

STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

Site Location: Land West of Edney's Hill, Barkham

Proposal: Proposed erection of 16 no. dwellings with new access off Edney's Hill, plus footpaths, car ports, parking, landscaping and associated works

Appeal ref.

Application Ref: 251486

Appellant: Abbeymill Homes

FEBRUARY 2026

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Wokingham Borough Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement (August 2025)

1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 This statement relates to an appeal by Abbeymill Homes (“the Appellant”), following the refusal of planning permission Ref: 251486 by Wokingham Borough Council (“the Local Planning Authority”), involving a proposal for the:

“Proposed erection of 16 no. dwellings with new access off Edney's Hill, plus footpaths, car ports, parking, landscaping and associated works.”

- 1.2 The application was determined under Officer delegated powers with a decision notice issued on 16th October 2025. The reasons for refusal included within the notice are as follows:

1. *The proposal represents inappropriate, unplanned development outside of development limits within the countryside and contrary to the spatial objectives of the development plan and to Policies CP1, CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan, Policy IRS1 of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan and the NPPF.*
2. *The proposed development would have an adverse impact on the landscape, character and appearance of the area by reason of the loss of an open green field in the countryside to an urbanising, poorly designed development, contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, policies CC01, CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, policies AD3 and IRS2 Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan, Barkham Village Design Statement, the Wokingham Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012), the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment and the NPPF.*
3. *The location of the proposed development is unsustainable in transport terms as the proposed development is not within suitable distances of day-to-day local facilities and amenities, including areas of public open space, by non-motorised transport modes, and will result in a high level of car dependency contrary to the*

sustainable goals in Section 8 and 9 of the NPPF, as well as policies CP1, CP2, CP3 and CP6 of the Core Strategy and TB08 of the MDD Local Plan.

- 4. In the absence of adequate information regarding satisfactory access arrangements, visibility splays and turning area for vehicles entering/exiting the site, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal will not lead to a detrimental impact on both highways and pedestrian safety, and that the development can be adequately serviced in terms of waste provision. The proposal is contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP6 of the Core Strategy, policy CC04 of the MDD and the NPPF.*
- 5. The proposed balcony serving plot 11 would result in uninterrupted views across the proposed gardens of plots 6 and 7 and therefore the privacy for future occupiers would be compromised, contrary to policy CP3 of the Core Strategy and the Wokingham Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012) and the NPPF.*
- 6. The applicant has failed to demonstrate that future occupiers of the proposed development would not be subject to adverse noise from the existing surrounding environment. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy CC06 of the MDD Local Plan, policy CP1 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.*
- 7. The proposal fails to demonstrate that the development can be suitably accommodated within the site without impinging on root protection areas, resulting in adverse and unacceptable impacts on important trees. Furthermore, impact on existing trees has failed to be considered in relation to required highway visibility splays. As such, the proposal fails to comply with CC03 of the MDD Local Plan and NPPF.*
- 8. In the absence of a planning obligation to secure suitable avoidance and mitigation measure and access management monitoring arrangements, in terms that are satisfactory to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), the LPA is unable to satisfy itself that the proposals include adequate mitigation measures to prevent the proposed development from having an adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, in line with the requirements of Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended and Article*

6(3) of Directive 92/43/EEC. The proposal would be contrary to Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan, Policies CP8 and CP4 of the Core Strategy.

- 9. By virtue of a lack of accurate information, an assessment of how 10% biodiversity net gain will be achieved is not possible and as such, the survey assessment is not acceptable and therefore the relevant date of pre-development biodiversity value is not agreed. As such, if granted planning permission, there is no guarantee if 10% biodiversity net gain will be achieved, hence would be contrary to Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).*
- 10. In the absence of a completed Legal Agreement, the schemes fails to make adequate provision for highways infrastructure, contrary to Policies CP1, CP3, CP4 and CP6 of the Core Strategy the NPPF.*
- 11. In the absence of a completed legal agreement, the scheme fails to make adequate provision towards primary medical care to accommodate for the increase in population as a result of the development. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy CP1 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.*
- 12. In the absence of a completed legal agreement, the scheme fails to make adequate provision for affordable housing, contrary to Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.*
- 13. In the absence of a completed legal agreement, the proposal fails to secure opportunities for training, apprenticeships and other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills contrary to policy TB12 of the MDD Local Plan.*

Purpose and Structure

- 1.3 This Statement of Common Ground (“the SoCG”) has been prepared jointly by the Appellant and the Local Planning Authority (LPA) in respect of a planning appeal made under S.78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 1.4 The purpose of this statement is to confirm those areas of common ground between the parties, as well as the key matters in dispute.

1.5 Both parties can confirm that this SoCG has been prepared jointly and agreed:

Signed:

Tim Northey (on behalf of Abbeymill Homes)

Date:

Signed:

TBC (on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council)

Date:

2.0 Planning Policy

The Adopted Development Plan

- 2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission should be determined against relevant policies in the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.2 It is agreed that the development plan in the context of this appeal comprises the Wokingham Core Strategy (2010), the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) and the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan. These plans are now all over 5 years old with the weight that can be attributed to them dependent upon their consistency with the Framework.
- 2.3 The parties agree that the following policies of this plan, are of particular relevance to this appeal:

Wokingham Core Strategy

- *Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development);*
- *Policy CP2 (Inclusive Communities);*
- *Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development);*
- *Policy CP4 (Infrastructure Requirements);*
- *Policy CP5 (Housing Mix, Density and Affordability);*
- *Policy CP6 (Managing Travel Demand);*
- *Policy CP8 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area);*
- *Policy CP9 (Scale and Location of Development Proposals);*
- *Policy CP11 (Proposals Outside Development Limits);*
- *Policy CP17 (Housing Delivery).*

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan

- *Policy CC01 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development);*
- *Policy CC03 (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping);*
- *Policy CC04 (Sustainable Design and Construction);*
- *Policy CC06 (Noise);*
- *Policy TB08 (Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards for Residential Development);*
- *Policy TB12 (Employment Skills Plan)*

- *Policy TB21 (Landscape Character).*

Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

- Policy AD3 (High Quality Development with Generous Open Space, properly landscaped).

Other Material Policy Considerations

The National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

- 2.4 It is agreed that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024 and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which set out national planning policy and guidance are important material considerations in this appeal.

Wokingham Borough Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement (August 2025)

- 2.5 The parties agree that this report (included at **Appendix 1**) is a material consideration with this appeal as it provides the Council's most up to date position on housing land supply in the district at the current time.

Adopted Planning Guidance

- 2.6 The parties agree that the following guidance documents are relevant in the context of this appeal:

- Barkham Village Design Statement (2007)
- Wokingham Borough Design Guide (2012)

3.0 Matters on Which the Parties Agree

Background to the Appeal

- 3.1 The application was submitted by the Appellant to the LPA in June 2025, and validated on the 22nd July 2025. The statutory determination deadline for the application was 21st October 2025.
- 3.2 The Case Officer advised in September 2025 that they would not be supporting the application and as they were not supportive of the principle, Officers would not therefore be willing to invite amendments to the scheme to overcome any consultee concerns.
- 3.3 The application was refused under delegated powers within the statutory determination period.

The Appeal Site and its Surroundings

- 3.4 The appeal site immediately adjoins the edge of the settlement of Barkham Hill, and is adjoined on three sides by existing residential development. To the south is a farmhouse and range of agricultural buildings.
- 3.5 The site is aligned on its northern boundary by Barkham Road, and Edney's Hill to the east. The surrounding area has an established residential character and predominantly comprises generously sized detached properties.
- 3.6 The appeal site is formed of a modest and unremarkable field previously used for grazing horses but currently unused. It is well contained from the Barkham Road and Edney's Hill by the established vegetation framework on these boundaries.
- 3.7 There is a variation in levels across the site, with levels falling away from north to south. Access into the field is obtained via a gated access off Edney's Hill. The boundaries within the site are marked by a post and rail fence.

- 3.8 The immediate surrounds are dominated by two to two and a half storey properties. These include recently constructed dwellings opposite the site on the other side of Barkham Road.

The Appeal Proposal

- 3.9 The planning application sought full planning permission for the following description of development:

“Proposed erection of 16 no. dwellings with new access off Edney's Hill, plus footpaths, car ports, parking, landscaping and associated works”

Nearly 40% of the proposed houses are affordable homes which will comprise both affordable rent and shared ownership tenure.

Site Status and Designation

- 3.10 The two parties agree with the following status of the appeal site:
- The site immediately adjoins the settlement edge of Barkham Hill;
 - Barkham Hill is designated in policy terms as a limited development location considered sufficiently sustainable to accommodate residential development of up to 25 dwellings;
 - A range of local services and facilities lie within accessible walking and cycling distance of the site;
 - The appeal site and its immediate setting is not covered by any statutory landscape designations;
 - The appeal site does not contain nor will it affect the setting of any designated nor non-designated heritage assets;
 - It contains no ecological features of recognised value;
 - It contains no notable landscape features that elevate it above ordinary undeveloped land;
 - It is located within flood zone 1 and so the risk of flooding is low.

Housing Need and Mix

- 3.11 The appeal site is located at a settlement where new residential development will be supported under the development plan to meet the district's housing needs.
- 3.12 An identifiable housing need exists for market and affordable homes in this part of Wokingham Borough. This includes very high levels of affordable housing need with recent delivery rates failing to sufficiently meet affordable housing targets and compounding affordability issues.
- 3.13 The appeal proposal will make a contribution towards meeting such housing needs. The reasons for refusal do not refer to concerns about the proposed mix of dwellings. The addition of new housing in this area is a very significant benefit of the scheme.

Housing Land Supply ("HLS")

- 3.14 The LPA acknowledges that at the present time it cannot demonstrate a deliverable 5-year HLS in the context of this appeal in accordance with its Land Supply Assessment at **Appendix 1**. The LPA can only identify 2.5 years supply for the period April 2025 to March 2030 which amounts to a severe shortfall.
- 3.15 The parties therefore agree that the provisions of Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF and the 'tilted balance' applies in the determination of this appeal.

Highways

- 3.16 The parties agree that whilst concerns exist within the reasons for refusal relating to a safe and suitable access onto the local highway, the submission of further evidence within the appeal may enable these concerns to be withdrawn. Similarly, additional evidence regarding the servicing of waste collections may also address the LPA's concerns.

Trees

- 3.17 The Appellant has submitted additional information in relation to trees as part of the appeal, and the LPA agrees to review this evidence to assess whether it sufficiently

demonstrates that it will not have an unacceptable impact upon trees. This may allow withdrawal of reason for refusal 7.

- 3.18 It is agreed between the parties that T20 is located offsite.

Archaeology

- 3.19 The reasons for refusal do not refer to any concerns in respect of archaeological considerations and in the event of planning permission being granted, a pre-commencement condition could be imposed to protect any such interest.

Layout and Design

- 3.20 It is agreed as common ground between the parties that the layout of the proposal reflects the established pattern of development in this part of Barkham Hill and it sits within the established southern build line of the settlement.
- 3.21 The proposed dwellings are orientated to front the roads, with setbacks from the boundaries that allow for the retention of the existing vegetation and trees.
- 3.22 The design, appearance and materials intended to be used in the construction of the dwellings is considered to be in keeping with the local vernacular and surrounding character, and will result in a high quality development proposal.
- 3.23 The southern portion includes a landscaped open space incorporating attenuation basin, additional landscaping, ecological enhancements and biodiversity improvements.

Landscape and Visual

- 3.24 The application was supported by a GLVIA3 compliant Landscape and Visual Appraisal which is proportionate for the development proposed and the methodology used has not been challenged.

- 3.25 The selection of viewpoints contained in the LVA are considered representative of the site and its landscape context, and there was no request for any additional viewpoints during the course of the application.
- 3.26 The appeal site and localised landscape is not covered by any qualitative landscape designations at a national or local level and is not considered to be a 'valued landscape' in relation to the NPPF.
- 3.27 Residential development is a characteristic of the localised setting, and the site is immediately adjacent to and influenced by the built form of the village.
- 3.28 The landscape and visual effects are localised due to the scale and nature of the proposals.
- 3.29 The proposals include the retention of the key landscape features alongside landscape mitigation measures, ecological enhancements and biodiversity net gain. The scheme includes a net gain in tree, hedge and shrub planting.

Residential Amenities

- 3.30 The parties agree that the appeal proposal would not have a detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbouring properties. It is also agreed that the level of amenity space for future residents of the development would be acceptable.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 3.31 Both parties accept that the proposed drainage strategy for the appeal site is acceptable and will not increase flood risk on the site or elsewhere.

Economic Benefits

- 3.32 The scheme offers a number of economic benefits which would support local businesses and services. These include both short and longer term benefits.
- 3.33 It is agreed that this proposal would help to support the vitality and viability of local services through the resultant population increase from the appeal proposal, an explicit objective of the NPPF (Paragraph 83). This is of modest positive weight.

Social Benefits

- 3.34 The parties agree that this proposal also includes a number of specific social benefits. This includes the delivery of market housing at a time of a severe land supply deficit. This weighs significantly in favour of the proposal.
- 3.35 These social benefits include the delivery of affordable homes in an area with a very high need due to housing affordability issues. This is also of significant positive weight.

Environmental Benefits

- 3.36 The proposal will extensively increase onsite landscaping and combined with other biodiversity enhancements, will deliver a net gain in biodiversity in excess of the 10% target. These environmental benefits will be of modest positive weight.
- 3.37 In addition, the proposal will enable the delivery of more environmentally efficient housing with higher levels of insulation and integrated renewable technology, ensuring a lesser environmental footprint than the existing housing stock at the settlement. This is of modest positive weight.

Barkham Hill Facilities and Services

- 3.38 It is agreed that Barkham Hill offers a number of local services to meet residents' day to day needs including (at the following walking distances from the middle of the site):
- Bus Stops (50m and 180m);
 - Village Store and Post Office (400m);
 - Recreation Ground (1010m);
 - Village Hall (1200m);
 - Pre-school (1200m);
 - Church (1200m);
 - Public House (560m and 1450m).

Planning Obligations

- 3.39 Both parties agree to work together within the relevant timescales of the appeal to draft and agree a suitable legal agreement the necessary obligations from the development considered reasonably necessary to make the application acceptable.

4.0 Matters on Which the Parties Disagree

Introduction

- 4.1 This section sets out those matters on which the two parties disagree. The extent of these matters may narrow during the course of the appeal process in light of additional evidence submitted with the appeal and the parties agree to work positively together to try and resolve as many issues as possible prior to the hearing.
- 4.2 Whether the appeal proposal represents inappropriate development.
- 4.3 The extent to which the appeal proposal would have an adverse impact upon landscape character and appearance of the area.
- 4.4 Whether the appeal site occupies a sustainable location.
- 4.5 If the scheme provides for safe access arrangements and is capable of being adequately serviced for refuse collections.
- 4.6 If plots 6 and 7 can be provided with amenity space that offers sufficient privacy.
- 4.7 Whether future residents will be subject to unacceptable levels of noise.
- 4.8 If the development can be accommodated without unacceptable impact upon existing trees.
- 4.9 Whether a prepared legal agreement sufficiently secures obligations including SPA contributions, affordable housing, biodiversity net gain, primary medical care contributions and employment skills. Such contributions will need to demonstrate compliance with the Regulation 122 tests.

5.0 Planning Conditions

- 5.1 The parties will seek to agree a list of conditions before the appeal hearing, with the following draft conditions identified:

[LPA to complete and draft relevant conditions]