

PLANNING REF : 261825
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Glebe House
: Blakes Lane Hare Hatch, Reading
: RG109TD
SUBMITTED BY : Mr And Mrs John&Janet Hargreaves
DATE SUBMITTED : 13/09/2026

COMMENTS:

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 261825

Site: Land between Merchiston and Glebe House, Blakes Lane, Wargrave
Land between Merchiston and Glebe House, Blakes Lane, Wargrave I
wish to register a formal objection to planning application 261825.
The detailed reasons are set out

below. This objection is based on the submitted application
material, the Council's Green Belt evidence
and the Planning Inspectorate's previous appeal decision concerning
the same site.

Email: John.hargreaves@hotmail.co.uk

Postcode: RG10 9TD

Address: Glebe House, Blakes Lane

Name: John Hargreaves and Janet Hargreaves

OBJECTOR DETAILS

We object to planning application 261825 for the demolition of the
existing horticultural structures and
construction of a substantial six-bedroom dwelling. The application
should be refused because the proposal would
introduce a very large and intensively domestic form of development
into Green Belt countryside, on land whose
wider strategic Green Belt function is identified in the Council's
own evidence. The proposal also raises

unresolved issues concerning Grey Belt status, previously developed
land, the March 2026 clearance, biodiversity
net gain, ecological connectivity, sustainable transport, drainage
and the claimed lawful fallback.

1. The correct planning approach

The application must be determined against the development plan and
the current National Planning Policy
Framework (NPPF), together with other material considerations. The
applicant's Grey Belt case should not be
treated as a shortcut to permission. The Council should make
separate findings on the status of the land, the
relevant Green Belt tests, the scale and openness effects of the
proposal, sustainability of location, landscape
and ecological effects, drainage and all other material
considerations.

This is particularly important because the applicant's Planning
Statement expressly concludes that the site
qualifies as Grey Belt and that the proposal would not constitute
inappropriate development. [A1, Planning
Statement, 5.1(a), 6.6 onward, 7.2(c)]. Those are the
applicant's conclusions, not findings which the Council is
required to adopt.

2. The Council's own Green Belt evidence - Parcel W11

The Council's Bracknell & Wokingham Green Belt Review identifies
Parcel W11 as land to the north east of
Wargrave between Highfield Road, Blakes Lane and the A4 Bath Road.
The Council assesses W11 as making an

overall contribution to Green Belt purposes. Its evidence identifies prevention of encroachment into the wider countryside, keeping land open and helping contain the north-eastern fringes of Wargrave as relevant functions.

[A19, Bracknell & Wokingham Green Belt Review, Parcel W11].

This evidence does not itself determine whether the site is Grey Belt under the current NPPF; the review predates the current Grey Belt definition. It is nevertheless highly material evidence of the established planning function of the wider landscape. The Council's refined assessment should also be used to identify the precise W11 sub-parcel in which the application red-line falls before any sub-parcel-specific conclusion is quoted. [A20, Green Belt Review Appendix C - Wokingham Refined Assessment]. The proposal should therefore be assessed in the context of an identified landscape function, not simply by

reference to the fact that horticultural structures existed on part of the land.

3. Grey Belt - status does not make the proposal acceptable

The applicant says the site qualifies as Grey Belt. [A1, 5.1(a), 6.6 onward]. The Council should require the

applicant to demonstrate each applicable national-policy condition and should record a reasoned finding on each one.

In particular, a general housing land-supply shortfall cannot automatically establish an unmet need for the particular type of development proposed. The application is for an exceptionally large private dwelling of approximately 734 sq m, approximately 9.3 m high and containing six bedrooms. [A1, 3.3-3.6; A7, CIL Form 1].

If the relevant Grey Belt test requires consideration of unmet need for the type of development proposed, the Council should require evidence addressing that specific question rather than treating the Borough-wide housing requirement as sufficient.

The sustainable-location question must likewise be assessed against the actual site and proposal. The Council should not assume that Grey Belt status overrides the need for sustainable development, landscape protection, biodiversity and other applicable policies.

4. Previously developed land and horticultural use

The applicant relies upon Certificate of Lawfulness ref. 152003 and the historic nursery use. [A1, 2.8-2.11 and 6.2-6.5; A17]. The critical question is the precise extent of land that can properly be treated as previously developed and the legal significance of the former horticultural use. The existence of a polytunnel, greenhouse and shed does not automatically make the entire 0.42 ha application site previously developed land.

This point is reinforced by the 2018 appeal. In APP/X0360/W/17/3184577, concerning the same site, the

Inspector concluded on the evidence then before him that the buildings were associated with horticultural nursery storage and did not fall within the previously-developed-land definition relied upon for the Green Belt exception.

[A18, paras. 3-6].

The Council should therefore identify the lawful-use area shown by the certificate and its plan, distinguish it from the wider site, and explain precisely how the current application meets the present national-policy test.

5. The 2018 appeal decision is powerful site-specific evidence

The previous appeal was dismissed on 6 March 2018. [A18, APP/X0360/W/17/3184577]. It considered the same land and a two-bedroom dwelling following demolition of the existing structures.

The Inspector found that the proposed dwelling would harm Green Belt openness because of its greater bulk and size, even though that earlier dwelling would not have had a larger footprint or been taller than the existing buildings. [A18, paras. 7-9]. The Inspector also found harm to countryside character and appearance, including the introduction of a domestic appearance contrasting with the horticultural and rural character of the site. [A18, paras. 10-13].

The Inspector further identified unresolved ecological concerns relating to reptiles and potential bat roosts and

concluded that the proposal would affect ecology and biodiversity unless adequate mitigation could be demonstrated. [A18, paras. 14-18]. The appeal was ultimately dismissed because Green Belt harm and other harm were not clearly outweighed by the considerations advanced. [A18, paras. 26-27].

The present proposal must of course be determined on its own merits. However, the Council should expressly explain why the earlier site-specific findings do not apply, particularly where the present dwelling is substantially larger. It would be unsatisfactory simply to refer to the appeal as historic without addressing its reasoning.

6. Exceptional scale and Green Belt openness

The proposed dwelling is approximately 734 sq m and approximately 9.3 m high, with six bedrooms. The applicant's own CIL documentation records 734 sq m of proposed gross internal area. [A1, 3.3-3.6; A7]. The submitted plans show the principal dwelling, detached garage, terrace and four parking spaces. [A11-A16;

submitted proposed plan set].

The proposal is therefore not a modest replacement of horticultural structures. It is a very substantial permanent residential building with the associated domestic infrastructure and garden. The comparison should not be

confined to footprint. Height, volume, roof form, solidity, domestic garden, parking, lighting, hardstanding and residential paraphernalia all affect the perception and spatial experience of openness.

The 2018 Inspector's finding is particularly important: a materially smaller dwelling was already found to harm openness. The Council should therefore identify the evidence supporting any conclusion that a dwelling of approximately 734 sq m would cause no greater harm. If the applicant relies on the location or concentration of

built form, that case should be tested against the actual drawings

and verified dimensions.

7. Character and appearance

The 2018 Inspector found that Blakes Lane is characterised by detached houses, woodland and fields reflecting a

countryside setting and that the proposed dwelling and garage would introduce a domestic appearance

contrasting with the existing horticultural site and rural surroundings. [A18, paras. 10-13].

The current scheme should be assessed against that baseline. The substantial increase in residential accommodation and domestic infrastructure risks intensifying rather than removing the character harm previously identified.

The Council should consider the proposal as experienced from Blakes Lane and surrounding public and private

viewpoints, including the cumulative effect of the dwelling, garage, parking, access, terrace, lighting, garden management and boundary treatments.

8. March 2026 clearance and the ecological baseline

The substantial clearance undertaken on or around 5/6 March 2026 requires particular scrutiny. The central evidential issue is that the site's physical condition may have been materially changed before the application's ecological evidence was collected.

The submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment was surveyed on 7 July 2026.

[A3, Eco 360, survey date 7 July 2026]. It therefore records the site after the March clearance. A post-clearance survey cannot, without supporting historical evidence, establish the full pre-clearance ecological condition.

The Council should reconstruct the pre-clearance baseline from dated aerial imagery, satellite imagery, historic photographs, Tree Officer records, previous surveys, local photographic evidence and other reliable material. The

reported removal of approximately 30 trees and the former orchard should be specifically addressed.

This is not an allegation that the applicant necessarily caused the clearance for planning purposes; it is a request that the planning authority avoids allowing a changed physical condition to become an evidential substitute for the condition that existed immediately before clearance.

9. Biodiversity Net Gain

The applicant relies upon a BNG exemption statement. The Council should formally establish the legally relevant

date on which the planning application was made and apply the transitional provisions in force at that date.

The application materials include CIL documentation dated 3 August 2026, while the ecological survey was undertaken on 7 July 2026. [A7; A3]. The date of a supporting document should not be assumed to determine the statutory application date. The Council should make an express legal finding on that point.

If BNG applies, the Council should also ensure that the biodiversity calculation reflects the correct pre-development baseline and the effects of the March clearance. The former orchard and trees should not disappear

from the assessment simply because the habitat was removed before the ecological survey.

10. Ecological connectivity

The ecological assessment identifies surrounding woodland, treelines, open/agricultural fields, hedgerow margins and ponds. [A3, 1.2-1.3]. The report describes the site's protected-species potential as generally low or negligible, while identifying moderate potential for birds. [A3, 4.3].

Those conclusions should not be treated as answering the separate landscape-scale question of ecological connectivity. The proposed dwelling, garage, parking, hardstanding, lighting and domestic garden could reduce

permeability through the site even if no protected species offence is demonstrated.

The Council should therefore assess the site's role as a movement corridor and require appropriate mitigation, including consideration of lighting, boundary permeability, planting and retained habitat.

11. Sustainable transport and location

The applicant identifies Wargrave railway station at approximately 2.7 km, Tag Lane bus stops at approximately 350 m, Hare Hatch Grange bus stops at approximately 650 m, Wargrave GP surgery at approximately 1.5 km and

Wargrave pharmacy at approximately 1.4 km. [A1, 2.4].

Those distances should be acknowledged rather than overstated.

However, the relevant question is whether the proposed six-bedroom dwelling is in a location that enables sustainable travel in practice. The rural road environment, lack of continuous footways and the likely dependence on private vehicles remain material.

The 2018 Inspector found the earlier location acceptable partly because the previous horticultural use could have

generated movements from up to seven staff and a single dwelling might generate fewer vehicle movements.

[A18, paras. 19-20]. That was a comparison specific to the evidence before the Inspector and should not be treated as a general finding that this site is sustainably located for any residential scheme.

12. Drainage and flood risk

The applicant relies on a Canham Consulting drainage strategy and SUDS approach. [A1, 6.75-6.78; A4, Drainage Strategy, ref. 260327-CCL-XX-XX-RP-C-1000]. The Council should independently verify the assumptions rather than accepting the existence of a drainage report as proof of deliverability.

The key questions include the actual greenfield runoff rate, the proposed discharge rate, the condition and capacity of the receiving ditch/watercourse, downstream connectivity, exceedance routes, maintenance, blockage, pump failure and the consequences of a loss of power or mechanical failure if pumping is relied upon.

The submitted site/topographical information records levels broadly between approximately 63.4 m and 65.7 m and a recorded water level of approximately 63.85 m. [Submitted site/topographical information]. These levels

make it particularly important that the drainage strategy is demonstrated rather than assumed.

The Council should not conclude that the development is deliverable until it is satisfied that the system will not increase flood risk on or off the site and that the receiving watercourse can safely accommodate the proposed discharge.

13. Claimed lawful fallback

The applicant states that the lawful storage use covered by Certificate 152003 is capable of immediate implementation. [A1, 6.2-6.5; A17]. The Council should test this assertion carefully.

A fallback is materially relevant only to the extent that it is lawful and realistically capable of implementation. The Council should identify the exact use and area authorised by the certificate, compare it with the present physical circumstances, and consider whether reinstatement is genuinely available without further planning permission. The 2018 Inspector expressly noted the limits of the appeal process in determining the correctness of the earlier certificate and relied on the evidence available for the appeal. [A18, paras. 5-6]. The current officer report should

therefore avoid treating the fallback as an unqualified fact without checking the certificate and its plan.

14. Cumulative and precedent effects

The Council's W11 evidence identifies the north-eastern fringes of Wargrave as potentially vulnerable to

incremental change. [A19/A20]. A decision to permit an exceptionally large dwelling on the basis of Grey Belt and former horticultural use could increase pressure for similar redevelopment of other countryside plots along Blakes Lane.

This does not mean that precedent is a standalone reason for refusal. Rather, it is relevant to the assessment of cumulative urbanisation and whether the proposal would undermine the spatial role of the Green Belt over time.

15. Planning balance and conclusion

The proposal combines a number of planning harms. The Council's own Green Belt evidence establishes that the wider W11 landscape performs recognised Green Belt functions. The 2018 appeal provides site-specific evidence of openness, countryside and ecological harm from residential redevelopment. The current proposal is substantially larger than the dwelling previously considered. The applicant's Grey Belt case should therefore be tested rigorously against the current NPPF and should not be allowed to bypass the separate questions of sustainable location, unmet need for the specific type of development, Green Belt openness, landscape character, biodiversity and flood risk.

The March clearance creates a particular evidential issue: the Council should reconstruct the pre-clearance

baseline rather than treating the July 2026 condition as conclusive.

The BNG exemption must likewise be determined by reference to the legally relevant application date and the rules in force at that time.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that planning application 261825 be refused. In the alternative, if the Council is minded to approve, it should first require clarification and independent verification of the Grey Belt assessment, lawful fallback, ecological baseline and BNG position, and drainage/flood-risk strategy, and should impose proportionate conditions controlling future enlargement and associated development where a clear site-specific justification exists.

Document references

- A1 - Planning Statement, hgh Consulting, August 2026: 2.4, 2.7-2.11, 3.3-3.6, 5.1, 6.2-6.21, 6.67-6.78, 7.2.
- A2 - Design and Access Statement, architecture made-in, July 2026.
- A3 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment, Eco 360, survey dated 7 July

2026.

- A4 - Drainage Strategy, Canham Consulting, ref. 260327-CCL-XX-XX-RP-C-1000.
- A5 - BNG Exemption Statement, Riverway Group, 31 July 2026.
- A6 - Arboricultural Method Statement, Oakfield, July 2026.
- A7 - CIL Forms 1 and 7, hgh Consulting, 3 August 2026.
- A8-A16 - Submitted existing and proposed site, block, demolition, floor, elevation and roof drawings.
- A17 - Certificate of Lawfulness ref. 152003, Wokingham Borough Council, approved 23 June 2015.
- A18 - Planning Inspectorate Appeal Decision APP/X0360/W/17/3184577, decision dated 6 March 2018, application 170445.
- A19 - Bracknell & Wokingham Green Belt Review, Wokingham Borough Council, June 2016, Parcel W11.
- A20 - Bracknell & Wokingham Green Belt Review, Appendix C - Wokingham Refined Assessment.
- A21 - National Planning Policy Framework, published 17 August 2026.
- A22 - Relevant adopted Wokingham Borough development plan policies, including Core Strategy CP1, CP3, CP6, CP7, CP11 and CP12 and Managing Development Delivery policies identified in the application documents.