for housing within the development plan. On the contrary the site was previously considered for allocation and was not allocated for housing. Apart from site constraints it was noted that the site is within the settlement separation of Arborfield Garrison and Barkham Hill and therefore development of the site would conflict with the Core Strategy's Spatial Vision. As a result, it was not considered appropriate to allocate the site or change the development limit boundaries. In addition, whilst planning policy has altered since previous planning applications on the site (i.e. the removal of the 'green wedge'), the general aspect of protecting the rural countryside is very much still in place. Previous applications, including an Inspector at appeal, have raised concern regarding the impact of development on the site on the countryside. Given this and the fact the site is not allocated for any land use, no weight is given to the assertion that the site is reserved in the development plan.

Housing land supply

The October 2015 SHLAA demonstrates the Council's five year housing land supply position against the full Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for the Borough. The Council published the Final Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in February 2016. The SHMA was commissioned by the six Berkshire Authorities and the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The full Objectively Assessed Need for Wokingham Borough is 856 dwellings per annum 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2036. The Council's position on housing land supply is that having regard to the OAN derived from the published SHMA, the Council can demonstrate a 6 year supply of housing land at 1 October 2015. The authority can also demonstrate a 5.6 year supply of housing land at 1 October 2015.

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when having regard to the phased housing requirements in its adopted Core Strategy. The OAN will need to be carefully considered along with supply capacity, unmet need from other areas and the authorities' policy objectives. Once these elements are complete, the Council will ultimately produce a new housing provision target in a new Local Plan that will then be subject to an examination in public by an Inspector. In conjunction with Reading Borough Council, West Berkshire Council and Bracknell Forest Borough Council, the Council has undertaken a joint strategic housing needs assessment for the period up to 2036. This assessment will inform the future local plan review which is the policy document that plans for development within the borough. A recent appeal decision relating to Stanbury House has been received. The planning inspector broadly agreed with the assessment of housing need and the way that this has been undertaken. However, he did raise some points about the assessment. The Council does not agree with these points and is considering the appeal decision in conjunction with its legal advisors to determine its next course of action.

In summary, the Council is able to demonstrate adequate housing supply. The site is not allocated for development in the spatial vision and policies of the adopted Core Strategy or Managing Development Delivery Document. Any benefit from delivery of eight dwellings on the site would not outweigh the risk of harm to the overall strategy for sustainable housing growth within the borough. As such the development would be contrary to the Core Strategy for development within the borough until 2026 and the Managing Development Delivery Development Plan Document 2014.

Self-build dwellings

The applicant has stated the Local Planning Authority has no specific policy in place to allow for people wishing to build their own home and this conflicts with the NPPF, which requires a 5 year supply of plots for people wishing to build their own home. There is no requirement within the NPPF to provide a 5 year supply of plots for people wishing to build their own home. Paragraph 50 states that Local Authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups within the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes). In accordance with The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding (Register) Regulations 2016, the council has had a register in place since 1st April 2016. Further to this, the applicant has stated the register has been signed by approximately 200 people. At present, only 44 people have signed the register stating their interest to build their own home. It is likely the 200 people referred to was the number of people who expressed their interest in 2014 in participating in an affordable self-build project in the borough.

Whilst it is acknowledged the LPA does not have a specific policy regarding self-build dwellings, this does not give automatic consent for them. The LPA's spatial vision for the Borough is through the development of the Strategic Development Locations and this is considered to be in line with the NPPF given that it requires a mix of housing for different demographics. As such, whilst there is no policy provision to refuse self-build applications, there is none to support it either. The provision of self-build dwellings is, in any case, ambiguous because there is no guarantee at this stage that the dwellings would be self-built; it is likely a legal agreement would be required to secure this. Furthermore, whilst the applicant makes reference to the self-build register, this has no impact on the application. There is currently no link in planning terms between the application and the register and the site could be developed by someone not on the register without some form of agreement in place. Given this, and the fact that there is a neutral policy stance on self-build dwellings means very little weight is given to this provision. The applicant also makes reference to an appeal decision where the Inspector allowed self-build dwellings. Nonetheless, the circumstances for that appeal differ considerably from this application given that there would be direct harm to the countryside and that the Local Planning Authority can demonstrate a housing land supply. Therefore, this is afforded minimal weight.

Discounted starter homes

The applicant states that the emerging Housing Bill will require new developments to provide discounted starter homes rather than affordable housing, suggesting that this site would be offered at a

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discounted level. The Government is currently concluding a consultation exercise on starter homes which will inform the Starter Home Regulations expected in October 2016. The regulations are expected to stipulate that 20% of all developments above 10 units must consist of starter homes. Dependent on the level of affordable housing triggered there will still be a requirement to provide other tenures of affordable housing. It is worth noting the starter home prices are capped at £250,000 outside London. On this basis, no weight is attached to this.

Conclusion

The proposal is contrary to the development plan due to it being outside of defined development limits and not fitting into any of the exception criteria outlined in the relevant policy. On this basis, the application should be refused unless material considerations outweigh the harm identified in being contrary to the development plan. It is considered there are no material considerations that either individually or cumulatively demonstrates a benefit in planning terms to outweigh the fact that the proposal is unacceptable in principle and therefore the application should be refused on this basis.

4. Character of the Area:

The site is a green field used for equestrian purposes and therefore is relatively open within the site. However, to the south there is a hedgerow and general vegetation with mature trees to the south west corner and a well maintained hedge along the western boundary (i.e. along the existing boundary of Coppid Hill House and Quarter Hill House). Along the northern boundary with Barkham Road and the eastern boundary with Edneys Hill are many mature trees. These allow filtered views into the site and contribute positively to the character of the area. Around the site is residential development primarily through Barkham Road which comprises of linear residential development along the road. There is a mix of dwellings along Barkham Road but the scale is predominantly two storey and the dwellings are set back on a building line. Mature trees and front boundary vegetation are characteristic of the street and this has resulted in the road being a designated Green Route. The road connects to Bearwood Road to the west of the site and this continues the general urban grain and although not a Green Route, still has trees and vegetation to the front boundaries. To the north and closer to the site is Aggisters Lane, a track road again with residential development but contradictory to the grain of development in the surrounding area. Nonetheless, it still maintains a verdant characteristic not least due to the large collection of trees at the junction with Barkham Road. Immediately west of the site is a collection of dwellings along Barkham Road. Originally this reflected the past development along Barkham Road but has since been added to with backland development and an intensification of residential properties. Ultimately this has eroded the character of the area given its more suburban form and the fact filtered views are possible through the application site to the backland development. To the south east of the site is Edneys Hill, a smaller road characterised by much more sporadic development primarily due to farm establishments and other rural enterprises. A hedgerow exists along much of the road however from parts of Edneys Hill views to towards the site can be achieved.

The site is within designated countryside and is a green field with the exception of single storey stable in the south west corner. As such, any further built form would have an urbanising and detrimental impact on the rural and verdant character of the site. The applicant has stated that the existing landscaping would be retained and augmented which, although encouraging, would not be sufficient to mitigate the permeant physical mass that the new dwellings would cause. As is the situation now, filtered views are available into and through the site and this would still occur even with additional landscaping. In any case, there are longer range views from Edneys Hill that would be impacted despite any additional landscaping. Furthermore, by their nature, residential gardens are going to be of a more kept and tidy appearance than any rural site and ultimately the establishment of residential curtilages would erode the rural characteristics of the site.

The NPPF notes that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised. Similarly, policy CP11 of the Core Strategy restricts development in the countryside partly in order to protect the high quality of the environment. The applicant notes that the site is surrounded by

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development limits and built form on three sides. Whilst at first glance this might suggest a natural infill, it belies the important and positive contribution the site makes in terms of the character of the area and also providing relief from built form. Along Barkham Road, the site causes a break in the built up and repeating pattern of built form from the east as well as making a significant contribution to the Green Route. Along Edneys Hill, the site can be seen in long range views and, at the moment, contributes to the rural character. The introduction of built form in this area would significantly erode the character from this viewpoint to the detriment of the countryside. As stated above, the area immediately west of the site has already seen intensification of development. This has firstly eroded the front boundary relationship with Barkham Road and secondly led to a substantial increase in built form in views from the more rural area of Edneys Hill. Ultimately this is considered to be an example of what could happen if the application site were to be developed.

With regards to the proposal itself, it is acknowledged the layout has been designed to reflect the existing pattern of development adjacent to the site. Whilst integrating into the character of the area is encouraged, it is considered this also intensifies the amount of development in the area to an unacceptable level given the undeveloped nature of the site. In addition the properties closest to Barkham Road would not front onto the street which is different to the established grain of development in the area. Indeed the layout reflects a more executive style housing development with large plots and no building line which is different to the more regimented grain of development along Barkham Road. Added to this, the introduction of a footpath at the edge of the site and between two houses is not considered to be appropriate given that both sides would likely be flanked by close boarded fencing which could encourage crime. As a result of this, although the proposed layout can physically accommodate the eight dwellings proposed, it is not considered to be of a good or appropriate design. This compounds the impact on the rural character of the site and ultimately would have a detrimental impact on the character of the area.

5. Residential Amenity:

The closest properties impacted by the proposal would be 384 Barkham Road, Quarter Hill House and Coppid Hill House. 384 Barkham Road would be beyond Edneys Hill with a vegetation barrier between the sites and, as such, would not be harmfully impacted in terms of overlooking, overbearing or a loss of light. Quarter Hill House has side facing windows towards the site but these serve non habitable rooms. Given this and the separation distance between the sites, no harmful impact in terms of overlooking overbearing or a loss of light would occur. Coppid Hill House also has side facing windows, two of which serve a habitable room; the third serves a non-habitable room. With regards to the two windows, these are secondary windows to a kitchen diner which also has a rear (and south facing) window. It is likely that these two windows would be detrimentally impacted as a result of the proximity of one of the proposed dwellings. Nonetheless, due to these being secondary windows, it is considered the harm caused would not be substantial in planning terms to warrant a reason for refusal.

With regards to the amenity of future occupiers, the layout proposed would meet the recommendations as set out in the Borough Design Guide for separation distances in terms of overlooking. The layout of the plots closest to Barkham Road would also prevent any overbearing impact or a loss of light. However the other line of properties is staggered resulting in the rear elevation being set further back than the neighbouring plot. Whilst it is noted this is due to the proposed layout rather than, for example, an extension, it would result in a two storey dwelling close to the boundary and immediate amenity space of its neighbour and therefore would have an undue overbearing impact. It is acknowledged this could be overcome by rearranging the layout to reflect the line of dwellings closest to Barkham Road but nonetheless, at this stage, does not represent good design.

6. Amenity Space:

The Borough Design Guide states that new dwellings should aim to provide an amenity space of 11 metres in length. The plans show that this would be exceeded for all the dwellings and therefore the proposal meets the recommendation. It is noted however that the site slopes downwards to the south

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and therefore the actual usable garden area is less than the stated length. Whilst this does cause some concern, given the overall length of the gardens, this is not considered sufficient to warrant a reason for refusal.

7. Highway Issues:

Highway Safety: The proposal would require access onto Edneys Hill. The Highways Officer has not objected to this and considers sufficient visibility splays can be achieved. Whilst it is noted that concerns from local residents have been raised regarding Edneys Hill, there is an established access onto the site and the visibility splays are sufficient. As such, no objection is raised subject to conditions including one to ensure a refuse vehicle could adequately use the access and another for a Construction Method Statement.

Traffic Impact: The proposal would add to the cumulative impact of development in the area and therefore would be expected to mitigate against this through CIL payments.

Parking: The proposal indicates that parking would be provided through garages and driveways and each property has ample provision that exceeds the parking standards. On this basis, the Highways Officer does not object. Cycle parking would also need to be provided and sufficient space is available for this to be controlled through a condition.

Sustainability: The site is outside of development limits and typically this can result in a higher dependence on the private car due to the lack of alternative transport means. Nonetheless, it is noted there is a bus stop immediately adjacent to the site and Barkham village store and post office is approximately 500 metres walk away. The bus stop is on the route of Number 3 (Leopard) and this provides transport to nearby shops, schools and Wokingham train station. As such, no objection is raised in this respect.

8. Impact on Flooding:

The proposal would increase the amount of built form on the site and it is acknowledged this would have an impact on surface water runoff. The site is within Flood Zone 1 and at low risk of flooding however the Drainage Officer has stated a Flood Risk Assessment should be submitted at the reserved matters stage. This would detail any flooding risks on the site as well as a drainage strategy to ensure flooding would not occur off the site as a result of the proposal particularly as the south east corner of the site is known to have some surface water issues. Subject to a condition, this is considered acceptable.

9. Infrastructure, SPA and Affordable Housing:

Community Infrastructure Levy: As the proposal is for the construction of new dwellings, it would be a CIL liable development. As this is an outline application, a CIL liability notice would not be issued until the approval of the last outstanding reserved matter. The CIL charge for new residential development is set at £365 per square metre for any net increase in residential floor space.

Affordable Housing: Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy sets out the thresholds for the provision of affordable housing for any new developments. Specifically, it states proposals for 5 dwellings or more or residential sites of 0.16 hectares or larger should provide affordable housing, subject to the location of the site in terms of development limits and whether it is green or brown field land. As a result, the site is required to provide 40% affordable housing which equates to 3.2 units. Typically this can be provided on site or through a commuted sum which for 3.2 units would be £474,304.90 index-linked (the Council's approach to calculating commuted sums for affordable housing is based on the difference in the residual development value of a scheme without on-site affordable housing and the same scheme with on-site affordable housing). The applicant has stated that the proposal should not be subject to providing affordable housing because the self-build element is in itself affordable housing. Nonetheless, the specific wording of policy CP5 is "all residential proposals of at least 5 dwellings..." and therefore this

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does not preclude self-build in this way. As such, given that no agreement is in place to provide affordable housing, the proposal is not acceptable in this regard.

Additionally, the applicant states an affordable housing is not required because of the recent High Court appeal decision suggesting that local authorities should not seek affordable housing on developments of fewer than 10 units. Whilst the Court of Appeal is clear that the Secretary of State's policy is a material consideration, it will not automatically override the adopted Development Plan. Planning applications must still be determined, as provided by section 38(6) of the Planning Act 2004, "in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise". The weight to be given to the NPPG threshold as against the development plan (i.e. Policy CP5) will depend on the circumstances in each case. The Council's threshold of five dwellings recognises the exceptional need for affordable housing within the borough as highlighted in the recent Berkshire Housing Market Assessment. This indicates that between 64% and 88% of the Borough's annual housing completions would need to be affordable dwellings. On this basis, the development plan requirement is considered to have greater weight than the NPPG threshold and therefore affordable housing is still required.

Special Protection Area: The proposal is located within 5 km of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area and therefore meets the threshold required to mitigate its impact on this through contributing to the Council's mitigation strategy. Due to the CIL regulations however, the contributions towards the mitigation strategy and the monitoring of this strategy, need to be collected in different ways. Therefore, the monitoring contribution has to be paid for via section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the strategy contribution via section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972. A legal agreement pursuant to this would be required however this has not been completed. Therefore the impact on the SPA is not considered to be mitigated against which forms a reason for refusal.

10. Other Issues

Environmental Health: The proposal site and the buildings contained within it are not known to have any contamination issues and there are no sites nearby that may give rise to potential contamination. However, given the scale of the works and the residential use proposed, the Environmental Health Officer has recommended a condition to require the reporting of contamination if any were to be found on the site.

Archaeology: Due to the undeveloped nature of the site, previous archaeological evidence is unknown however there have been some finds at Bailiff's Cottage to the west. As a result of this and the scale of the works proposed, the Archaeological Officer has advised that a written scheme of investigation prior to development commencing is required. This can be controlled through a condition.

Landscape and Trees: There are a number of trees along the boundary with Barkham Road and Edneys Hill which contribute to the character of the area and also the Green Route along Barkham Road. It is noted these would largely remain and therefore their protection is paramount given their importance to the wider area and this would need to be controlled by condition. Additional landscaping would also be important in trying to integrate the proposal into the area however it is acknowledged this is a reserved matter.

From a landscape perspective, the site is within Landscape Character Area J2 'Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay' where the main features are large areas of rural farmland interspersed with a fairly dense network of mixed traditional and modern settlements, arable farming predominates with pasture on slightly high ground and paddocks near settlement. The site is also opposite a wooded byway which is another feature of the landscape character and helps reinforce the rural character. In addition, the site can be seen in long range views from Edneys Hill and currently helps in preventing the edge of development overwhelming that part of the landscape character. The Tree and Landscape Officer has raised concern that the introduction of built form on the site would

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contribute to the urbanisation of this countryside route and compromise the established landscape character concluding that this would erode rather than enhance the high quality of the environment.

Refuse Collection: A refuse collection point is indicated near to the access with Edneys Hill and the Waste Services Officer has not raised an objection to this. The Highways Officer has stated that information regarding a refuse vehicle entering and leaving the site in forward gear can be controlled by condition. Given that the application is outline, this is considered appropriate and no harmful impact is considered to occur in this respect.

Biodiversity: The proposal would result in the loss of a green field currently used for equestrian purposes. No preliminary ecological appraisal has been submitted and the Ecology Officer notes that the use of the site for equestrian purposes does not preclude it from having any ecological value. Indeed without an assessment of the site, it is not possible to ascertain if any protected species (e.g. reptiles, badgers, breeding birds or bats) may be present on or adjacent to the site which could potentially impact on the layout if mitigation strategies were required. Furthermore, whilst the hedgerows on the site would be retained they would be incorporated into the amenity space for the proposed properties. This would remove their protected status under the Hedgerows Act and put pressure on the hedgerows given that they would be part of residential curtilage. Without a survey to indicate the significance of the hedgerows and no ecological buffer around them, it is considered the proposal would result in significant harm in terms of ecology. Given that schemes should be providing wildlife enhancements as per the NPPF and none are provided, the proposal is not acceptable in this regard.

Sustainable Design and Construction: Due to the replacement of the Code for Sustainable Homes with national standards in building regulations, the proposal is not required to meet Code 4 in line with Policy CC04 of the MDD. However, the policy does require that all development should incorporate suitable waste management facilities including on-site recycling. It is considered that sufficient internal and external storage could be provided to accommodate this.

Internal Space Standards: Internal space standards are not considered at an outline stage but could be considered through reserved matters. They are set nationally and require dwellings to achieve a minimum standard. The layout suggests the dwellings would be of a sufficient size to meet the standards and therefore no objection is raised subject to a condition ensuring that any reserved matters application is submitted in accordance with these standards.

CONCLUSION

The application is unacceptable in principle, has a harmful impact on the character of the area, the amenity of future occupiers and does not take into account impact on ecology. Furthermore, no provision for affordable housing or mitigation against the SPA has been agreed. Therefore the application is recommended for refusal.

Recommendation:	Refusal
Date:	19 th July 2016
Case Officer:	Graham Vaughan

Recommendation agreed by: 19/07/16 
Position: Team Leader – Development Management
Date:

REMEMBER - The earliest date for a decision on this application is: 29/06/2016

SITE VISIT NOTES AND RECORD

REFERENCE NO:	161412
SITE ADDRESS:	Land adjacent to Coppid Hill House, Barkham Road, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4TG
DATE OF VISIT(S)	13/6/16

DESCRIPTION OF SITE/BUILDING

Field (Stable in corner) view to dwelling on top of hill.

DESCRIPTION OF SURROUNDINGS/LOCAL CHARACTER

Open area, generally set back on line
Mature trees / veg to front

RELATIONSHIP WITH ADJOINING PROPERTIES

Windows on top dwelling & - Some on CHH.

SITE CONSTRAINTS AND OTHER PLANNING MATTERS:

(E.g. parking, access, trees, levels, boundary treatments, other)

Some trees to corner. Mod-trees on boundaries
Access to EH.