

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	250835
Site Address:	Land adjacent to Hutts Farm Cottage, Blagrove Lane, Wokingham, RG41 4AX
Expiry Date:	31 March 2026
Site Visit Date:	17 April 2025
Proposal: Outline application for the proposed erection of 3 no. detached dwellings with associated parking and access. (All matters reserved except for means of access and layout.)	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB06 – Development of Private Residential Gardens TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets
Joint Minerals and Waste	The site is not located within the Minerals and Waste Safeguarding area and so policies from the JMWP are not relevant.

Plan (JMWP)	
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside SS10 – Meeting our housing needs SS17 – Transport improvements CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE3 – Environmental standards for residential development C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging H1 – Housing mix, density and standards H12 – Residential development of existing private gardens FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE3 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH5 – The historic environment DH6 – Archaeology HC5 – Environmental protection HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution HC9 – Contaminated land and water
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (At Hutts Farm Cottage)		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
240337	Full application for the proposed erection of a first floor extension along with 2No rear facing dormers, to facilitate conversion of the existing annex building to an independent dwelling, with associated external alterations including addition of a chimney and flue, a front canopy roof and changes to fenestration, plus provision of replacement parking for Hutts Farm Cottage.	Approved 28/03/24
231631	Full application for the proposed erection of a first floor extension to facilitate conversion of the existing annex building to an independent dwelling, with associated external alterations including addition of a chimney and flue, a front	Approved 07/12/23

	canopy roof and changes to fenestration, plus provision of replacement parking for Hutts Farm Cottage.	
221676	Full application for the proposed conversion of the existing outbuilding to a separate dwelling with associated alterations including changes to fenestration and erection of new boundary fence and gates, plus formation of new parking for the existing dwelling. Refused for the following reason: <i>The proposed development is not in a suitable location for housing and is located in an area where the very limited facilities or amenities and suitable footpaths and street lighting will discourage future occupants of the dwelling from cycling and walking, and would lead to a high dependence on private vehicle use, therefore resulting in an unsustainable development, contrary to the NPPF, Policies CP1, CP3, CP6, CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy and Policy CC01 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan.</i>	Refused 26/07/2022 Appeal Allowed 04/01/2023
212832	Full application for the proposed conversion of the existing outbuilding to a separate dwelling with associated alterations including changes to fenestration and erection of new boundary fence and gates, plus formation of new parking for the existing dwelling.	Refused 11/10/2021 Appeal Dismissed 24/02/2022
200930	Full application for the proposed conversion of the existing outbuilding to a separate dwelling with associated alterations including changes to fenestration and erection of new boundary fence and gates, plus formation of new parking for the existing dwelling	Refused 29/06/2020 Appeal Dismissed 24/12/2020
PLANNING HISTORY (Near the site)		
222306	Outline application, with all matters reserved except for access, for the proposed erection of up to 350 dwellings (Use Class C3) and care home (Use Class C2), with new accesses onto Barkham Road and Blagrove Lane, landscaping and onsite SANG, following demolition of outbuildings and agricultural buildings	Refused and allowed at appeal 29/05/25

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

Revised Consultation:

WBC Environmental Health – No comments received

WBC Highways – No objection subject to conditions and obligation to secure traffic calming measures

WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Community Infrastructure) – No comments received

WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to conditions

WBC Ecology Newts – No comments received

WBC Ecology – No comments received

Original consultation:

WBC Environmental Health – No objection

WBC Drainage – No objection subject to condition

WBC Highways – Insufficient forward visibility splays from the proposed access

WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Community Infrastructure) – No comments received

WBC Landscape and Trees – Development in the countryside, impact on landscape character and trees

WBC CIL – Proposal would be CIL liable as it results in the erection of one or more new dwellings

WBC Ecology Newts – No objection subject to condition

WBC Ecology – No objection subject to conditions

External (Responses for both consultations)

Natural England – No comments received

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received

South East Water – No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council

Wokingham Town Council raised objection to the initial consultation:

This is not in an agreed development area as per the local plan. It has a proposed access onto Blagrove Lane that is dangerous. There is no pavement on the road so pedestrians will not be safe. Refuse vehicles will block the road and it will be difficult for vans and large vehicles to access and leave the proposed junction to the site.

Officer comment: Please refer to 'Principle of Development' and 'Highways' section of the report for commentary on these matters.

No response was received to the revised consultation for the reduced scheme.

Ward Member(s)	No comments received for either original or revised consultation
Neighbours	No comments received for either original or revised consultation

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site lies on the western side of Blagrove Lane and forms part of the residential curtilage of an existing detached two storey dwelling known as Hutts Farm Cottage. To the rear of Hutts Farm Cottage is a detached building (presently unnamed) that has permission to convert to become a self-contained dwelling (see planning history).

Both Hutts Farm Cottage and the detached building are set back substantially from Blagrove Lane and are well screened on all sides by trees and hedges.



Hutts Farm Cottage indicated with a blue cross, the detached outbuilding with permission for conversion to residential indicated by an orange cross and the application site indicated by a red cross

The application site is triangular and is located within countryside and is surrounded by open countryside to the east, north and west sides. However, a recent planning application for up to 350 dwellings and a care home has been approved (at appeal) within the fields immediately surrounding the site (see planning history section; application 222306). The location of this approved scheme is below, with the site subject of this application being starred to show in context.



Application 222306 indicated by the red line and the site subject of this application is starred.

A development of “Hutts Farm” occupies the southern side of Hutts Farm Cottage with access from both Blagrove Lane and Doles Lane and contains 3 x grade II Listed buildings.

Proposal:

Outline planning permission is sought for the erection of 3 detached dwellings within the existing rear amenity space of Hutts Farm Cottage. A new access will be formed off of Blagrove Lane, between Doles Lane and Roberts Grove, to serve the new dwellings.

The original scheme sought approval for 4 dwellings, however the scheme was subsequently reduced in light of officer feedback.

Only layout and access can be considered under this outline application, with matters of appearance, landscaping and scale being reserved.

Principle of Development:

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

(a) Adopted Development Plan

(i) Spatial strategy

The site is located outside of defined settlement limits (as indicated in policy CP9) and so sits within the countryside. As such, policy CP11 of the Core Strategy applies which focuses on countryside development. The policy outlines some normal exceptions for development in the countryside which are as follows:

- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and*
- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and*
- 3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or*
- 4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;*
- 5) In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:*
 - i) Bring about environmental improvements; or*
 - ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.*
- 6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;*
- 7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.*

The proposal does not meet any of the above exceptions. However, whilst a development may not meet the specified exceptions outlined in CP11, this does not automatically mean that the development will undermine the intent of the policy. Attention therefore has to turn to whether the proposal conflicts with the aforementioned overarching aims of CP11.

The overarching aims of policy CP11 are to prevent settlement coalescence and to maintain the quality of the environment. Due to the modest scale of the development and distances from nearby settlements, the development would not result in settlement coalescence. In terms of maintaining the quality of the environment, a multi-dimensional assessment is required and interlinks with other material considerations that will be discussed in this report. Within the report's conclusion, it will judge as to whether the scheme maintains the quality of the environment.

(ii) Locational sustainability

Policy CP6(b) of the Core Strategy states that schemes will be granted where they are located where there are or will be at the time of development, choices in the mode of transport available and which minimise the distance people need to travel.

WBC Highways have noted that there are only limited local facilities within acceptable walking distance from the site (Evendons Primary School), and the closest day-to-day local facilities are located beyond the acceptable walking distance.

Blagrove Lane is subject to national speed limit. There is no street lighting and existing pedestrian or cycling network along the site frontage to provide safe and

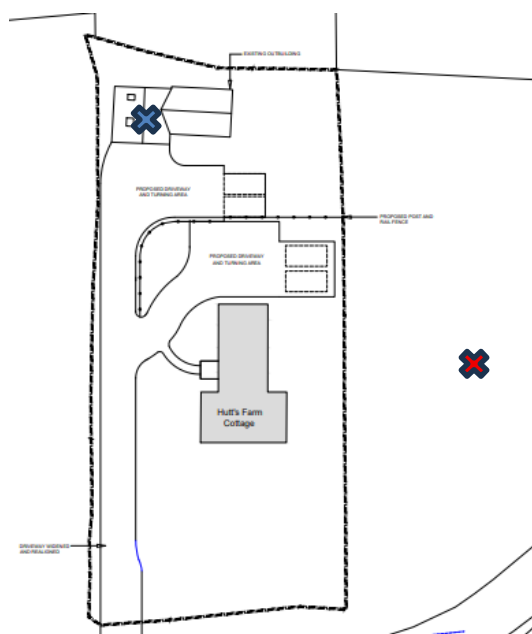
attractive environment for considering sustainable travel modes. This has also been noted by the Town Council.

Meanwhile, the nearest bus stops to the site are at Ye Olde Leathern Bottel, Barkham Road and Evendons Lane, Finchampstead Road. Both pairs of bus stops are circa 1km from the site, which is not considered to be within acceptable walking distance and makes car the main mode for this development.

In terms of bus services themselves, it is relevant to note that 'leopard 3' service between Barkham Road and Wokingham were subject to enhanced services from May 2025, to provide half-hourly services on Mondays to Saturdays and hourly services on Sundays. The enhanced service from/to Wokingham will meet the requirement for good service. It should be noted that the bus service has been enhanced since the previous appeal at Hutts Farm Cottage (see planning history).

Taking all the above into consideration, WBC Highways have raised objection to the proposal on sustainability grounds, and that this site would be an unsustainable location for the future occupiers of this residential development.

Taking a look at the planning history of the site, it will be noted that there have been numerous applications for another single residential dwelling in the curtilage at Hutts Farm Cottage (approx. 20m to the north-west of this application site):



Appeal scheme location indicated by blue cross. This application site indicated by red cross

These were refused by the LPA on the grounds that the site is an unsustainable location and were subsequently appealed. Whilst not exactly the same application site, this proposed scheme and that for the single dwelling are in such close proximity (both within the curtilage of Hutts Farm Cottage) and so it is logical to consider the position taken by the Planning Inspector determining the appeal (for application 221676). The

Inspector agreed that the site subject to the single dwelling was an unsustainable location and said:

An additional survey provided under this appeal, shows a steady stream of pedestrians and cyclists using Blagrove Lane, even after sunset, and in wet weather. This does not mean that future occupants of the proposed dwellings would necessarily do so and does not change the physical characteristics of the lane. However, evidence of regular use of the lane by pedestrians and cyclists does indicate that some people see these as viable transport choices for access to services and facilities. While travel options may not be ideal, the distances involved before reaching the settlement edge and lit footways are relatively short and the parties do not dispute that the lane is lightly trafficked with no record of accidents in the past 5 years. I also acknowledge that even in locations with lit footways, fewer people are likely to choose to walk or cycle after dark and in poor weather. Taken together, the above factors mean that while the proposal would conflict with Policies CP1, CP3, CP6 and CP9 of the CS and CC01 of the MDD, the resulting level of harm would be modest.

Two appeal decisions at the site, from December 2020, and February 2022 have been brought to my attention by both parties. The proposed development subject to this appeal is the same, and the submissions and my observations do not indicate any material changes to the site or its surroundings. Both previous Inspectors found the proposed development to be contrary to development plan policies with regard to accessibility to services and facilities. Consistency in the planning process is important and the previous appeals are material considerations. My finding of policy conflict is consistent with the previous appeals.

Despite this, the appeal was allowed, due to the Council not having a 5 year housing land supply and therefore the harm, as a result of the site's unsustainable location, was not considered to substantially and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when applying the tilted balance under para 11(d) of the NPPF.

Given the proximity of this current application site to the appeal site (which was deemed unsustainable), and given this proposal is for a greater number of dwellings, it is reasonable to conclude that the site is an unsustainable location, despite improved bus services since that previous appeal. Given this scheme is also for a greater number of residential units than the appeal scheme, the harm resulting from the unsustainable location is greater, as it means more occupiers would be reliant on private motor cars. Whether or not there are factors that outweigh the harm/ shortfall of the site being an unsustainable location for residential development is a judgement that will be made in the overall planning balance at the end of this report.

(b) Housing Land Supply

The Council currently has a 2.5 housing land supply and so paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the NPPF is engaged, known as the 'tilted balance'. This requires LPAs to only resist residential development where any adverse impact would 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits'.

(c) Local Plan Update

The Local Plan Update (LPU), the plan which will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and MDD local plans, is at Regulation 22 stage as it has been submitted to

the Planning Inspectorate for examination. As per paragraph 49 of the NPPF:

Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);*
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and*
- c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)*

As a whole, the LPU is still given limited weight, despite its advance stage of preparation. This is owing to unresolved objections to a great number of the policies contained within it. However, those policies highlighted in **yellow** in the policy table earlier in this report are those that have received less objection and therefore are considered by Officers to individually hold moderate weight in the determination of this application. All the others hold limited weight. The policies that hold moderate weight will feed into/ be considered in their relevant sections in this report.

d) Summary on principle of development

In summary, the proposal does not comply with all required exceptions outlined in Policy CP11 in this countryside location. However, as discussed, an assessment is required to be made as to whether the proposal unduly compromises or conflicts with the intent of policy CP11 and its overarching aims. In particular, it will need to be assessed as to whether the proposal maintains the quality of the environment. The site is also not located in a location that is considered suitably sustainable in terms of modes of transport other than the private motor car, and in terms of access to services and facilities.

Notwithstanding this, the Council still does not have a 5 year housing land supply and thus the 'titled balance' is engaged. As such, any shortfalls of the scheme are required to be substantial and demonstrable to outweigh the benefits. This judgement will be made in the planning balance section of this report.

Impact on Landscape and Character of the Area

Policy CP3(a) of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design.

Policy TB21 of the MDD states that "*proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape*".

The site is within Wokingham landscape character area (LCA) J2 'Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay', a moderate quality landscape of moderate sensitivity and a moderate capacity for change.

However, in light of the extant permission on adjacent fields for upto 350 units (see planning history), the landscape of the immediate surroundings is evolving and has been deemed acceptable by a Planning Inspector for a large scale development. In light of this judgement, the landscape is considered to be suitable for a high level of change, without detriment to the wider surrounding area to an unacceptable degree.

When looking at Hutts Farm, the buildings can read as part of small group of buildings (see left hand image below). In the proposed layout arrangement for this application scheme (see right hand image below), the 3 dwellings also in this arrangement also resemble a small grouping of structures. Located in the countryside the groups of buildings relate broadly to each other but not to any other extended area of settlement.



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The scale and size of the dwellings are subject of further approval as part of 'scale' reserved matters. Given the countryside location and scale of dwellings in the vicinity, it will be expected that these will not be more than 2 storey but this will be assessed and determined at reserved matters stage.

Heritage Assets

Policy TB24 of the MDD states that the Council will support proposals that conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings.

Hutts Farmhouse and the associated barn and cattle shelter are a cluster of Grade II listed buildings located over 50m south of the application site. Due to intervening built form between the heritage assets and the site, and the sufficient proximity, no harm is considered to arise to designated heritage assets as a result of the proposal.

Dwelling Mix

Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy states that Planning permission will be granted for residential development providing a mix and balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures and sizes.

Whilst an outline application, the description of development states that the development is for 3 detached dwellings. As such, the number of dwelling types is fixed. However, the size of the 3 dwellings (ie how many bedrooms each would have) is subject to change; presently each are shown to have 4 bedrooms. Whilst there is no variety presently shown in terms of dwelling sizes, 4 bedroom dwellings would provide family sized accommodation which the borough is in need of. Due to the small quantity of dwellings, a great mix is also not expected or anticipated. However, the dwelling sizes will not be fully known/ determined until reserved matters are submitted in relation to 'scale'.

Standard of residential accommodation

Policy TB07 states that *"Proposals for new residential units, including change of use or conversions, should ensure that the internal layout and size are suitable to serve the amenity requirements of future occupiers."* This is also echoed by Policy R17 of the Wokingham Borough Design Guide (2012). R18 of the Borough Design Guide requires sufficient sunlight and daylight to new properties, with dwellings afforded a reasonable dual outlook and southern aspect. Section 12 of the NPPF seeks to promote development that has good architecture and layout with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and Section 14 states that new development should take account of layout, orientation, and massing to minimise energy consumption.

The indicative floor plans show the three dwellings would have a floor space of between 174 – 203 sqm and would have 4 bedrooms each. As such, they would well exceed the minimum internal floor areas stipulated in TB07 which is 100 sqm. Each habitable room would be served by a window that would provide suitable outlook and light. Reserved matters relating to scale will dictate the final size of dwellings and so it will be ensured at that stage that dwellings will still be of a suitable internal size.

It is acknowledged that the eastern elevation of the detached building/ future dwelling to the north of Hutts Farm Cottage has/ would have a first-floor window that serves a

As such, it demonstrates that the plot can accommodate 3 dwellings that are of a good size and would provide a suitable level of accommodation for future occupiers. As layout of dwellings is fixed, it can also be concluded that each plot would be provided with a suitably sized private rear amenity space that would wrap around the dwellings and have a depth in excess of 11m which is outlined in R16 of the Borough Design Guide.

Neighbouring Amenity:

As the scale of the dwellings are not fixed at this outline stage, a full assessment of the development in relation to adjoining land users will be made at reserved matters stage. At this outline stage, however, the layout plan has been reviewed to help establish that, if in principle, it would appear that 3 dwellings can be accommodated in relation existing neighbours, given the layout would be fixed.

EXISTING POST AND RAIL FENCE
BOUNDARY WITH NEW
FENCING TWO REINFORCEMENT SHAPES
TIES TO THE EXISTING FENCE
LINE OF MIXED NATIVE SPECIES TO
BE PLANTED ALONG BOUNDARY

EXISTING FENCE AND HEDGE
TREES REMOVED FOR NEW 15
SIDE FENCED AND BOUNDARY
SIDE TREE CONSIDERED FOR
REPLANTING

NEW HEDGE OF INDIGENOUS
PLANTED BEHIND 2-600 X 4
VISIBILITY LINE EITHER SIDE
SIDE ACCESS SIDE HIGHWAY CO
DRIVING

EXISTING OFF TREE (Y2)
REMOVED AND NEW BOUNDARY
JOINED SUBSEQUENTLY ON SITE
SIDE TREE CONSIDERED FOR
REPLANTING

NATIVE TREE PLANTING STRATEGY
ALONG BOUNDARY OF EXISTING
FENCING

NATIVE SPECIES HEDGING FENCE
BOUNDARY OF NEW DEVELOPMENT
WITH PLANTING 2-600 X 4 PLANTING
BEHIND EXISTING TREE TRUNKS

EXISTING LARGE HEDGE
REMOVED FOR PROPOSED
ADDITION TWO CORNERS ALL
NEW HIGHWAY PLANTING
DRIVING 2-600 X 4
WITH NEW PLANTED SIDE
HEDGE PLANTED BEHIND

Site Area = 0.309ha = 0.764 acres

There would be approximately 14m separation distance between Hutts Farm Cottage and proposed plot 1; this would not be a direct back-to-back relationship owing to the orientation of plot 1. There would be a 25m separation distance between the detached building/ dwelling to the rear of Hutts Farm Cottage and proposed plot 3. Again, owing the orientation of plot 2, there would not be a direct relationship between the two dwellings. These separation distances are considered acceptable in light of windows not conflicting with one another on the existing/ proposed development. The separation distance is also sufficient to avoid overbearing impacts and to ensure existing dwellings would still receive suitable levels of natural light to habitable rooms.

To the north is part of the scheme for upto 350 dwellings which is extant. As that extant permission is outline only, with only access that was considered, the layout and siting of those proposed dwellings is not known at this stage. However, looking at the Green Infrastructure Plan submitted for that outline application (below), it can be seen that there would be a green buffer between this application site and the developable area of the adjacent larger scheme. The application site is starred below. The developable areas/ Green Infrastructure areas were fixed via condition as part of the 350 dwelling scheme application.



As such, the relationship between this scheme and that to the north cannot be determined in full at this stage as both schemes are outline, however in principle it

would appear that there would be some distance between the future residential development, owing to the pocket of green infrastructure separating the site with that owing to the north.

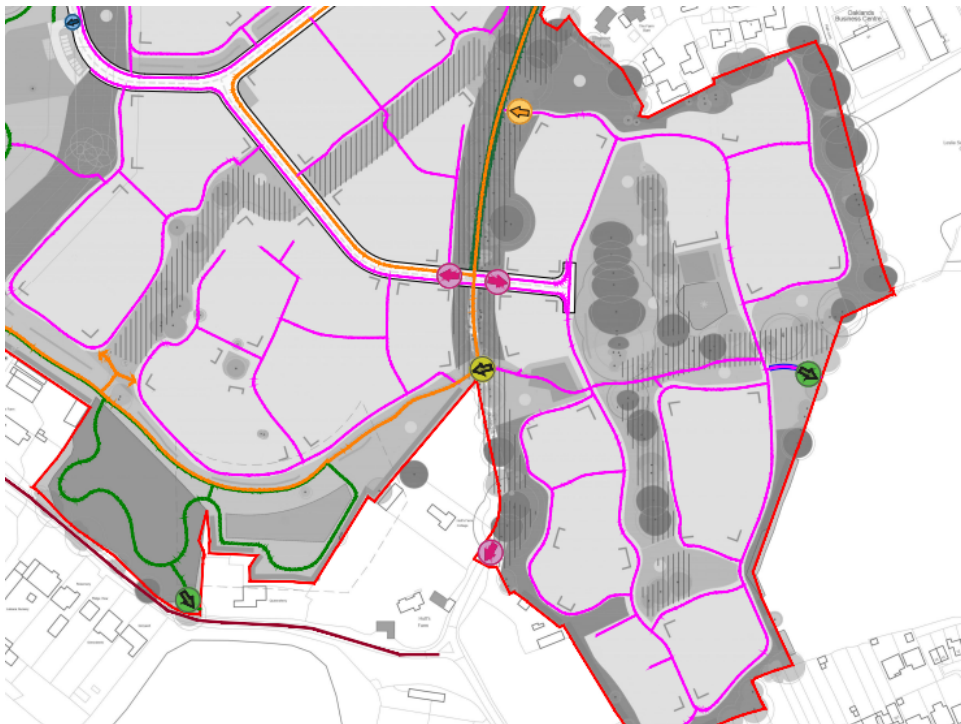
Highways:

Policy CC07 of the MDD and C5 of the LPU states that development should be provided with suitable parking. Policy CP6(g) of the Core Strategy states that development should not result in highway problems.

Access and visibility splays

A new access will be created onto Blagrove Lane. WBC Highways have reviewed the location of this proposed access and note that forward visibility splays are substandard in light of a category A tree (T19 on the submitted tree survey) that is on the site boundary with Blagrove Lane.

However, WBC Highways did note that if this development were to come forward after the larger adjacent 350 unit scheme, WBC Highways would have less concern over forward visibility from the access because as part of that larger scheme, a proposed downgrading of Blagrove Lane is proposed. The proposed downgrading is between Doles Lane and Roberts Grove and indicated below in orange.



No proposed downgrading is shown directly outside the application site and therefore there would not be a direct conflict with the proposed access for this development.

However, this application cannot rely on that larger scheme coming forward first (given only outline permission has been granted, and not reserved matters, it is not at a point where its implementation is imminent) and therefore needs to be satisfactory in its own right.

WBC Highways have advised that if this application scheme is intended to be delivered in advance of the large Blagrove Lane scheme, which is entirely possible as the schemes are not linked or reliant on one another, this scheme will need to reduce the 85th percentile speed to no more than 24.5mph due to the inadequate forward visibility splays. The scheme shall be implemented along Blagrove Lane (between Doles Lane and Roberts Grove). Officers understand that the proposed speed reduction measures required as part of this application would not preclude or prevent measures to downgrade portions of Blagrove Lane in future and both this scheme, and the larger Blagrove Lane scheme are working to achieve a similar goal; to reduce vehicle speed movements on this section of road.

WBC Highways suggested these speed reduction measures for this application should be secured via a s106 legal obligation. However, upon further review, Officers are content that the above can be secured via a Grampian condition. Grampian conditions can be used only when there is a realistic prospect of the works being able to be carried out. Given the off-site highway works will need to be carried out on the highway, where the landowner is the Borough Council, there is a realistic prospect of the works being agreed by the Borough Council via a s278 application. This matter will therefore be dealt with via a Grampian condition and the visibility splays proposed will also be conditioned. It will also be conditioned that the access will be surfaced and provided before any other part of the development.

Parking

According to the WBC Car Parking Standards, the development of such scale as will require a minimum of seven parking within the red line boundary, including one unallocated visitor parking space. Each parking space shall have minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m. WBC Highways have confirmed that there is no objection to the total number of parking spaces proposed and a visitor parking space is also proposed. It will be conditioned that parking is provided prior to occupation of the development. Details of cycle parking will also be conditioned.

Refuse Collection Strategy

According to Manual for Streets, the maximum carrying distances for households (30m) and refuse collection operators (25m) from the collection point. Such standards will apply to all plots within the site. The applicant proposed that kerbside collection along Blagrove Lane will be applicable for this proposal, the revised site arrangement will allow bin collection to be carried out within the maximum carrying distance subject to a bin collection point to be placed at a suitable condition.

Flooding and Drainage:

Policy CC09 of the MDD states that all sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.

Policy CC10 of the MDD states that all development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development including taking into account climate change is managed in a sustainable manner.

The site and access thereto is in Flood Zone 1 which is defined as land having a less than 1 in 1000 annual probability of river flooding or tidal flooding in any given year meaning its probability of flooding is 'low'.

Given the site is flood zone 1, the site is suitably located for residential development and future occupiers would not be at high risk from future flooding. As such, in principle, the development is compatible with flooding constraints.

In terms of drainage, from the application form that surface water proposes soakaway while foul water management is unknown. Full drainage details will be secured via condition.

Trees:

Policy CC03 of the MDD states that development should protect and retain existing trees and hedges and incorporate high quality, ideally native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.

There are protected trees on the site; to the south-western boundary 2 Oak tree protected by TPO 0914/1997. There is a tree within the site recognised in the Ancient Tree Inventory as being a 'Notable' tree ATI Ref. 44638 which is equated with T19 of the submitted tree survey. Trees on the opposite side of the lane but material to development are; T21 a Notable tree (44988), T18 a Notable tree (44977), T17 a Veteran tree(44988). All these trees are included in the ATI reference numbers in brackets. These trees are also protected by TPO 1465/2013 and includes T15, T21 and T29.

The site access has been relocated during the course of the application to avoid conflict with 'A' category trees and to overcome highway constraints. The site entrance is now 55m south of the northern extent of the site, and will result in the removal of 4 trees, 3 of which are 'C' category T23, T24, T25, and 1 which is 'B' category which is an Oak tree (T25).

The loss of T25 is regrettable, however this tree is not a protected tree and can be replaced with a new Oak tree elsewhere on the site at a good size such as 14-16cm girth. In addition to the loss of the 4 trees at the entrance, hedgerows H1 and H11 will need to be removed. Hedge H11 is an ornamental hedge of Cherry Laurel located south-east of the access which needs to be removed in its entirety to facilitate the visibility splay.

There will be a slight incursion into the root protection area of T21 from the access but this is to the periphery of the RPA where excavation will be supervised by the Arboriculturalist. No Dig construction methodology will be used for the access formation using Cellweb over a geotextile membrane covered with a permeable surfacing.

At paragraph 4.5 of the AIA/AMS is a methodology for planting native hedge within the RPA of trees T1 and T2 along the southern boundary which is acceptable.

Overall the WBC Tree & Landscaping officer raises no objection to the revised and updated tree information including the Tree Protection Plan. Adherence to these documents will be conditioned.

In terms of proposed landscaping across the site, this will be secured via the 'landscaping' reserved matter which will detail the hard and soft landscaping along with boundary treatments.

Ecology:

Policy CP7 of the Core Strategy states that. Policy TB23 of the MDD focus on development protecting habitats and species of principle importance and opportunities for biodiversity enhancements.

The applicant's ecologist, within their ecological appraisal, noted that the site comprised a large expanse of modified grassland, a non-native ornamental hedgerow and a small number of medium mature scattered trees. The modified grassland provided low foraging and commuting potential for protected and notable species and the non-native hedgerow was of a monoculture nature, further limiting the suitability for protected and notable species on site.

Protected species

Whilst the WBC Ecologist provided no comments on the amended scheme, they initially raised no objection to the original (larger) scheme. They considered it reasonable and proportionate for the application to not have a full reptile survey but rely on the current local knowledge of widespread reptile populations. Recent nearby planning applications have identified the presence of slow-worm in hedgerows locally and there is hedgerow connectivity to the site. The presence of this species in the margins of the site should be considered likely.

As such, based on the submitted ecological impact assessment and previous comments from the WBC Ecologist, it is considered that the proposal would unlikely have a harmful impact on the local conservation status of reptile species of principal importance provided a Construction Environmental Management Plan condition is applied to secure mitigation measures for reptiles during construction.

In terms of Great Crested Newts, the proposal has been assessed by NatureSpace. The site is located in within a red Impact Risk Zone for great crested newts, indicating an area of highly suitable habitat and potential great crested newt presence. There are no ponds within the application site and ten ponds shown on OS mapping within 500m of the application site, three of which are within 250m. There are recent records of great crested newts to the south of the application site within 250m, and within 500m both north and south of the site.

The ecological report states that habitats within the application site are of low value for great crested newts. Great crested newts are unlikely to shelter within the site, though they may traverse through the site when moving between more suitable habitats. There is considered to be a low risk of harm to individual great crested newts, so the report provides a set of reasonable avoidance measures which are recommended to be implemented. Great crested newts are confirmed to be present within the landscape, both north and south of the application site. However, given the low-suitability of

habitats which will be impacted by the proposed development and wider landscape factors, it is agreed that reasonable avoidance measures are a proportionate approach. It will be conditioned that the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted ecological assessment

Ecological Permeability and Species Specific Enhancement

The Ecological Impact Assessment has made recommendations for species specific enhancement, such as the inclusion of bat and bird boxes, in section 7 of the submitted ecological report. In principle, this is accepted, however a condition securing a detailed strategy of enhancements, their locations etc will be secured via condition.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The applicant concludes that overall, the site will achieve a -18.82%% (-0.19 units) net loss for habitats and -100% (-0.1 units) for linear features within the site. As such, the proposal will not achieve the mandatory 10% BNG on site. In light of this, the mandatory required will have to be achieved through payment into a suitable off-site biodiversity net gain offsetting scheme. In the absence of the WBC Ecologist providing information to the contrary as part of the re-consultation, the baseline assessment is agreeable. The LPA does not need apply any conditions or agree an obligation to secure and monitor on-site delivery. The general biodiversity gain condition applied by legislation will be sufficient.

Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (TBH SPA)

Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy states that *“Development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effects on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.”*

The application site is located within the 7km of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area. As per policy CP8, only development proposals that propose 50 or more residential units will be required to provide mitigation. This mitigation is in the form of SANG/ SAMM contributions. As this proposal does not meet this threshold of residential units, the proposal is not required to make a contribution towards SANG/ SAMM provision.

Sustainability:

Policy CC04 outlines that in respect of new homes, the follow should be achieved:

- a) Seeking to achieve the requirements of the full Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4;*
- b) Meet internal potable water consumption targets of 105 litres or less per person per day (as part of the requirement to meet full Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4).*

It should be noted that the above policy is out of date and were written before the Council's declared Climate Emergency. For this reason, the Council produced a Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement (CCIPPS) (2022) which outlines what is expected of development proposals in light of the climate emergency.

In relation to policy requirements outlined in CC04, it should be noted that the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 has now been withdrawn, and now applicants must meet

the interim Future Homes Standard (as required by Building Regulations) of a minimum 31% reduction in emissions, in line with the CCIPPS. This will be secured via condition.

With regards to water consumption, measures for internal water use for each dwelling at a standard of less than 110 litres per person per day is required. This water consumption standard to comply with the CCIPPS, which is a higher standard than that outlined in CC04 because Wokingham Borough is situated within part of the country classified as an area of serious water stress. This will be conditioned.

Planning Balance/ Conclusion:

The most important policies for determining the application are out of date by virtue of The absence of a 5 year housing land supply. Paragraph 11 of the Framework therefore states that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

The proposal would provide several material benefits that weigh in favour of the application. The provision of new, family housing weighs substantially in favour of the scheme and there would be associated economic benefits as a result of the new population and during the construction phase, albeit the latter would be a short term benefit.

It is acknowledged that the site is located in the countryside, contrary to the spatial strategy of the borough. However, the large scheme to the north for upto 350 dwellings will undoubtedly change the surrounding context and countryside if implemented. That said, even if that larger scheme were not to come to fruition, this application scheme is considered a modest addition to the countryside, in a layout that is comparable to the (limited) built form in the immediate vicinity. When turning back to the overarching aim of policy CP11, which is to maintain the quality of the environment, the proposal has not displayed substantial policy conflict in respect of material considerations. The scheme will not result in the loss of important trees, and overall is a quantum of development that is not incongruous with the location. Whilst it is unfortunate that BNG uplift will not be provided on site, a mechanism is in place to ensure that overall, the scheme will provide the mandatory requirement.

However, it is acknowledged that the site is overall not considered a sustainable location for transport modes other than the private motor car. Nevertheless consideration is given to previous appeal decisions in the immediate vicinity that have allowed residential schemes despite this same disbenefit. Whilst this is a larger scheme in comparison to the neighbouring appeal scheme at Hutts Farm Cottage (by 2 units), it is still a relatively minor scheme with a small number of households. Bus services have also improved in the past year (since adjacent previous appeal decisions), meaning residents would be served by a good bus service, albeit the walking distance and environment to the bus stop is acknowledged to be substandard. However speed reduction measures on Blagrove Lane, as discussed, will be secured, somewhat improving the walking environment in the immediate vicinity as cars will be travelling at a reduced speed.

Whilst the site is not located in a truly optimally sustainable location overall, given the above mitigating factors with regards to site sustainability, (albeit they are limited),

and the benefits of the provision of family housing, when applying the tilted balance in accordance with para 11(d)(ii) of the NPPF, the adverse impacts would **not** significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

As such, the recommendation, on balance, is to grant planning permission, subject to conditions.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approve, subject to the following conditions: 1. Time limit for reserved matters 2. Time limit for commencement of development 3. Reserved Matters 4. Approved plans 5. Materials 6. Landscaping 7. Arboriculture 8. Retention of trees 9. Speed reduction measures 10. Visibility splays 11. Access surfacing 12. Access to be provided 13. Cycle parking 14. Vehicle parking 15. Refuse provision 16. CEMP 17. Biodiversity Enhancements

	18. Future Home Standard 19. Water Standards 20. GCN 21. Drainage
Date:	24 March 2026
Earliest date for decision:	18 August 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	24/03/26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- Countryside
- Bat roost habitat suitability
- Great Crested Newt consultation zone (red)
- Tree Preservation Orders
- Thames Basin Heath SPA – 7km zone
- SSSI Impact Risk Zone