

Date: 26 February 2025
Application: 250267



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

WBC Ecology

Development Management &
Compliance

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Dear WBC Ecology,

Full Planning Approval Consultation

Application Number: 250267

Applicant: Mr Thomas Roberts

Site Address: 31 Barkham Ride, Wokingham, RG40 4EX

Parish: Finchampstead

Grid Reference: Easting - 478994, Northing - 165846

Type of Development: Other Change of Use

Proposal: Demolition of the existing dwelling and use of land as an extension to Victoria Gardens Residential Park Home Estate, with the stationing of 35 park homes (permanent C3 use class accommodation) and the construction of an ancillary community building (use class F2(b)) and park office (use class Eg(i))

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Development Management has received the above application and we require your comments on the proposal using the recommended memorandum below. The documents associated with this are available to view in NEC DM using the application number 250267. Alternatively, public documents are available to view on the Council's planning application search page: [Wokingham Borough Council Online Planning](#).

Please index your response into NEC DM against the application. If you are recommending conditions, you should give a reason with reference to relevant policies. A list of standard conditions can be found on the Z Drive at: [Z:\Standard Planning Conditions](#).

Your observations are required in respect of this application within **10 working days** of the above date or **15 working days** if the development type is classed as a major development.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	Cath Holwill		
Service	WBC Ecology	App No:	250267
Address:	31 Barkham Ride, Wokingham, RG40 4EX.		
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Type of Development:	Other Change of Use		
Site Visit Made:	No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☒ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☒ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

The application site comprises land and buildings within the curtilage of 31 Barkham Ride located directly east of Rooks Nest Wood Country Park.

The application follows planning application 230791 [*Outline application for the proposed erection of 26 no. dwellings following demolition of the existing dwelling and garage*] which was approved in September 2024. The new proposals would see the erection of 35 mobile homes and a community building and office, with associated gardens and parking.

Priority woodland habitat

Directly to the north of the site is a block of deciduous woodland (a priority habitat). To the west is Rooks Nest Wood Country Park.

The site plan shows buildings on plots 17, 18 and 19 are positioned just over ten metres from the woodland to the north. As stated in our comments for PA 230791, the siting of buildings to the north of the site will result in the deterioration of the woodland. Development next to woodland can have several adverse effects, including:

- Increased light spillage from windows and outside lights
- Overshadowing of the woodland habitat
- An increase in activity, noise and disturbance
- The introduction of non-native species and garden escapees from the garden
- The loss of semi natural habitats, including grassland, adjacent to a woodland (woodland

edge habitats are often the most valuable part of the woodland for wildlife).

Our advice for PA 230791 was that the development proposals may therefore harm the woodland which, unless the *“need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance”* would be contrary to local policies, CP7 and TB23.

When the council approved the application a condition was set to ensure that there is no new development within 15m of the woodland :

Condition 45: Parameters of development

No development shall be constructed within 15m of the priority habitat woodland to the north of the site or within 10m of the western boundary (that adjoining Rooks Nest Country Park).

Reason: *To ensure that development does not result in harm to priority habitats and to ensure the development has appropriate buffers with adjoining open space in accordance with policies CP3 and CP7 of the Core Strategy and TB23 of the MDD.*

The new plans would therefore not comply with this condition and would also be contrary to local policies, CP7 and TB23.

Other Issues:

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The development is subject to mandatory BNG and the BNG report (AAe, January 2025) concludes that the development will lead to a net gain of 0.58 Area Habitat Units (AHUs) s equivalent to 13.15%.

One large and two medium trees will be removed. The net gain will be achieved through the planting of 60 small trees, a pond, and the enhancement of areas of modified grassland to other neutral grassland:

The BNG metric assumes that these areas of neutral grassland will reach ‘moderate’ condition. However, given these areas are described as *“communal greenspace, an ecological corridor with wildflower meadow planting”* , it seems very unlikely these will succeed as wildflower meadows. These areas will be subject to increased residential recreational pressure and disturbance plus potential pet fouling which will enrich the soil. Furthermore, it is very likely there will also be pressure from residents to mow these wildflower areas which further reduces their intended function for ecological enhancement. Accounting for these areas as modified grassland of an optimistic moderate condition is more realistic but will lead to a net loss of approx. -0.04AHU (equivalent to a loss of -0.82% habitat units) and would therefore not achieve the net gain required.

Furthermore, most of the 60 proposed new trees will be placed at the north of the site in a narrow strip less than 5metres wide.. These should not be classified as individual trees but rather as a line of trees, or woodland, in the metric.

Our advice is that while the baseline habitats may have been assessed correctly, the estimated net gain is unrealistic and unlikely to be achieved in practice.

Summary:

Our advice is that the proposed layout does not comply with Condition 45 of PA 230791, with buildings positioned too close to the priority woodland and the development therefore does not comply with local policies CP7 and TB23. Additionally, the BNG calculation appears unrealistic, with proposed enhancements unlikely to achieve the required net gain. The applicant should redesign the layout to meet woodland buffer requirements and revise the BNG assessment for a more realistic outcome

Conditions & Reasons (if required)			
Date:	4/3/2025	Signed:	C HOLWILL