

PLANNING REF : 252595
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Arborfield Green Community Centre
: Arborfield, Reading
: RG2 9ND
SUBMITTED BY : Barkham Parish Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 14/01/2026

COMMENTS:

Barkham Parish Council strongly objects to this application on the following grounds:

1. Harm to the Countryside

The proposed development will cause considerable and unnecessary harm to the countryside. It lies outside the designated settlement area, croaches on the green wedge between Barkham Hill and Arborfield Cross, and will lead to the urbanisation of a rural area—eroding the character and identity of Barkham. This conflicts directly with the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan Policy?IRS1, which mandates the preservation of separation between settlements, and Policy?IRS2, which seeks to recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements.

2. Conflict with Local Planning Policies

The development is contrary to numerous policies, including:

- CP1, CP3, CP11 of the Core Strategy (2010)
- CC01, CC02, TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) document (2014)

In addition, it runs afoul of the neighbourhood plan's Policy?IRS3, which focuses on the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and green spaces, requiring conservation of local assets.

3. Site

Unsustainability

The site is not sustainable. In 2018, BPC conducted an extensive survey comparing access to existing and planned facilities against the requirements of the Wokingham Borough Guide SPD (June 2012). The site failed to meet these requirements. Since then, Wokingham Borough Council has declared a climate emergency, making it even more critical to reduce reliance on private car use. This development would increase car dependency, contrary to sustainability objectives and neighbourhood plan aspirations under its Sustainable Development section, which encourages reducing environmental impact.

4. Not Included in Local Plan Update

The site is not included in the Local Plan Update submission, specifically because it is located outside the settlement limits. This is consistent with Policy?AD1 of the neighbourhood plan, which permits new development only within defined development limits.

5. Precedent of Refusals

Several planning applications in this area have been refused for similar reasons, including:

- Oakwood View (172165) – July 2017 (70 dwellings)
- Langley Pond Farm (171186) – April 2017 (18 dwellings)
- Langley Pond Farm Stables (171597) – May 2017 (2 dwellings)
- Land North and South of School Road (180596) – April 2018 (120 dwellings)

These refusals consistently reflect the area's unsuitability for new development.

6. Impact on Local Wildlife

The proposed development will significantly disrupt local wildlife habitats. The area currently supports a range of species—including birds, small mammals, and invertebrates—that rely on the existing green spaces and hedgerows. Urbanisation will fragment these habitats, reduce biodiversity, and pose risks to protected species. This contradicts Policy?IRS3 (protection of natural environments and green spaces) and Policy?CP7 (Biodiversity), along with TB23 (Nature Conservation) of the MDD, all of which require developments to conserve and enhance biodiversity and avoid harm to ecological networks.

7. Highway Safety Concerns: Langley Common Road / School Road Junction

The junction of Langley Common Road and School Road is already a dangerous location due to restricted sight lines and the speed of traffic approaching from both directions. This danger has been exacerbated by the closure of School Road, which has altered traffic patterns and increased pressure on surrounding routes. Additional traffic generated by this development will significantly increase the risk of accidents.

While BPC recognises the safety benefits of closing School Road for pupils, there are several downsides that need to be managed, particularly as these will be aggravated by the level of development planned in the area. These include the negative impact of increased traffic volumes on Langley Common Road and increased usage of the difficult junction where School Road joins Langley Common Road and Barkham Road.

Key Issues:

- Limited visibility for vehicles exiting School Road onto Langley Common Road.
- Current speed limit (40mph) on Langley Common Road exacerbates safety risks.
- Increased traffic flow will make safe entry and exit at the junction more difficult, especially during peak hours.

Mitigation Measures Requested:

- Reduce the speed limit on Langley Common Road to 30mph to improve safety and reaction times.
- Implement junction improvements, including enhanced signage, road markings, and visibility splays, before any development proceeds.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, Barkham Parish Council urges Wokingham Borough Council to refuse this application. It represents an unsustainable, policy-conflicting, and harmful intrusion into the countryside, undermining both local planning principles and environmental commitments—including those enshrined in the Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan.