

**Land west of Edney's Hill, Barkham Road,
Barkham, Wokingham, Berkshire**

Abbeymill Homes

Landscape & Visual Appeal Statement

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251486

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Site: Land west of Edney's Hill, Barkham Road, Barkham, Wokingham, Berkshire

Client: Abbeymill Homes

Report Title: Landscape & Visual Appeal Statement

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1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. Jenk Landscape Design + Planning Ltd has been commissioned by Abbeymill Homes (the “Appellant”) to provide specialist landscape and visual advice and to prepare a landscape focussed appeal statement in relation to the refused planning application and subsequent Appeal against Wokingham Borough Council (WBC).

Application Background

- 1.1.2. The Appeal relates to a planning application (Ref: 251486) on land west of Edney's Hill, Barkham Road, Barkham, Wokingham, Berkshire. The description of development is as follows: ***“Full application for the proposed erection of 16 no. dwellings with new access off Edney's Hill, plus footpaths, car ports, parking, landscaping and associated works.”*** The application was received on 23 June 2025 and registered on 22 July 2025.
- 1.1.3. By way of background, Jenk Landscape Design + Planning Ltd prepared a proportionate, GLVIA3¹ compliant Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA)² to accompany the original planning application. The early appointment of a team of professional consultants allowed for the development of a carefully considered layout that addressed key environmental constraints, including the landscape context and the visibility of the Site.
- 1.1.4. In addition, a Landscape Strategy Plan (Rev D)³ was prepared and included within the submitted LVA. This was developed in close coordination with the project ecologist and arboricultural consultant and establishes the principles of the landscape and open spaces. Although fully detailed hard and soft landscaping would be secured via a suitably worded landscape condition, the Landscape Strategy Plan provides a sufficient level of detail to illustrate the proposals in context with the retained vegetation and the Site's localised setting.
- 1.1.5. WBC's Landscape and Tree Officer, Brigitte Crafer, provided comments dated 19 September 2025 and also undertook a review of the submitted LVA alongside the submitted Design and Access Statement and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA)⁴.
- 1.1.6. Within their response, the Landscape and Tree Officer does not question or critique the methodology used for the basis of the LVA, which reflects the approach advocated by the landscape industry best practice guidance, GLVIA3. Furthermore, the Officer did not disagree with the selection of viewpoints included in the LVA, nor did they identify any alternative or additional viewpoints; as such the selected viewpoints are considered representative.

¹ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013

² Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Jenk Landscape Design + Planning Ltd, June 2025 (Ref: LA1031.LVA.002)

³ Landscape Strategy Plan, Jenk Landscape Design + Planning Ltd, April 2025 (Dwg ref: LA1031/LSP/100 Rev D)

⁴ Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Aspect Arboriculture Ltd, April 2025 (Ref: 12357.AIA.001)

1.1.7. The application was subsequently recommended for refusal by WBC Officers with a decision notice issued on 16 October 2025, citing thirteen Reasons for Refusal (RfR).

1.1.8. The perceived landscape and visual harm considered by the Council is set out in RfR Nos.1 and 2.

Scope and Form of Appeal Statement

1.1.9. I am instructed by Abbeymill Homes Ltd ("the Appellant") to provide specialist landscape and visual advice for the Appeal in respect of land west of Edney's Hill, Barkham Road, Barkham ("the Appeal Site").

1.1.10. The Appeal Site is not covered by any landscape, heritage or environmental designations and does not contain any notable landscape features that elevate it above that of ordinary undeveloped land on the edge of the village, and its contribution to the wider landscape is limited due to the visually and physically enclosed nature of the Site. The proposed development is of a small scale, and will not result in significant adverse effect on the landscape at either a national or district level.

1.1.11. I have prepared my appeal statement to assist the Inspector in determining the merits of the proposed development, having regard to the loss of the small parcel of pastoral land, including the effect on character and visual amenity of the locality. I will also outline how the proposed scheme and layout has been developed to respond to local character and settlement pattern, and incorporates inherent mitigation measures to minimise the landscape and visual effects.

1.1.12. My statement briefly sets out the background to the landscape work and provides an overview of the landscape and visual effects, however in order to avoid repetition, I shall make reference to the originally submitted LVA. I will then address the landscape and visual matters identified within the Reasons for Refusal and the Landscape and Tree Officer's comments.

1.1.13. The submitted LVA and my statement are based upon the relevant guidance and established methodology within the GLVIA3⁵. I would note that the GLVIA3 is a guidance tool relating to best practice and is not prescriptive. The methodology is included as an Appendix within the originally submitted LVA⁶.

1.1.14. Some additional supporting graphical material has been prepared to illustrate and support the case presented in this Statement and is included within the Figures and Appendices. This includes a Context Landscape Masterplan (**Appendix CJ A**) and an Existing / Proposed Urban Grain Plan (**Appendix CJ B**) and an Illustrative Visualisation (**Appendix CJ C**) based on Viewpoint 10 from the submitted LVA.

1.1.15. My appeal statement should be considered alongside the other statements prepared on behalf of the

⁵ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013

⁶ Appendix 4 of Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Jenk Landscape Design + Planning Ltd, July 2024 (Ref: LA1009.LVA.001)

appellant, including that of Mr Tim Northey (dealing with planning matters), Mr Patrick Haythornthwaite (dealing with arboricultural matters), and Mr Chris Callaway (dealing with highways matters).

- 1.1.16. A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been drafted by the Appellant with the intention of being agreed between the main parties in order to narrow down the key points of disagreement, and this includes key points on landscape and visual amenity matters.

Experience and Qualifications

- 1.1.17. My name is Chris Jenkinson. I hold a Bachelor of Arts with Honours Degree in Landscape Architecture and a Post Graduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture from the University of Gloucestershire. I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLi).
- 1.1.18. I am the owner and Director of Jenk Landscape Design + Planning Ltd, a practice specialising in landscape planning and design services for both private and public sector clients. Prior to establishing my practice, I was employed for over 18 years by a well-established environmental planning consultancy, where I held a senior position.
- 1.1.19. Over the past 21 years, I have provided landscape advice for a broad range of planning applications and appeals, including renewable energy, healthcare, residential, retail, agriculture, commercial, and employment developments. Many of these sites are located within or adjacent to sensitive environments, such as Green Belt land, National Landscapes, National Parks, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens, and areas containing Listed Buildings.
- 1.1.20. As part of my professional work, I regularly prepare detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs), either as stand-alone documents, for presentation at public inquiries or hearings, or as chapters within Environmental Statements. I also provide wider landscape planning advice and feasibility assessments for a variety of development proposals.
- 1.1.21. In addition to LVIA work, I am regularly engaged in landscape design projects ranging from high-level strategic plans to detailed planting schemes and hard landscape designs for the discharge of planning conditions and preparation of technical construction drawings. This work routinely involves close coordination with ecologists to integrate biodiversity enhancements and ensure landscape mitigation measures effectively reduce potential landscape and visual effects.
- 1.1.22. This experience has given me a comprehensive understanding of how landscape character and the visual environment interact, and how development perception can be influenced by variations in character, the presence of landscape features, and high-quality landscape design. Such expertise supports the successful integration of development while contributing to placemaking and the creation of functional, high-quality spaces.

Declaration

- 1.1.23. I am familiar with the Appeal Site and the character of its surroundings and have reviewed the relevant plans and documents in relation to this Appeal.
- 1.1.24. I was involved in the original planning application and prepared the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA)⁷ and Landscape Strategy Plan⁸ submitted with the application.
- 1.1.25. I have visited the Site and its environs on multiple occasions, across different seasons, throughout the year to inform my assessment.
- 1.1.26. The information I have prepared represents my professional opinion on the objective and subjective aspects of the proposed development in relation to landscape character and visual effects. To the best of my knowledge, the facts contained herein are true and accurate, and I confirm that I have complied with my professional Code of Conduct.

⁷ Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Jenk Landscape Design + Planning Ltd, June 2025 (Ref: LA1031.LVA.002)

⁸ Landscape Strategy Plan, Jenk Landscape Design + Planning Ltd, April 2025 (Dwg ref: LA1031/LSP/100 Rev D)

2. Overview of Appeal Site and its Setting

Overview of Context

- 2.1.1.** The Appeal Site lies on the south-western edge of Barkham, immediately south of Barkham Road and bounded by Edney's Hill to the east. It is surrounded by residential development to the north, west, and east, with open agricultural land to the south. The Appeal Site forms a small, undeveloped parcel within a predominantly built-up context, located outside the defined village boundary in the open countryside, though its setting is strongly influenced by the adjacent built form and settlement-edge features.
- 2.1.2.** The Site covers approximately 0.68 hectares and is broadly square in shape. It is gently sloping from northwest to southeast, with the high point at 69m AOD in the north-western corner and the low point at 61m AOD in the south-eastern corner. The Site currently comprises grassland with some regenerating scrub, with boundary vegetation forming the most significant landscape feature. Mature trees and mixed understorey along the northern and eastern edges provide visual containment, while the western boundary adjoins established residential properties including Quarter Hill House and Coppid Hill House, with a post and rail fence and hedgerow forming the interface. Two mature Oak trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) are located just beyond the southwestern corner of the Site.



Figure CJ 2.1: Extract from Dwg LA1031/SS/004 Site and Setting Plan within the submitted LVA, with Appeal Site identified red.



Figure CJ 2.2: Internal view of the Appeal Site looking northwest.

2.1.3. The surrounding settlement reflects a predominantly low-density, linear or ribbon development pattern along Barkham Road, with a mix of housing types set within spacious plots and well-treed street scenes. To the south, the landscape comprises enclosed pastoral and arable fields, hedgerows, and tree belts, interspersed with farmsteads and some dispersed dwellings. Public Rights of Way in the area, including BARK19, WOKI33, and BARK10, are located beyond the Site, with no intervisibility due to intervening built form, vegetation, and topography.

2.1.4. The Appeal Site and its immediate setting are not covered by any statutory landscape designations. A locally valued landscape lies further to the north and west, physically and visually separated from the Site. Heritage assets, including Bearwood College Registered Park & Garden (approximately 650m to the north) and the Church of St James with associated Scheduled Monument (approximately 700m to the south), are also outside the Site's visual envelope.



Figure CJ 2.3: Zoomed in annotated aerial image of Appeal Site showing the immediate local context of Barkham Hill.

- 2.1.5. In summary, the Appeal Site is a contained, undeveloped parcel at the south-western edge of Barkham Hill, framed by existing residential development and boundary vegetation. Its scale, topography, and context allow for sensitive, low-density development that responds to the character of the settlement edge and surrounding landscape, while avoiding significant visual or landscape effects, as demonstrated in the submitted LVA.

Overview of Published Landscape Assessments

- 2.1.6. At a national level, the Appeal Site lies within the **Thames Basin Heaths National Character Area (NCA 129)**, with the Thames Valley NCA 115 located to the north. These NCAs provide a broad context for the landscape within which Barkham sits, identifying transitional patterns between built-up settlements and surrounding rural landscapes.
- 2.1.7. At the district level, the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (WBLCA, 2019) identifies 14 Landscape Character Types (LCT), with the Appeal Site located within **LCT J: Settled and Farmed Clay**. LCT J is further subdivided into Landscape Character Areas (LCA), with the Appeal Site situated within **LCA J2: Arborfield and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay**. This character area is described as a gently undulating agricultural landscape, dominated by large arable fields bound by hedgerows, smaller fields of pasture and horse paddocks near settlements, and a network of local roads. The area contains both historic scattered settlements and more modern residential development, including the garden village at Arborfield Garrison.
- 2.1.8. Key characteristics of LCA J2 include: gently undulating landform; consistent pattern of water bodies; wooded context; predominantly arable farming with pasture on higher ground and horse paddocks near settlements; a mix of older farms, hamlets and small villages; a dense network of local roads and public rights of way; and a rural character away from main roads and built-up areas. The landscape condition is identified as **moderate**, with a landscape strategy aimed at conserving and enhancing the rural character, integrating new development sensitively, and retaining the open qualities between settlements.
- 2.1.9. Overall, the WBLCA provides a robust assessment of the wider landscape setting, capturing the transitional character from the settled village edge to the surrounding pastoral and agricultural landscapes of the Loddon Valley. While the northern high ground around Barkham Hill is more wooded, the south-facing valley slopes form a medium-scale agricultural landscape, with the localised village fringe displaying lower sensitivity due to surrounding built form.

Overview of Site Specific Landscape Character

- 2.1.10. The Appeal Site and its immediate setting is characterised by:
- Gently undulating southeasterly sloping land within a small former paddock (0.68 ha), largely grassed with regenerating scrub.

- Boundaries with mature trees, hedgerows, and understorey to the north and east, providing visual and physical containment.
- Residential development to the north, west, and east, comprising predominantly large, detached dwellings along Barkham Road in a linear/ribbon pattern.
- Southern boundary adjoining open agricultural land, with hedgerows and tree belts defining the wider valley landscape.
- Two mature TPO Oak trees at the south-western corner (off-Site), visually prominent in the localised context.
- Limited internal features, restricted long and middle-distance visibility, and moderate tranquillity due to adjacent roads and settlement edge.
- Village fringe character strongly influenced by surrounding built form and vegetation.

2.1.11. Landscape sensitivity: Medium value; medium/low susceptibility; overall Medium–Medium/Low sensitivity. The submitted LVA's assessment of landscape value, susceptibility, and sensitivity remains robust, and I remain of the view that it is accurate and well-founded.

Overview of Visual Baseline Assessment

2.1.12. The submitted LVA identified that the undulating topography, surrounding settlement edge built form to the north, east, and west, and the established vegetation along the Site boundaries create a high degree of visual containment. Visibility of the Site is therefore largely restricted to the immediate and localised area.

2.1.13. The Site is influenced by the built edge of Barkham Hill on three sides and forms part of the settlement fringe along Barkham Road, with middle-distance views from the south limited by topography and vegetation. Long-range views are negligible.

2.1.14. Views of the Site are generally partial or glimpsed:

- Close-range filtered views along Barkham Road behind boundary vegetation.
- Short sections of open views along Edney's Hill where topography rises beyond Mortimers Lodge Farm.
- Views are framed within the context of surrounding residential properties, including recently constructed dwellings opposite the Site and large detached properties to the west.

2.1.15. Overall, the LVA confirms the visual receptors affected by the development of the site would be limited and localised, where the site is seen as the transition between settlement edge and open agricultural landscape. The perception of the Appeal Site is one of being part of and surrounded by the existing development along Barkham Road.

3. Review of the Appeal Proposals

- 3.1.1. Full details of the Proposals are set out in the submitted Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement. Further details were provided in the submitted LVA.
- 3.1.2. It should be noted that the approach adopted to the landscape mitigation measures was an iterative process, providing input to the development of a layout from the initial stages in order to embed mitigation measures into the Proposed Development, and seek opportunities to avoid or reduce adverse effects whilst identifying opportunities for landscape enhancements. This approach is consistent with Section 4 of GLVIA3⁹.
- 3.1.3. The Proposed Development comprises:
- Ten two-storey detached and semi-detached dwellings;
 - Six apartments within a single two-storey building to the southeast;
 - Built form set back from Barkham Road, Edney's Hill, and the established boundary treescape.
- 3.1.4. The layout reflects the existing settlement pattern of Barkham Hill, with the southern boundary following the curtilage line of existing residential properties to the west, ensuring the development does not extend notably beyond the current defined village edge. Dwellings are orientated to front the roads, with setbacks allowing retention of existing vegetation. The scheme responds to local character and morphology in terms of footprint, scale, density, and appearance.
- 3.1.5. Materials and architectural detailing have been selected to ensure sensitive integration into the local context, maintaining the village character and high-quality design.
- 3.1.6. Landscape strategy and mitigation measures include:
- Retention and enhancement of the majority of existing treescape along Barkham Road and Edney's Hill;
 - Additional native tree, shrub, and hedge planting;
 - Setback of development to the south with open space, wildflower meadow grassland, scattered tree and scrub planting, wetland features, and biodiversity enhancements;
 - Reinforcement of the southern boundary following existing rear curtilages;
 - Pedestrian access points to improve connectivity;
 - Overall integration of the development with existing vegetation and village edge features to create a robust and defensible landscaped edge.
- 3.1.7. Further details of the landscape strategy and mitigation are set out in Section 4 of the submitted LVA, however overall, I remain of the opinion that the landscape proposals aim to comply with local policy

⁹ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013

objectives and the various published LCA guidelines to ensure that an appropriate and high-quality landscaped setting is achieved.

- 3.1.8. The Landscape Strategy Plan (Rev D)¹⁰ was included as part of the application submission. This drawing has been updated for the Appeal to reflect minor layout changes; however, the key landscape components remain unchanged.
- 3.1.9. An extract of Landscape Strategy Plan (Rev E) is included in **Figure CJ 3.1** below for ease of reference. The full drawing including associated legend for landscape typologies, annotations and species list is included within **Appendix CJ A**.



Figure CJ 3.1: Extract from Dwg LA1031/LSP/100 Rev E Landscape Strategy Plan.

¹⁰ Landscape Strategy Plan, Jenk Landscape Design + Planning Ltd, April 2025 (Dwg ref: LA1031/LSP/100 Rev D)

4. Overview of Landscape & Visual Effects

4.1.1. Section 5 of the submitted LVA considers the principle of introducing residential development within the context of the receiving landscape and visual environment, undertaken in accordance with GLVIA3. The assessment evaluates the nature and extent of potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Appeal Proposals. The summary that follows draws directly from that assessment and, in my opinion, provides a balanced, robust, and proportionate appraisal of the likely effects, the overall conclusions of which I support.

Overview of Potential Landscape Effects

4.1.2. By way of summary, the potential landscape effects of the Proposed Development are as follows:

- The Appeal Site forms a small grassland field between existing residential areas along Barkham Road and Edney's Hill; it is not isolated and does not extend into the wider rural landscape.
- The Proposed Development reflects the existing village morphology with linear/ribbon development, retaining boundary vegetation and setbacks from road corridors.
- Key landscape features, including trees and hedgerows, will be largely retained, with new open space and landscaping to the south providing transition to the countryside.
- The magnitude of change on the Appeal Site and its immediate setting is assessed as Medium.
- Resulting potential landscape effects are **Moderate to Moderate/Minor adverse** on the Site itself, reducing to **Minor or Negligible** on the wider landscape and published LCA J2.
- Change is highly localised, compatible with the prevailing village character, and does not extend the settlement edge further south.

4.1.3. Overall, I consider the landscape effects of the Proposed Development to be limited in extent, localised in nature, and appropriate to the existing settlement context. Mitigation embedded within the layout and landscape strategy ensures that the development integrates effectively into its immediate surroundings.

4.1.4. In my opinion, the Appeal Site is closely related to and forms part of the village edge, and the Appeal Proposals would not introduce elements that are uncharacteristic or incongruous. The scheme accords with the guidance set out within the WBLCA, delivering a high-quality, landscape-led development that complements the established settlement pattern.

Overview of Potential Visual Effects

4.1.5. The submitted LVA also provides a detailed assessment of potential visual effects; however, by way of summary:

- Visual change is highly localised due to the undulating topography, vegetation structure, and surrounding built context.

- Visibility is largely restricted to short sections of Barkham Road and Edney's Hill, with occasional glimpsed views from nearby PRoWs; longer distance views are blocked.
- Where visible, the development will be seen in context with existing residential properties, maintaining settlement continuity.
- The magnitude of visual change is initially assessed as Medium to High from closest viewpoints, reducing to Medium once mitigation planting and retained vegetation mature.
- Resulting potential visual effects are generally **Moderate adverse** for immediate views, reducing to **Minor / Negligible adverse** for more distant or filtered views.
- The Proposed Development will not appear visually prominent or incongruous, with the landscape strategy and retained treescape effectively softening and filtering views and maintaining the verdant character of Barkham Road and Edney's Hill.

4.1.6. Overall, I consider the visual effects of the Proposed Development to be limited in extent, highly localised, and moderate at most. The combined influence of retained vegetation, site topography, and the proposed landscape mitigation ensures that the development integrates with the existing settlement form, does not dominate available views, and does not give rise to significant long-term adverse visual effects.

4.1.7. An additional visualisation has been prepared from Viewpoint 10 (refer **Appendix CJ C**), which represents a relatively open view available from Edney's Hill on rising ground to the southeast. The visualisation demonstrates that the Appeal Proposals would be experienced in the context of existing residential development and retained vegetation, with proposed built form broadly aligning with the established ridgeline and settlement edge. It confirms that visual change would be localised, that the development would not appear unduly prominent or visually intrusive when viewed within its existing context, and that the scale, form and disposition of the proposals are consistent with the character of the settlement edge. This additional material supports the conclusions of the submitted LVA in respect of the limited magnitude and absence of significance of visual effects.

4.1.8. In my opinion, the visual amenity of the immediate setting has sufficient capacity to accommodate the Proposed Development, given the Site's contained nature, its position at the settlement edge, and its relationship with surrounding residential development within the established village fringe.

5. Response to Reasons for Refusal

5.1.1. Reasons for Refusal Nos. 1 and 2 set out the Council's principal objections to the Appeal Proposals and contain a degree of overlap. Further commentary on landscape, visual and character matters is also provided within the Delegated Officer's Report and the Landscape and Tree Officer's consultation response.

5.1.2. For clarity, I have distilled the Reasons for Refusal into the key issues that, in my opinion, underpin the Council's decision. Each issue is addressed in turn below, setting out the Appellant's case and providing a reasoned rebuttal. Matters relating to detailed technical arboricultural matters associated with Reason for Refusal No. 7 are addressed separately by Mr Patrick Haythornthwaite; however, the retention of boundary trees remains integral to the overall landscape strategy and informs my assessment of landscape, visual and character effects.

- 1. Alleged inappropriate and unplanned development outside defined development limits, within the countryside;
- 2. Alleged adverse impact on the landscape, character and appearance of the area;
- 3. Alleged unacceptable loss of green field land; and
- 4. Alleged poor quality of design.

1. Alleged inappropriate and unplanned development outside defined development limits, within the countryside.

5.1.3. The Council appears to consider that the extent to which the Proposed Development would erode and encroach into the countryside, by virtue of its siting, would be inappropriate. It is acknowledged that the Appeal Site lies outside the defined village confines within open countryside; however, it is located on the edge of the village and is influenced by surrounding built form and settlement-edge characteristics. It is accepted that the Proposed Development would result in the change of a small pastoral field to a residential use and that this would represent a degree of encroachment into the countryside.

5.1.4. However, the degree and inappropriateness of this encroachment is, in my view, overstated by the Council, and I dispute the assertion that the proposals would be entirely inappropriate. It is difficult to reconcile how a carefully considered, small-scale scheme, immediately adjacent to the village edge and within the perceived village fringe, could reasonably be regarded as unacceptable in principle.

5.1.5. The Appeal scheme does not seek to extend development incongruously into the wider open countryside, but rather to make use of an undeveloped gap within an otherwise developed context, responding to the established character and natural pattern of growth. The southerly line of existing development, both in plan form and as experienced on the ground, has informed the evolution of the

layout. As a result, the scheme incorporates a substantial area of landscaping, sustainable drainage, and open space to the southern edge, with the developable area set back accordingly. This approach is intentional and serves to limit the perception of encroachment into the wider countryside and settlement setting, while reflecting the current pattern of development.

5.1.6. Accordingly, while there is clearly a degree of encroachment arising from the development of an undeveloped field at the village edge, this is an inevitable characteristic of residential development on greenfield land. In this instance, the encroachment would be very limited, having regard to the existing built edge, the modest scale of the proposals, and the highly localised nature of the landscape and visual effects. I therefore do not consider the resulting encroachment to be unacceptable or inappropriate, particularly in the context of the borough's unmet housing need, which necessitates some development on greenfield land.

2. Alleged adverse impact on the landscape, character and appearance of the area.

5.1.7. Reason for Refusal No. 2 asserts that the Appeal Proposals would fail to respect, conserve or enhance the landscape character and appearance of the area.

5.1.8. As set out in Section 4 of this Statement and within the submitted LVA, the introduction of residential development on a greenfield site will inevitably result in some change to the local landscape. However, the LVA identifies that the resulting landscape character effects would be highly localised and limited to the Site and its immediate setting. When assessed in accordance with GLVIA3 methodology, and taking into account the low-density nature of the scheme and the proposed mitigation, these effects are not considered significant.

5.1.9. In character terms, a key consideration is whether development responds positively to the established settlement pattern and landscape structure of the locality. In my opinion, the Appeal Proposals achieve this. The scheme reflects the prevailing linear and ribbon-like form of development along Barkham Road and Edney's Hill, maintains appropriate setbacks, and respects the established relationship between built form, vegetation and open countryside at the settlement edge.

5.1.10. The Appeal Proposals have been informed by a detailed appraisal of the Site and its immediate surroundings, including the established settlement pattern, landscape structure and visual context of Barkham Road and Edney's Hill. The layout, scale and form of development respond directly to this analysis, with modest building heights, varied orientation, generous spacing between dwellings and a strong emphasis on landscape structure. The scheme avoids uniformity or suburbanising forms and instead reflects the loose-knit, low-density character that defines the settlement edge in this location.

5.1.11. Particular regard has been given to the retention and reinforcement of existing landscape features that contribute to local character, including mature trees, hedgerows and boundary vegetation. These

elements form the primary framework of the scheme and are supplemented by new planting that strengthens visual containment and reinforces the transition between the settlement edge and the countryside to the south. In this way, the proposals maintain the underlying landscape structure and ensure that development is of an appropriate scale and form in relation to its landscape setting, without undermining the character or appearance of the area.

5.1.12. The Appeal Proposals comprise a small-scale, low-density and carefully considered scheme that is landscape-led in its design. Extensive new ecological and landscape enhancements are proposed, particularly along the southern edge of the Site, creating a strong and defensible settlement boundary and a sensitive transition to the wider countryside. These measures provide long-term landscape structure, enhance biodiversity and ensure the built elements are appropriately integrated into their setting. The majority of the existing treescape along Barkham Road and Edney's Hill is retained and reinforced, maintaining the verdant character of these corridors.

5.1.13. **Figure CJ 5.1** illustrates the Appeal Proposals within the wider village context and demonstrates how the scheme responds to the established settlement pattern, character and morphology of Barkham. The loose-knit arrangement, setbacks from Barkham Road and Edney's Hill, and the landscaped southern edge reflect the prevailing development pattern rather than introducing a form that would appear incongruous or visually intrusive.



Figure CJ 5.1: *Proposed scheme within wider context of Barkham Hill.*

5.1.14. In my opinion, the proposals represent a logical and proportionate response to the existing settlement pattern, without resulting in substantial encroachment into the wider rural landscape, and are consistent with relevant guidance and policy requirements relating to landscape character and settlement form.

- 5.1.15. The relationship of the Appeal Proposals to the existing urban grain is further demonstrated in **Figure CJ 5.2**, which shows the linear ribbon development along Barkham Road and areas of development at depth immediately to the west. The Appeal Proposals sit comfortably within this pattern and do not represent an uncharacteristic form of development.

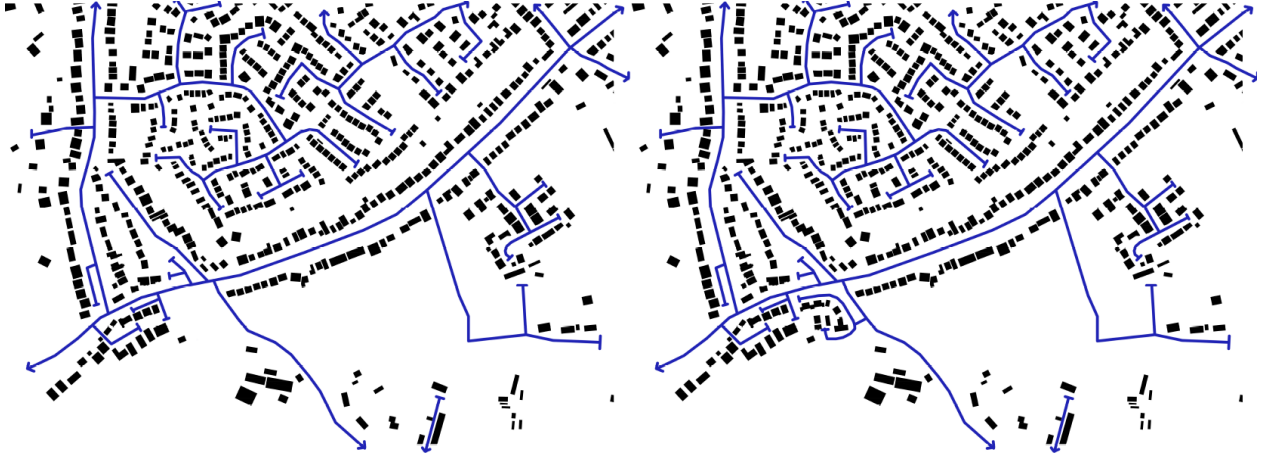


Figure CJ 5.2: *Barkham Hill urban grain diagram (as existing left and with Appeal Proposals right).*

- 5.1.16. **Figure CJ 5.3** illustrates the southerly extent of development and confirms that the existing building line along the settlement edge is not uniform, but varies in depth and alignment. The Appeal Proposals reflect this pattern, tying into the established southern extent of development and avoiding any pronounced or abrupt extension into the wider countryside.



Figure CJ 5.3: *Proposed scheme within wider context of Barkham Hill demonstrating the Appeal Proposals reflecting the southerly line of development (dashed black line).*

- 5.1.17. Contrary to the Council's Reasons for Refusal, the submitted LVA and the analysis above demonstrate that the Appeal Proposals do respect, conserve and, in several aspects, enhance the landscape

character of the area. The development relates well to the existing settlement pattern and maintains the key characteristics of the local landscape.

- 5.1.18.** It is also relevant that the character of Barkham Road has evolved following the construction of a single bungalow and four two- and a half-storey dwellings immediately to the north of the Appeal Site. These dwellings, characterised by relatively steeply pitched roofs, were delivered following the removal of the previously vegetated frontage along this section of the road, resulting in a more open and built-defined streetscape. The Council did not raise any concern in respect of their scale, massing or the loss of frontage vegetation. By contrast, the Appeal Proposals retain the existing vegetated frontage, introduce additional structural planting, and set built form further back from the road, thereby providing a softer and more landscaped transition at the settlement edge. The evolution of the streetscape is illustrated at Figure **CJ 5.4**, which compares Google Streetview imagery from 2017 and 2024.



Figure CJ 5.4: Comparison Google Streetview images from 2017 (left) and 2024 (right).

- 5.1.19.** In my opinion, the extent of adverse landscape, character and appearance impacts identified by the Council has been overstated. While some adverse effects are acknowledged within the LVA, as is inevitable with development on greenfield land, these effects are limited, localised and not significant. When considered in the context of the Site's containment, the prevailing settlement character and the proposed mitigation, the Appeal Proposals would not result in unacceptable harm to landscape character or appearance.

3. Alleged unacceptable loss of green field land.

- 5.1.20.** The Council appears to place considerable weight on the principle of the loss of open green field land. However, the Appeal Site does not comprise open countryside in the sense envisaged by policy, nor does it perform a strategic landscape or settlement function whose loss would result in unacceptable harm. The Site is a small and contained parcel of land at the edge of Barkham, enclosed by residential development on three sides and defined by strong physical boundaries. Its character and visual experience are already influenced by the adjacent built form, and it does not function as an expansive or undeveloped tract of countryside contributing to wider rural openness.
- 5.1.21.** While the Site is currently undeveloped, the planning system does not afford blanket protection to all greenfield land. In the context of an acknowledged need for new housing, the principle of developing sustainably located greenfield sites adjoining existing settlements is well established. Importantly, the Site is not subject to any statutory or local landscape designation, has no public accessibility, does not form part of a strategic gap, and does not contribute to settlement separation or the prevention of coalescence. The proposals retain a clear and defensible settlement edge and do not extend development into the wider open countryside.
- 5.1.22.** Furthermore, the Appeal Proposals do not result in the wholesale loss of openness. A substantial proportion of the Site is retained as landscaped open space, supported by the retention of existing trees and hedgerows and the introduction of extensive new planting. This landscape-led approach ensures that openness is reinterpreted and maintained in visual and experiential terms, while allowing for a low-density form of development that reflects the character of Barkham Road. When assessed in this way, the limited loss of undeveloped land is proportionate, justified, and does not amount to the level of harm suggested in the Reason for Refusal.

4. Alleged poor quality of design.

- 5.1.23.** In respect of the alleged poor quality of design, the Appeal Proposals have been carefully designed to respond positively to the character, form and context of the surrounding settlement. The scheme is intentionally low-density, reflecting the established linear and spacious pattern of development along Barkham Road and within the immediate locality. The layout has been deliberately configured to respect existing building sizes, established building lines and the orientation of neighbouring properties, ensuring that the proposals integrate comfortably with the surrounding village form. In my opinion, the scheme represents a high-quality and considered design response, balancing the delivery of new housing with the retention and enhancement of local landscape character and settlement identity.
- 5.1.24.** All proposed buildings are two storeys in height, consistent with the prevailing scale and massing of development in the surrounding area. The architectural approach and material palette have been informed by local vernacular cues and nearby residential development, ensuring a coherent and

contextually appropriate appearance. Variation in building orientation, the spacing between dwellings, and the incorporation of open car ports and landscaped breaks serve to avoid a uniform or regimented layout. When combined with the retention of boundary trees and the provision of landscaped open space to the south, this results in a loose-knit, visually permeable form of development that reinforces the existing settlement edge and, in my opinion, represents a high-quality design response that would sit comfortably within the established built environment and will not appear visually intrusive or incongruous. The architectural approach, scale and articulation of the proposed dwellings are illustrated in the representative house-type and car port elevations at **Figure CJ 5.5**.



Figure CJ 5.5: Submitted house type and carport elevations.

- 5.1.25.** The recently completed dwellings to the north demonstrate that taller houses can be successfully accommodated in this part of Barkham Road without objection from the Council. The Appeal Proposals, by contrast, adopt a more considered approach, with lower building heights relative to street level, retention of existing vegetation along the frontage, and landscaped setbacks, resulting in a development that is visually more integrated and maintains a softer interface with Barkham Road.
- 5.1.26.** Concerns regarding the inclusion of an apartment building within the scheme are, in my opinion, unfounded. The provision of a mix of dwelling types and sizes is an established and desirable component of sustainable residential development. The Appeal Proposals include six apartments (two one-bedroom and four two-bedroom units) contained within a single, two-storey building of modest scale. The footprint and massing of the apartment building are comparable to several larger dwellings in the surrounding area, and its architectural treatment has been specifically designed to reduce perceived bulk and integrate with its context. In addition, the building is positioned on lower ground within the Site, with finished floor levels approximately 3–3.5 metres below those of the dwellings along the northern boundary, further reducing its visual presence and ensuring it would not appear

dominant within the landscape or streetscape. The scale and architectural treatment of the apartment building are shown at **Figure CJ 5.6** below.



Figure CJ 5.6: Submitted apartment elevations.

- 5.1.27. Significant emphasis has been placed on landscape retention, enhancement and ecological mitigation within the Appeal Proposals. Existing trees and hedgerows, which make a notable contribution to the Site's visual containment, settlement edge character and landscape structure, are largely retained and form the framework around which the development has been designed. Where development is introduced, it is carefully accommodated within this existing green infrastructure rather than resulting in its unnecessary loss. The scheme also incorporates extensive new landscaping, including native tree and hedgerow planting, ecological-led open spaces and habitat enhancements, which will soften and filter views of the built form, strengthen the settlement edge and deliver measurable biodiversity benefits.
- 5.1.28. This landscape-led approach ensures that the development integrates effectively with its surroundings, reinforces local character and delivers high-quality streetscapes and usable amenity spaces. When considered as a whole, the proposals demonstrate a thoughtful and well-resolved design response, and do not support the Council's assertion that the scheme is poorly designed.

6. Review of Landscape Consultation Response, Officer Report and Barkham Parish Council's Response

WBC Landscape and Tree Officer Consultation Response

- 6.1.1. The WBC Landscape and Tree Officer's consultation response appears to overstate the Site's prominence, its importance along Barkham Road as a 'pause/breathing space' and, as a result, the degree to which it is perceived to be locally valued. Furthermore, the Officer's review of the assessment of visual effects appears to be exaggerated and is not supported by a proportionate assessment of baseline conditions or a balanced evaluation of susceptibility and magnitude.
- 6.1.2. The Landscape and Tree Officer notes that the Appeal Site lies outside the defined settlement limits and therefore considers it contrary to the Local Plan. However, in the context of an acknowledged need for new housing, greenfield sites on the edge of settlements inevitably form part of the planning balance, and countryside designation alone should not preclude development. In my opinion, the Appeal Site represents a suitable location in principle: it is not subject to any statutory or local landscape designation, contains no landscape features whose loss would result in unacceptable harm, and is influenced by existing residential development on three sides. The Site is therefore not isolated but forms part of a contained settlement edge. Policy CP11 allows for sensitive development in the countryside where it responds appropriately to landscape and settlement character, and in this regard the Appeal Proposals reflect the established morphology of Barkham Road, respect the existing settlement edge, and avoid encroachment into the wider open countryside. The surrounding built form and tree-lined boundaries provide a strong framework of containment and continuity with the existing landscape structure.
- 6.1.3. The Officer further suggests that the Appeal Site functions as a *"pause/breathing space of landscape where there are other such pauses such as opposite at Aggisters Lane, and slightly to the west at the junction with Bearwood Road (1A Bearwood Road) which are typical features of Barkham Road as it moves into countryside"*. However, I do not agree that such spaces represent a defining or consistent characteristic of Barkham Road. Rather, the road is characterised by a predominantly linear ribbon of development set within generous plots and a strong treed framework, with vegetation providing visual relief rather than intentional or strategic breaks in built form. As set out in the LVA, this linear settlement pattern is the prevailing character, and the Appeal Proposals respond appropriately by retaining mature roadside vegetation and reinforcing the established treed corridor, thereby respecting and continuing the existing character of Barkham Road.
- 6.1.4. The Officer suggests the development does not follow the local building line. In reality, the proposals respond to the linear and ribbon-like character of Barkham Road while transitioning sensitively to the rural landscape southwards and reflecting the adjoining dwellings, including Coppid Hill House and Quarter Hill House. This is demonstrated on **Figure CJ 5.3** within Section 5 of this Statement. The

southern part of the site, adjoining open fields, provides a landscaped transition that mitigates any perceived extension of the built frontage. The proposed layout reflects the existing pattern of detached and semi-detached dwellings, consistent with the local character.

- 6.1.5. Concerns regarding the Appeal Site's topography and landscape prominence are overstated. While the land slopes gently from northwest to southeast, the changes in elevation are modest and do not result in the Site being visually dominant. Where visible, the Appeal Site is seen within context to the existing built form that surrounds it and visual containment is afforded by a combination of the built form, the mature treescape and the undulating topography. Views of the Site from longer distances are filtered by intervening vegetation and undulating terrain, limiting any broader visual impact. The proposed layout, building setbacks, and retention of existing treescape maintain a sense of openness along both Barkham Road and Edney's Hill and ensure that the development sits comfortably within its context. In my opinion, the Council's assessment overestimates the Site's prominence and visibility from public viewpoints and does not provide a clear or reasoned justification for attributing a "very high" magnitude of change, nor is there adequate acknowledgment of the existing built elements already present within the surrounding views, including development on comparable or higher ground.
- 6.1.6. It is noted that Edney's Hill is a narrow lane with a verdant character that extends south from Barkham Road and the settlement edge. The proposals minimise visual intrusion through the retention of boundary vegetation, the use of a sensitively designed access, and the alignment of dwellings that maintains the rhythm of the settlement edge built form in this location. While the Officer suggests a "very high" magnitude of change from viewpoints along Edney's Hill (LVA Viewpoints 9-12), these effects are localised from a relatively short section of the lane, and exist where built components and the settlement edge characteristics already characterise the views. Introducing a low density, small scale residential scheme will not result in adverse effects of a magnitude or significance that would justify refusal given the nature of the existing views. In order to help illustrate this, an **Illustrative Visualisation** based upon the LVA Viewpoint 10 has been prepared and is included within **Appendix Cj C**.
- 6.1.7. The Officer raises concerns regarding adequacy of planting and open space. The proposals provide extensive soft landscaping, including native hedgerows, specimen trees, and open space that form meaningful buffers along Edney's Hill and the southern boundary. The layout creates incidental landscaped spaces that break up the built form, provide visual relief, and will mature over time to integrate the development fully into the landscape. The scheme adopts a landscape-led approach, balancing development with the retention and enhancement of valued landscape features, consistent with the objectives of the J2 LCA.

Delegated Officer Report

- 6.1.8. The Officer Report (OR) reiterates many of the landscape consultation points on perceived effects on landscape, character and visual amenity. It also summarises the Council's historic position, highlighting previous appeal decisions that resisted smaller-scale residential schemes on the Appeal Site due to perceived harm to the rural character, openness, and "green" nature of the site. However, it is important to recognise that the immediate context of the Site and its surroundings has changed materially since those decisions, which were considered under a different planning policy framework. Notably, four two- and a half-storey dwellings have been constructed immediately to the north of the Site, and vegetation along Barkham Road has been cleared, reducing the verdant character that previously defined the streetscene. These changes have altered the baseline landscape and visual context against which new development would be perceived (refer **Figure CJ 5.4**).
- 6.1.9. The current Appeal Proposals also differ materially from the historic schemes. Previous applications featured dwellings with rear or side elevations oriented away from Barkham Road, extensive rear gardens extending to the southern boundary, and built form extending further southwards. In contrast, the Appeal Proposals are oriented to front Barkham Road and Edney's Hill, providing a coherent street-facing arrangement that aligns with the established linear development pattern. The southern part of the Site is reserved for public open space and new landscaping rather than private rear gardens and harsh close board fencing, delivering a softer and more defensible transition to the wider countryside. The overall layout, orientation, and spacing of dwellings have been carefully designed to respect the prevailing settlement edge, reduce visual prominence, and integrate with existing landscape features. While the scheme proposes more dwellings than previous applications, this is consistent with the efficient and considered use of land while maintaining a landscape and character-led approach.
- 6.1.10. It is also relevant that the historic applications and appeals were determined without the benefit of a qualitative landscape assessment. By contrast, the current proposals are supported by a detailed Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and follow a landscape-led approach responsive to the Site's constraints, surrounding character, and settlement pattern. Taken together with the materially changed baseline conditions, these factors demonstrate that the concerns cited in previous decisions do not directly apply to the current scheme. In my professional opinion, the Appeal Proposals would not result in the same degree of harm to landscape, character, or visual amenity that was anticipated in the historic decisions.

Barkham Parish Council Response

- 6.1.11. The Parish Council objects on the basis that the Site lies within a so-called "Green Wedge" and that development would erode openness, rural character, and the separation between Barkham and Wokingham. While these concerns appear to draw on historic local plan terminology, it is important

to note that the Green Wedge is not a formal designation within the adopted Wokingham Borough Development Plan. This position is expressly acknowledged within the Delegated Officer's Report (page 14), which confirms that the former Green Wedge designation derived from the superseded Wokingham District Local Plan (2004) and carries no policy weight within the current development plan. Accordingly, WBC has not refused the application on Green Wedge grounds, and this does not form part of the formal Reasons for Refusal.

- 6.1.12. The Delegated Officer's Report further confirms that, having assessed the proposal in the context of settlement coalescence, WBC Officers do not consider that the development would result in coalescence between Barkham and any other settlement. Whilst acknowledging that incremental encroachment into countryside can, in some circumstances, contribute towards coalescence, the Report is clear that this proposal, by reason of the distance to other settlements and the Site's contained position, would not give rise to such effects.
- 6.1.13. In my opinion, the Appeal Proposals respond appropriately to landscape, character, and visual considerations. The Appeal Site is well-contained on three sides by existing residential development and does not represent an isolated rural parcel. The scheme is low-density and landscape-led, designed around the retention of existing trees and hedgerows, with extensive new planting, ecological enhancements, and integrated open space. These measures reinforce the established settlement edge, strengthen the southern boundary of Barkham, and reflect the prevailing linear and ribbon-like character of Barkham Road, ensuring that landscape and visual effects are localised, proportionate, and appropriately mitigated.
- 6.1.14. Importantly, the Parish Council's concerns regarding settlement separation and coalescence do not apply in this case, as confirmed within the Officer's Delegated Report. The Site is located at the southern edge of Barkham and is not in close proximity to Wokingham or any other distinct settlement, with no intervisibility between the Site and adjacent villages. The Appeal Proposals would not compromise the integrity of any strategic gaps, nor would they lead to coalescence. In my opinion, the development preserves the distinct settlement edge of Barkham and does not affect the separation between settlements.
- 6.1.15. This section provides context for the detailed policy-based response that follows, demonstrating that the proposals maintain and enhance the landscape, character, and visual qualities of the Appeal Site and its surroundings, consistent with the Adopted Development Plan.

7. Response to Landscape Related Policies

7.1.1. As set out in Reasons for Refusal Nos. 1 and 2, the Council considers that the Appeal Proposals conflict with policies of the Core Strategy, the Managing Delivery Document (MDD) Local Plan, and the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan. These include Policies CP1, CP3, CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy; Policies CC01, CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan; and Policies IRS1, IRS2 and AD3 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

7.1.2. The submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) explains how the Proposed Development responds positively to the relevant policy framework. Overall policy compliance is addressed separately by Mr Tim Northey; however, the following paragraphs set out my professional opinion in respect of landscape character and visual amenity matters.

Core Strategy Policy CP1 and MDD Policy CC01 – Sustainable Development

7.1.3. Policies CP1 and CC01 require development to maintain or enhance environmental quality and apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development where adverse impacts do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh benefits. As set out in the LVA, the Appeal Proposals would result in change to a small parcel of land; however, such change is localised, moderate at most, and does not equate to unacceptable harm. The scheme has been carefully designed to respect the receiving landscape and visual context, retain key landscape features, and deliver landscape and ecological enhancements. On this basis, the proposals accord with the objectives of both CP1 and CC01.

Core Strategy Policies CP3 and CP9 – Scale, Location and General Principles

7.1.4. Policies CP3 and CP9 relate to locating development in appropriate places and ensuring that scale, form and layout respond positively to local context. Barkham Hill is identified as a limited development location, and the Appeal Proposals are small-scale, low-density and proportionate to the character, services and facilities of the settlement.

7.1.5. The layout reflects the established linear and ribbon development pattern along Barkham Road, with building heights, plot sizes, spacing and setbacks consistent with surrounding development. A comprehensive landscaping strategy is integral to the design, reinforcing the well-treed character of Barkham Road and Edney's Hill and providing a sensitive transition to the countryside to the south. The proposals therefore comply with CP3 and CP9 by delivering development of an appropriate scale and form that integrates successfully with its surroundings.

Core Strategy Policy CP11 – Development Outside Development Limits

7.1.6. Policy CP11 relates to development in the countryside and seeks to avoid inappropriate encroachment or expansion. The Appeal Site is not an isolated rural parcel; it is contained on three sides by existing residential development, with the settlement boundary abutting the northern, eastern and western edges.

- 7.1.7. The southerly extent of the built form has been carefully defined to broadly follow the existing development line, reinforced by landscape and ecological open space. This ensures the proposals do not project into the wider countryside or give rise to the perception of excessive encroachment. In this regard, the Appeal Proposals accord with the requirements of Policy CP11.

MDD Policies CC03 and TB21 – Green Infrastructure and Landscape Character

- 7.1.8. Policies CC03 and TB21 seek to protect landscape character and deliver high-quality green infrastructure. The Appeal Proposals have been informed by the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment and are designed to retain and reinforce the key characteristics of the “Arborfield and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay” landscape.

- 7.1.9. Existing trees, hedgerows and boundary vegetation are largely retained and form the framework of the scheme, supplemented by new tree planting, native landscaping and ecological enhancements. The proposals deliver net gains in green infrastructure, improve biodiversity, and ensure that the development is well integrated into its landscape context, fully aligning with the objectives of Policies CC03 and TB21.

Neighbourhood Plan Policies IRS1, IRS2 and AD3 – Settlement Separation, Identity and Design Quality

- 7.1.10. Policy IRS1 seeks to preserve the separation between settlements. The Appeal Proposals do not result in coalescence or erosion of settlement gaps, and the defined southern landscape edge ensures a clear and defensible boundary is maintained.
- 7.1.11. Policy IRS2 requires development to respect the identity and rural setting of Barkham. The proposals respond directly to the village’s low-density, linear settlement pattern and well-treed character, while maintaining an appropriate transition to the countryside through landscape-led design.
- 7.1.12. Policy AD3 seeks high-quality development with generous open space and appropriate landscaping. The Appeal Proposals deliver a low-density scheme with generous setbacks, substantial private and communal open space, and a comprehensive landscape strategy embedded within the layout. The development is structured around the retention of existing trees and the delivery of high-quality new landscaping, resulting in a well-designed scheme that complies fully with Policy AD3.
- 7.1.13. In my opinion, the Appeal Proposals comply with the landscape and visual policies cited in Reasons for Refusal Nos. 1 and 2. The development maintains the character and setting of Barkham, retains existing trees, provides extensive new landscaping and ecological enhancements, respects settlement separation and identity, and delivers a high-quality, low-density scheme fully integrated into its context.

8. Summary and Conclusions

- 8.1.1. My name is Chris Jenkinson. I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) and Director of Jenk Landscape Design + Planning Ltd. I am instructed by Abbeymill Homes Ltd to provide specialist landscape and visual advice for the Appeal in respect of land west of Edney's Hill, Barkham Road, Barkham.
- 8.1.2. The Appeal relates to planning application 251486 for the erection of 16 dwellings with new access off Edney's Hill, footpaths, car ports, parking, landscaping, and associated works. The conclusions on landscape and visual issues are set out in full within the submitted LVA, which remains unchanged.
- 8.1.3. The claims made by the Council in the Reasons for Refusal, Officer's Report, and consultation responses regarding landscape and visual effects are overstated and not supported by robust evidence.
- 8.1.4. The Appeal Site and localised landscape is not covered by any qualitative landscape designations at a national or local level. The Site is not remarkable in terms of its land use, features, and elements relative to the immediate surrounding area and it does not include any features which would elevate it above an 'ordinary' landscape. The Site itself and localised landscape is not considered to be a 'valued landscape' in relation to the NPPF¹¹.
- 8.1.5. While located within open countryside, the Appeal Site is immediately adjacent to existing built development on three sides, forming a small gap within an otherwise continuous linear settlement pattern along Barkham Road. Its position as settlement fringe reduces its susceptibility to landscape change.
- 8.1.6. The Proposed Development adopts a landscape-led approach, taking account of site constraints and incorporating mitigation measures in accordance with GLVIA3¹² principles. The layout and design solutions are specific to the character, form, and settlement pattern of Barkham, providing a bespoke and locally responsive design solution.
- 8.1.7. The scheme introduces residential development in a logical manner without extending the village notably southwards and avoids introducing features that are incongruous within the localised setting along Barkham Road and Edney's Hill.
- 8.1.8. The proposals are in keeping with the linear and ribbon development pattern of Barkham Road, reflecting the historic growth, pattern, and morphology of the village. By following the existing southerly line of development, the scheme does not encroach into the wider countryside.

¹¹ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, Paragraph 187a

¹² Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013, Third Edition, Section 4

- 8.1.9. Potential landscape effects on the Appeal Site and its immediate setting are limited to **Moderate to Moderate/Minor adverse**, and would not be significant when considered alongside the low-density design and mitigation measures. Effects on the published WBLCA LCA J2 would be no higher than **Negligible adverse**, reflecting the sensitive and contextually responsive design of the scheme.
- 8.1.10. In summary, in reviewing effects upon the landscape character, I remain of the view that while some change to the landscape is inevitable on greenfield land, this would be localised to the Appeal Site and its immediate surroundings, and compatible with the prevailing character of the area.
- 8.1.11. The visual effects of the proposals are highly localised. Visibility is limited primarily to short sections of Barkham Road and Edney's Hill to the east and south. Longer distance views are filtered by topography, intervening vegetation, and surrounding built development, ensuring that visual change is contained.
- 8.1.12. The Proposed Development would be seen in context with the existing village edge, reflecting similar density, scale, orientation, and appearance, and would not appear out of context or visually intrusive.
- 8.1.13. The LVA recognises that some localised visual change will occur from an open field to residential development; however, the layout has been designed to reflect the character and form of the village, and is set within a robust landscape framework. Proposed mitigation measures, including retention of key trees, hedgerows, and new landscape planting, would moderate these effects.
- 8.1.14. The localised visual environment has the capacity to accommodate the proposals given the Site's position on the village fringe, surrounded by development to the east, north, and west. Any visual change is restricted to a small geographic area, with no significant long-term adverse effects on the local or wider visual environment.
- 8.1.15. In my professional opinion, the proposals integrate successfully without causing significant long-term harm to the character or appearance of the landscape. Effects are highly localised and effectively mitigated by the landscape-led design measures, which respond to local characteristics and the established settlement pattern.
- 8.1.16. The proposals conserve and enhance key landscape features, maintain the settlement edge, and provide a low-density housing scheme that is consistent with the character, pattern, and morphology of the village.
- 8.1.17. Having regard to the Council's stated Reasons for Refusal, I do not consider that the Appeal Proposals give rise to the harms alleged. In respect of Reason for Refusal No. 1, the proposals do not represent inappropriate development, but rather a logical and contained extension to the existing settlement edge, informed by the established pattern of development along Barkham Road and Edney's Hill, and consistent with the Site's settlement-fringe context. In respect of Reason for Refusal No. 2, while the development would result in the loss of an open greenfield parcel, this change has been carefully

managed through a low-density, landscape-led design that respects local character, avoids suburbanisation, and ensures that landscape and visual effects are localised, proportionate and appropriately mitigated. The proposals would not result in an overly urbanising or poorly designed form of development, nor would they undermine the character or appearance of the area.

- 8.1.18. It is also relevant that previous appeal decisions were made within a materially different policy and physical context. Since then, development immediately to the north and the removal of the former vegetated frontage have altered the baseline character of Barkham Road. The Appeal Proposals respond positively to this changed baseline through the retention of frontage vegetation, additional planting, and the creation of a softer settlement edge. The scheme is oriented to front Barkham Road and Edney's Hill, providing a coherent street-facing arrangement, while the southern part of the Site is reserved for open space and structural landscaping. Accordingly, historic conclusions on landscape and character harm do not directly apply to the current proposal.
- 8.1.19. I therefore conclude that the Appeal Proposals represent a bespoke, landscape-led and locally responsive design solution that is acceptable in landscape, visual and character terms. The proposals would not result in significant or unacceptable harm to the landscape character, visual amenity or settlement identity, and do not support the Council's Reasons for Refusal. On this basis, I respectfully request that the appeal be allowed and planning permission granted.

Appendix CJ A

Landscape Strategy Plan Rev E & Context Landscape Masterplan



Indicative Native Tree Species	
Acer campestre	Field Maple
Betula pubescens	Downy Birch
Carpinus betulus	Common Hornbeam
Crataegus monogyna	Common Hawthorn
Malus sylvestris	Crab Apple
Prunus padus	Bird Cherry
Quercus robur	Common Oak
Sorbus aria	Common Whitebeam
Sorbus aucuparia	Rowan
Indicative Mixed Native Hedgerow Mix	
10% Acer campestre	Field Maple
10% Corylus avellana	Common Hazel
40% Crataegus monogyna	Common Hawthorn
5% Ligustrum vulgare	Wild Privet
10% Malus sylvestris	Crab Apple
15% Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn
5% Rosa canina	Dog Rose
5% Viburnum lantana	Wayfaring Tree
Indicative Mixed Native Shrub Mix	
Cornus sanguinea	Common Dogwood
Corylus avellana	Common Hazel
Crataegus monogyna	Common Hawthorn
Euonymus europaeus	Spindle
Ilex aquifolium	Common Holly
Rosa canina	Dog Rose
Ruscus aculeatus	Butcher's Broom
Sambucus nigra	Elder
Sorbus torminalis	Wild Service Tree
Viburnum opulus	Guelder Rose
Indicative Ornamental Shrubs & Grasses	
Brachyglottis 'Sunshine'	
Ceanothus thyrsiflorus repens	
Choisya 'Aztec Pearl'	
Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire'	
Cotinus coggyria 'Royal Purple'	
Euonymus fortunei 'Emerald n' Gold'	
Genista lydia	
Hebe albicans	
Hebe 'Midsummer Beauty'	
Lavandula angustifolia 'Hidcote'	
Potentilla fruticosa 'Tangerine'	
Sarcococca confusa	
Sedum spectabile 'Brilliant'	
Skimmia japonica 'Rubella'	
Spiraea japonica 'Firelight'	
Viburnum davidii	
Indicative Grass & Wildflower Mixtures @4g/msq.	
Emorsgate EL1 Flowering Lawn Mix.	
Emorsgate EM2 General Purpose Wildflower Meadow Mix (supplemented with Yellow Rattle to control the grasses).	
Emorsgate EM8 Meadow Mixture for Wetlands.	

- Legend:**
- Application Site Boundary
 - Existing Trees & Vegetation Structure Retained | Refer Arboricultural Information
 - Proposed Houses, Apartments & Carports
 - Proposed Standard Specimen & Native Tree Planting | Min 14-16cmg | Rb
 - Proposed Large Canopied Semi-mature Native Tree Planting | Min 18-20cmg | Rb
 - Proposed Species Rich Mixed Native Hedgerow | @4/1in m
 - Proposed Species Rich Mixed Native Hedgerow with Trees & Dry Ditch
 - Proposed Mixed Native Shrub / Scrub Planting @ 2-3/m | Br | Transplants
 - Proposed Ornamental Evergreen & Herbaceous Shrub Planting | @ 3/m | in groups of 3+5 plants
 - Proposed Flowering Lawn Turf / Grass Mix Emorsgate EL1 or similar
 - Proposed Species Rich Wildflower Mix Emorsgate EM2 or similar (supplemented with Yellow Rattle to control grasses)
 - Proposed Attenuation Basin with Wetland Grass Mix Emorsgate EM8 or similar
 - Existing 1.2m Timber Post & Rail Fence
 - Proposed 1.8m Timber Close Board Fence
 - Proposed Timber Bike Shed
 - Proposed Asphalt Path
 - Proposed Permeable Block Paved Road Brindle or similar finish
 - Proposed Block Paved Road & Parking Charcoal Grey or similar finish
 - Proposed Flag Paving Paths & Patios Charcoal Grey or similar finish | 400x400mm
 - Existing Sewer Easement
 - Highways Visibility Splay
- Drawing Notes:**
- Drawing prepared for planning purposes and depicts the indicative landscape arrangement and principles of the landscape strategy only.
- Native species of local provenance to be used.
- Do not scale from drawing, use figured dimensions only.
- Drawing to be read in conjunction with all Jenk Landscape Design + Planning Ltd reports and drawings.
- Refer to Arboricultural drawings for full details of existing trees and retention / protection methods.

Drawing Annotations:

- Majority of the existing mature trees and vegetation structure along Barkham Road & Edneys Hill are retained to maintain the existing character of the streetscenes. Localised vegetation removal required for the new access and associated highways visibility splays - refer Arboricultural Info.
- Proposed dwellings to be set back from Barkham Road & Edneys Hill to reflect the set back and settlement form of the locality whilst maximising tree retentions. Proposed materials and elevational treatment to reflect the local character enabling the development to respond to its context.
- High quality hard landscape materials used for roads, parking, paths and patios utilising recessive finishes. This seeks to reflect the settlement - countryside edge context and responds to the localised townscape character of Barkham.
- An area of open space for landscape and biodiversity enhancements with attenuation basin is included on the southern boundary which reflects localised character and assist in softening the proposed dwellings. This enhances green infrastructure and creates a high quality landscape setting.
- Proposed tree planting internally and along the boundaries will mitigate for the degree of vegetation removal required for the access and creates a high quality green setting to the residential development. Ornamental planting using flowering and berry producing species add to wildlife value.
- Proposed pedestrian access link through to Barkham Road provides direct links between the new development and existing built up area. Existing vegetation structure to be cut back locally and appropriately managed over the long-term to improve its overall condition and maintain longevity with additional spot planting.

Appendix CJ B

Existing & Proposed Urban Grain Plan



EXISTING BARKHAM URBAN GRAIN



PROPOSED BARKHAM URBAN GRAIN



0m 50 100 150m
scale 1:2500

REVISIONS / AUTHOR		DATE
PURPOSE OF ISSUE		
PLANNING		
DRAWN	SCALE	
MW	1:5000@A1	
CHECKED	SIGNED OFF	DATE
TN	TN	IAN 2026
PROJECT		
LAND OFF EDNEYS HILL BARKHAM		
TITLE		
URBAN GRAIN PLAN		
DRAWING NUMBER		REV
WOK-PL111		A
ABBEMILL HOMES LTD.		
Market House Silver End Olney Bucks MK46 4AL T: 01234 714 844 W: abbeymillhomes.co.uk E: enquiries@abbeymillhomes.co.uk		

Appendix CJ C

Illustrative Visualisation – Viewpoint 10



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