

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Application Number:	253110
Site Address:	Brunningshams Farm, Heath Ride, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3QJ
Expiry Date:	6 March 2026
Site Visit Date:	12 February 2026
Proposal: Full planning application for the proposed erection of seven two-storey dwelling houses with a central access road, associated parking, landscaping and ancillary works, following the demolition of existing workshops and light industrial buildings and the clearance of associated hardstanding and landscaping.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements 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 TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB08 – Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
060006	Application for a certificate of lawful existing use for light industrial use and office space.	Refused: October 2006 (appeal dismissed)
061265	Application for a certificate of lawful existing use for light industrial use and office space.	Refused: May 2006
052588	Application for a certificate of existing lawful use for light industrial use with office space.	Withdrawn: February 2006
050079	Proposed erection of a porch and formation of hardstanding for storage racks. Retrospective.	Withdrawn: February 2006
39066	Part conversion of Barn to Aquatic Centre	Approved: April 1992

CONSULTATION RESPONSES**Internal**

WBC Environmental Health – No comments
 WBC Drainage – Request further information
 WBC Highways – Request further information
 WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy) – No comments
 WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Community Infrastructure) – Objection raised
 WBC Landscape and Trees – Objection raised
 WBC CIL – CIL liable development
 WBC Ecology – Objection raised
 WBC Waste Services – No comments
 WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No objection
 Berkshire Archeology – No objection subject to a condition
 British Horse Society – No objection subject to a condition
 Binfield Badger Group – No objection subject to a condition

REPRESENTATIONS

Finchampstead Parish Council	Object to this application on the following grounds: 1. Outside the development area and development in the countryside (only part being brownfield), contrary to WBC's Core Strategy Policy CP11 and FNDP Policies ADH1 and ADH2. 2. Overdevelopment of the site contrary to FNDP Policy D3.1b and not in keeping with the street scene on Heath Ride. 3. Constitutes tandem development contrary to FNDP Policy. 4. Unsustainable location. The PC also raise concerns relating to the impact of increased traffic on Heath Ride and lack of consideration for a local unclassified route.
Ward Member(s)	Cllr Rebecca Margetts objects to the application and requests that the application be listed for the planning committee if officers are minded to approve. Their objection is made on the following grounds: • Density • Not in Keeping with the Street Scene • Unsustainable Location

Neighbours	33 letters have been received from local residents in response to the proposed scheme. Whilst the level of opposition differs between individuals, the general notion is that the development should not be supported, with principal issues being raised on the following grounds: 1. Legal & Policy Conflicts (Restricted Byways, Planning History, Local Plan) 2. Inappropriate Construction Access & Traffic Safety Risks 3. Road Fragility, Damage, and Resident Maintenance Burden 4. Flooding, Surface Water, Groundwater & Sewage Risks 5. Environmental Impact & Wildlife Concerns 6. Overdevelopment, Massing, Design & Character of the Area 7. Access, Turning Space & Visibility Problems 8. Public Transport, Sustainability & Travel Demand 9. Public Consultation Concerns 10. Additional Planning, Environmental & Infrastructure Requirements
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APPRAISAL

Site Description: The application site consists of 4.2 acres of land on the southern side of Heath Ride, Finchampstead. The site is currently accessed via a discreet entry point on the western end of the site's northern frontage and upon entering the site, the historic agricultural barn is in full view in the centre. Scattered around its western and southern elevations are also several small, dilapidated outbuildings and various discarded materials. There is also evidence of large areas of hardstanding underneath areas of overgrown shrubland surrounding the barn.

Most of the site southwards is visually dominated by large areas of overgrown vegetation and a variety of trees with varying maturity levels. Both the front, side and rear boundaries of the site are all densely lined with tall, mature trees and hedgerows which is characteristic of Heath Ride and provides a rural, verdant and tranquil atmosphere to the site.

The site is within the designated Countryside and within 5km of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area. Also of note is the site's immediate proximity to the 'Simon's Wood and Heath Pond' Local Wildlife site which abuts the site's south-eastern boundary.

The site's planning history is predominantly agricultural related apart from a previously consented change of use of the barn on site to an Aquatic Centre for the breeding and distribution of tropical fish (Use Class Sui Generis, reference 39066). This consent is however only limited to the barn building and its immediate surrounding curtilage, not the entirety of the application site.

Proposed Development: The application seeks full planning permission for the construction of seven detached two-storey dwellings, together with a new central access road, associated parking, landscaping, following the demolition and clearance of the existing buildings and hardstanding.

The houses appear to be large, modern two-storey dwellings, and this is consistent across the site.

As has been made clear through the various submitted documents, this application follows a pre-application enquiry made by the applicant for an eight-dwelling scheme on the site. The formal pre-application advice provided by the Council was clear in its conclusion that residential development of the scale and density proposed would be unacceptable, principally due to the impact on landscape character, the overdevelopment of the site, and the failure to reflect the low-density, informal settlement pattern of Heath Ride. While the number of dwellings has subsequently been reduced, Officers consider that the current proposal does not address the fundamental concerns raised at pre-application stage, with the form, layout and intensity of development remaining largely unchanged. Officers requested during the application submission that the number of units was reduced but the Applicant did not wish to pursue this.

Principle of Development: Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plans for the area are the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy 2010 and the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014. At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) constitutes guidance which the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must have regard to. The NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making but is a material consideration in any subsequent determination.

Core Strategy 2010:

The site is located outside of development limits and therefore subject to assessment under Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy. Policy CP11 does not permit development outside of development limits unless it falls within an exemption criterion, as outlined below:

- 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.

In this instance, the proposal does not fall within any of the identified exceptions and is therefore contrary to the spatial strategy set out in the Core Strategy.

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 (MDDLDP):

Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan 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.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to identify a five-year supply of specific deliverable sites to meet housing needs. At the current time the Council is unable to demonstrate that it has 5 years' worth of deliverable sites. Planning applications will therefore be considered in line with paragraph 11 of the NPPF which states that where relevant policies are considered out of date permission will be granted unless the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policy for England and places sustainable development at the heart of the decision-taking process incorporating objectives for economic, social and environmental protection. These objectives seek to balance growth and local community needs against protection of the natural, built and historic environment. How the development performs against these three objectives will be considered in the planning balance section at the end of this report.

Section 5 of the NPPF includes policy guidance for rural housing. Paragraph 82 states that in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs.

Paragraph 83 follows on from this, stating that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of

smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.

Paragraph 124 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed or 'brownfield' land.

The buildings and areas of hardstanding adjoining Nine Mile Ride can be regarded as previously developed land. However, these elements are limited in extent and are set within a much larger area of undeveloped land which is open in character and forms part of the wider countryside.

The site as a whole therefore cannot be characterised wholly as previously developed land. While it is acknowledged that the existing built form falls within the definition of previously developed land, the remainder of the site is greenfield and its countryside function and character remain the dominant considerations in the assessment of the proposal. Accordingly, the proposal has been assessed principally against countryside policies rather than policies relating to the redevelopment of previously developed land although relevant policies relating to previously developed land have some weight in predominantly in relation to plot 2.

Locational Sustainability:

Policy:

Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy states 'the scale of development proposals in the borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility.'

Policy CP6 states of the Core Strategy states:

'Planning permission will be granted for schemes that:

a) Provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice;

b) 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;'

The supporting text to Policy CP6 states:

'Paragraph 2.16 recognises that the borough has one of the highest car ownership rates of any English local authority. To reduce the likelihood that these vehicles will be used and to encourage modal shift, it is important to ensure all proposals achieve sustainable development'

‘To help achieve sustainable development, proposals likely to generate significant demands for travel movements should be located in areas with best access to existing good services. This means that people can have the widest range of choice in selecting transport modes and help reduce the use of the private car. The availability of good existing public transport services has been considered in drafting the strategy for the Borough.’

Walking:

Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy states “the scale of development proposals in Wokingham borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility”.

The Borough Design Guide SPD states ‘if places are to be sustainable then the aim should be to create: Walkable neighbourhoods, with a range of facilities within 10 minutes walking distance of residential areas, which encourage people to travel on foot or by bicycle.’ Walkable neighbourhoods are defined in Manual for Streets (MfS) as those typically characterised by having a range of facilities within 10 minutes walking distance from residential areas. Manual for Streets clarifies that 10 minutes walking distance is roughly 800 metres. The Urban Design Compendium further advises:

‘People should be able to walk in 2-3 minutes (250 metres) to the post box or telephone box: the newsagent’s should be within 5 minutes (400 metres). There should be local shops, the bus stop, the health centre and perhaps a primary school within a walking distance of (say) 10 minutes (800 metres).’

The National Design Guide (Oct 2019) defines walkable as local services being no more than a 10 minute walk (800m radius).

Table 1 below includes walking distances and times for various facilities from the application site. It is to be noted that whilst table 1 includes average times for most pedestrians, pedestrians do include people of all ages, sizes and abilities, as set out in Manual for Streets para 6.3.3.

Destination	Location	Distance (in Metres)	Approximate Time (in Minutes)
Bus Stops (both services)	Kiln Ride	900m	12m
Train Station	Crowthorne	1.9km	26m
Primary School	Nine Mile Ride Primary School	1.5km	21m
Secondary School	Luckley House School	3.4km	46m
Local Shops	Londis	1.4km	19m
Dr’s Surgery	Finchampstead Surgery	1.7km	23m

Employment	Nine Mile Ride Industry	2.7km	37m
Nursery School	Gorse Ride Infant and Nursery School	2km	27m
Public House	The Queens Oak	2.7km	38m
Table 1: Walking distances (one way) and times (based on 5kph, 1.4m/s) from the application site to various facilities and services			

Whilst the most up-to-date guidance is within the National Design Guidance, the proposal would also not comply with the standards set out in The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation's (CIHT) "Providing for journeys on Foot" CIHT suggests that recommended maximum walking distances to shops and facilities is between 800m and 1200m. Table 2 below provides CIHT recommended maximum walking distances for various facilities:

	Town Centres (m)	Commuting/ School (m)	Elsewhere (m)
Desirable	200	500	400
Acceptable	400	1000	800
Preferred maximum	800	2000	1200
Table 2: CIHT recommended maximum walking distances (page 49)			

The site is outside of and unconnected to any settlement. The nearest settlement is Finchampstead which, whilst a modest development location, the site is not within acceptable walking distance to any facilities within the settlement except for a bus stop which has limited services (see below). Furthermore, the initial walking route would be via Heath Ride which, as already outlined above, is a narrow single lane private road with no pathways or crossing points and is not desirable for the average walker. Future occupants would therefore be reliant on private vehicles for basic day to day needs.

The CHIT documents Buses in Urban Developments recommends that bus stops for less frequent routes should be within 300 walking distance and the proposal would fail to achieve this.

Taking the above into consideration, the site is considered not to benefit from good levels of accessibility due to the lack of service and facilities within walking distance and attractiveness of the local walking environments.

Buses:

The supporting text to policy CP6 of the Core Strategy sets out the requirement of a good bus service:

a) At least a thirty minute service frequency during peak times (7:00 to 9:00 and 16:00 to 19:00 Monday to Saturday); and

b) At least an hourly service frequency during off-peak hours (9:00 to 16:00 and 19:00 to 22:00 Monday to Saturday and between 7:00 and 22:00 on Sundays).

The Bus service along Nine Mile Ride is the 125, 125a and 125b operated by Thames Valley Buses. It does not meet the criteria set out above and cannot be considered as a 'good service'. There is no 30-minute frequency during peak nor hourly service during off-peak hours.

Cycling:

There are no cycle lanes in vicinity of Heath Ride or Nine Mile Ride, which is a busy B Road. It would not be an attractive route to all cyclists. Cycling infrastructure in the area is limited and the development would unlikely encourage an uptake in modal journeys by bicycle.

The CHIT document Planning for Cycling estimates the modal share of cycle trips to equate to around 2% of all journeys. Cycling also has a seasonal bias and is only an opportunity for those that are physically capable. Even if good cycle infrastructure was in the vicinity, it would not compensate for the poor walking opportunities and poor public transport.

Overall, the Council consider that the application site is located within an unsuitable location for residential development. The occupants of the dwellings would be overly reliant on private motor vehicles to access basic amenities and services, contrary to policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, CC01, CC02 and CC08 of the MDD Local Plan, the Borough Design Guide SPD and the NPPF.

Summary of Principle: The development is contrary to development plan by reason of the site's location outside of settlement limits which is not supported by Policy CP11 of the Local Plan. However, Policy CP11 of the Local Plan is currently considered to be out of date given the Council's inability to demonstrate 5 years' worth of deliverable sites.

Further assessment of these policy conflicts in relation to the benefits of the proposals will be included in the 'Planning Balance' section below.

Character of the Area: Policy CP11 supports development in the countryside only where it maintains the high quality of the rural environment. Policy CP1(1) similarly only supports development that maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment, with policy CP3 supporting development of an appropriate mass, layout, built form, height and character to the area CP3(a) and which makes a positive contribution to the sense of place contributes to the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings CP3(f).

The Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document provides further guidance for developers with general guidance that development should respond positively to its site and local context (G1) and respond positively to the local character of the area (G2).

Policy TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues. Proposals should retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

Policy CC02 of the MDD Local Plan states that development at the edge of settlements is acceptable where it is demonstrated that it is within development limits and respects the transition between the built-up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape.

RD9 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development on the settlement edge create an edge and incorporate soft landscaping to integrate to the rural setting.

The National Design Guide section B1, paragraph 67 also states that the built form of well-designed places should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

With regards to well-designed places, paragraph 135 of the NPPF states planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

Similarly, paragraph 139 states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.

Policy AHD1 of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP) states that development proposals outside the Development Locations will only be supported where they are in accordance with national and Borough planning policies. Paragraph 6.3 of the policy notes that there will be continuing demand for small infill development sites and whilst the FNDP does encourage innovation and modernity in design, this needs to be sympathetic to, and complement, existing styles and as such won't always be appropriate.

Policy IRS4 of the FNDP relates to implementing a strategy to preserve the identity of Finchampstead Parish through informal green spaces. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should:

- Preserve the semi-rural look and feel of the Parish with its surrounding natural open environment.
- Preserve the distinctive character and appearance of the Parish countryside with varied landscapes and outstanding views.
- Preserve the topological features of the landscape that distinguish it as part of the Blackwater Valley and Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas.
- Protect and where possible, enhance the green spaces of the Parish, both general and specific, through protected special areas, green gaps between settlements, green corridors, diverse flora and community spaces.
- Specify tree and hedgerow planting to reinforce and reflect local biodiversity in the Parish.
- Retain informal green gaps along the Parish access roads and other small areas of natural green space, as outlined in Annex S Rights of Way Network with adjoining Parishes.
- Retention and potential expansion of the green corridors through the extensive rights of way network and enclosure hedgerows to retain and enhance the outstanding views east, south and west within the Parish.

The seven dwellings proposed would be served by a central vehicular access, entering into a cul-de-sac style road/residential layout. Plot sizes are generally uniform in scale with outdoor amenity space being located to the south (rear) of each dwelling. Soft landscaping would enclose each plot's boundaries.

A turning head extends beyond the rear of the most rear sited dwelling. The Planning Statement claims this is to enable large vehicles to access and egress the site in forward gear. The wet woodland to the rear is to be retained, and this would sit within the context of a proposed communal grassland area.

In terms of the dwelling designs, their architectural form incorporates sharp, contemporary roof forms that incorporate natural wooden cladding on almost all elevations, with slate tiles lining the gable roof forms. The flat roof forms on top of the houses proposed would also incorporate green roofs.

A clear focal point of the development is that all seven dwellings proposed are intended to meet 'Passive House' standards, leveraging natural resources to create energy-efficient and sustainable homes.

Heath Ride is predominantly characterised by large, detached dwellings set within generously sized plots, which are typically narrow at the frontage and deep in form, creating a loose, informal and spacious pattern of development. Built form along the road is intermittent, with dwellings generally set back from the highway and contained within mature landscaping, allowing vegetation and undeveloped gaps to read as a defining feature of the street scene. The prevailing character is therefore one of low density, visual openness and a strong semi-rural quality.

The vast majority of properties along Heath Ride are served by individual, private vehicle accesses, rather than shared or communal roads. This results in a fragmented and informal layout that avoids the appearance of a planned estate or suburban enclave. Even where existing development extends beyond the original linear pattern of the road, particularly in the form of limited backland plots, such schemes typically

retain the spacious and private qualities of the host plots and do not result in a perceptible increase in density or consolidation when experienced from the public realm.

By contrast, the proposed development would introduce a grouped form of residential development comprising seven dwellings served from a single, central access road. Although reduced from the previously proposed eight dwelling scheme, the proposal would still function as a small cul-de-sac, presenting a compact and unified residential form that is fundamentally uncharacteristic of Heath Ride. The introduction of a formalised internal road with footways, along with associated domestic features such as shared turning areas, large parking areas and regularised plot boundaries, would give the development an overtly suburban and urbanising appearance, at odds with the informality of its surroundings.

The submitted layout demonstrates that, notwithstanding the reduction in unit numbers, the overall site structure, density and grain of development remain largely unchanged from the pre-application scheme that was found unacceptable. The plots remain relatively uniform in shape, contrasting sharply with the established narrow-and-deep plot pattern that defines the character of Heath Ride. The resultant built form would therefore appear significantly more intensive and consolidated than surrounding development.

Importantly, the pre-application advice was explicit in identifying density and layout, rather than solely the number of dwellings, as the primary source of harm. It advised that a substantial reduction in density, together with a more discreet and rural-led approach to access and layout, would be required in order to respond positively to the site's context. The current proposal does not achieve this. The removal of a single dwelling does not deliver meaningfully larger plots, increased spacing between buildings, or a looser form of development that would respect the existing character of the area. In fact, not only would the size of the plots require consideration, but the nature of the layout requires substantial rethinking to achieve a scheme that is more in keeping with the character of Heath Ride.

While it is acknowledged that the proposed dwellings would not extend further south than some of the existing buildings on the southern side of Heath Ride, the concentration of development on the site remains of concern. The cumulative effect of seven dwellings, together with the associated access road, parking provision, and day-to-day residential activity, would result in a level of domestication that would exacerbate the perceived extent of built development within the countryside. This would erode the sense of openness currently experienced at the site.

In spatial and visual terms, the proposal would therefore fail to reflect the spatial qualities and settlement pattern that characterise this part of Heath Ride. It would introduce an unduly dense and formalised residential enclave into an area defined by informality, spaciousness and vegetated gaps, resulting in a development that appears visually intrusive and incongruous within its rural context.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal represents an overdevelopment of the site, and that the reduction from eight to seven dwellings does not go far enough to address the fundamental concerns identified at pre-application stage. The development would

remain harmful by reason of its density, layout and form, resulting in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the countryside and the established residential character of Heath Ride.

Landscape Character

In terms of landscape character, the site is located in the countryside and is within 'Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands' landscape character area M1, that is classified as a high quality landscape with high sensitivity and the lowest capacity for change. The valuable landscape attributes for M1 include;

- *Large expanses of mixed woodland containing mature trees*
- *The distinctive pattern of interconnected woodland and forestry, interspersed with sandy heaths, lakes, bogs and wet woodland and occasional pastoral fields which provide scenic quality and visual diversity (a variety of colours and textures and changing seasonal interest) and provide a naturalistic sense of place to the suburban development.*
- *Distinctive long straight historic roads following the route of rides through the former Royal Forest of Windsor*
- *Settlement pattern of low density post-war properties in large plots along long straight rides and notably the occasional wooded gaps between areas of settlement. Integration of development in the wooded landscape and absence of commercial, industrial buildings /large or tall built structures.*
- *The continuous network of woodland and forestry which helps to provide physical and visual separation between settlements and to filter and screen views to the settlements within the area, as well as provide an attractive setting to housing.*

The Landscape Strategy for the M1 LCA is;

"To conserve and enhance existing character. The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are the characteristic forestry and woodland; the rarer open landscapes of heath, mire lakes and pasture; important wildlife habitats; historic landscape features associated with the Royal Forest and recreational use. In particular, there is an opportunity to consider restoration of heathland within the woodland context. The aim should be to link and connect existing heathland areas.

In terms of development, the aim is to

"conserve and enhance the rural setting and gaps between settlements and maintain the low density domestic character of development"

The proposed development would introduce a regimented and consolidated form of residential development into this sensitive landscape. Although the site contains existing buildings and areas of hardstanding, the scale, density and layout of the

proposed scheme would represent an intensified form of development that is incongruous with the prevailing landscape structure and settlement pattern. As mentioned above, the introduction of seven large dwellings arranged along a central access road would read as a planned residential enclave, rather than reflecting the informal, low-density grain that characterises development within this landscape.

The Landscape & Trees Officer has acknowledged that a proportion of the woodland on site is shown as retained; however, the proposal relies heavily on incorporating significant tree groups within private rear gardens. This approach raises concerns about the long-term sustainability and management of retained landscape features, particularly given the absence of robust mechanisms to ensure their protection over time. As a result, the proposal does not convincingly demonstrate that the defining wooded character of the site would be safeguarded in perpetuity.

The cumulative erosion of existing features, alongside the introduction of access infrastructure, domestic treatments and areas of hardstanding, would reduce the perceived openness of the site and weaken the continuity of the wooded landscape.

Overall, the development would have a detrimental impact on the open, rural and informal developed residential character of the area. The density of the proposed development would also result in adverse harm to the Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands landscape character area and detracts from the openness and rural character and appearance of Heath Ride. This is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework 2024, Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy 2010, Policies, Managing Development Delivery Development Plan Document Policies TB21 and CC03, the Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2012 and the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Housing Amenity:

Internal:

The internal space standards for new dwellings are set out in the Borough Design Guide and supported by Policy TB07 of the MDD. The dwellings proposed meet the minimum standards required for their occupancy levels and would provide adequate internal space to serve future occupiers.

External:

The Borough Design Guide specifies a minimum depth of 11 metres for rear gardens and a 1 metre set-back from the site boundary to allow access thereto.

All seven gardens proposed would be south facing and achieve a minimum depth of 11 metres, plus the garden widths are also generous. Accordingly, the proposed dwellings would each be provided with an area of private external amenity space that meets the Council's minimum size and depth standards, and is therefore considered acceptable in quantitative terms. However, notwithstanding compliance with guidance, the close proximity of dwellings, regularised plot arrangement and overall density of development would result in a perceived lack of privacy between gardens and first floor rooms, which is particularly apparent from the visual impressions provided as part of

this submission. While this matter is not considered, in isolation, to warrant refusal of the application, it nonetheless represents another shortcoming of the scheme and further illustrates the consequences of the site being developed at an excessive density.

Neighbour Amenity:

Loss of Light and Overbearing

The plans demonstrate that the proposed dwellings would be sufficiently spaced from one another to prevent unacceptable overbearing impacts or loss of light. The scale, height and positioning of the buildings would allow for appropriate separation distances, ensuring an acceptable level of outlook and daylight for future occupiers.

Several of the proposed dwellings would adjoin the boundaries shared with Farthings Lodge to the west and Brock House to the east. However, the dwellings are set at acceptable distances from these neighbouring properties, and the presence of existing mature boundary vegetation would provide a significant degree of screening. Accordingly, the proposal would not result in undue overbearing or loss of light impacts to neighbouring occupiers.

Overlooking

The submitted plans confirm that adequate separation distances would be maintained between the proposed dwellings and adjoining sites. While some first-floor side-facing windows would provide oblique vantage points, any potential overlooking towards neighbouring properties would be limited by distance, orientation and the presence of existing boundary landscaping, such that no unacceptable overlooking impacts would arise.

In terms of overlooking within the development itself, this matter is closely related to the assessment of housing amenity set out above. Although the proposal would not result in harmful or unacceptable overlooking in technical amenity terms, the density and close arrangement of dwellings around the central cul-de-sac would give rise to a perceived sense of overlooking between properties. This perception stems from the concentrated layout and reduced visual separation between plots, which contrasts with the spacious, informal pattern of development that characterises Heath Ride.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: The Highway Authority has not raised an objection in principle to the redevelopment of the site for seven dwellings but has requested further information and amendments to address a number of outstanding matters prior to determination.

The Highway Officer accepts that traffic associated with a development of this scale would not have a material impact on the wider highway network, consistent with previous pre-application advice. However, concerns are raised in relation to the sustainability of the site, noting that Heath Ride is an unadopted, unlit and unpaved restricted byway which is more likely to serve recreational users than everyday pedestrian trips. While a Walking Routes Analysis has been submitted, no specific mitigation, improvements or contributions have been proposed to address identified risks or to promote sustainable modes of travel, which is considered a shortcoming

given the intensification of use. These concerns are consistent with Officers analysis of location sustainability undertaken above.

In terms of access, the principle of upgrading the existing western access to serve the development is acceptable. Visibility splays are shown to be acceptable in principle, and the internal access road widths are broadly compliant with standards. However, concerns have been raised regarding the layout and alignment of the internal road, including sharp bends close to the site access, which may affect the manoeuvrability of service vehicles. The Highway Authority advises that additional traffic-calming features would be required to ensure vehicle speeds are appropriately controlled.

The proposed parking provision is broadly acceptable, with each dwelling benefitting from a double garage and driveway spaces. However, discrepancies have been identified in the submitted parking calculations, which refer to an eight-dwelling scheme and inconsistent habitable room numbers. Updated parking calculations and plans would therefore be required, including confirmation of visitor parking provision in accordance with Council standards. This is likely to have been resolved if pursued.

Significant concerns are raised in relation to swept path analysis, particularly for refuse and emergency vehicles. The submitted tracking drawings contain inconsistencies in vehicle size, settings and manoeuvres, demonstrate overrunning of boundaries and visitor parking spaces, and do not adequately show vehicles entering and exiting the site in forward gear in all directions along Heath Ride. Further swept path analysis would be required to demonstrate that refuse vehicles and emergency vehicles can safely access, manoeuvre within, and exit the site without conflict. This has not been pursued as there remain fundamental reasons for refusal outside of these matters.

Additional matters requiring clarification include confirmation of land control over the access route, revised details of cycle storage, provision and location of EV charging points, and the submission of a framework construction and demolition method statement.

Overall, the Highway Authority requests further information and amended details to address these points before the application can be fully assessed from a highway perspective.

Flooding and Drainage: The Lead Local Flood Authority has advised that the site lies within an area of low fluvial flood risk and is acceptable for residential development in principle from a drainage and flood risk perspective. A surface water drainage strategy has been submitted which follows a sustainable drainage approach and is considered acceptable in concept. However, further clarification and supporting information is required before the drainage impacts of the development can be fully assessed, including details of how surface water would be safely discharged from the site, confirmation that the receiving ditch has sufficient capacity, and further information on exceedance flows and long-term management.

Officers are of the view that the outstanding matters could reasonably be addressed through the imposition of appropriately worded planning conditions. As such, the requirement for this additional information does not, in itself, warrant refusal of the application.

Trees: The Trees Officer has reviewed the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement and confirms that these documents are acceptable in technical terms. The proposals would, however, result in the loss and partial removal of a number of trees and tree groups, including boundary vegetation and internal groups that currently contribute to the wooded character of the site.

The proposal would also result in incursions into root protection areas, necessitating specialist foundation and construction techniques. Although appropriate methodologies have been identified, the Trees Officer advises that careful updating of the arboricultural information would be required should the layout be amended, as advised by the Officer.

In addition, uncertainty remains around the practical management of retained boundary trees, particularly where ornamental conifers or mature trees form plot boundaries, and where future maintenance could lead to decline or unsightly pruning impacts.

Overall, while the submitted arboricultural information indicates that development on the site is technically achievable, the Tree Officer considers that the more fundamental concerns relating to landscape character and density carry significantly greater weight. In this context, the arboricultural matters are secondary, as any acceptable scheme would require a materially different layout and reduced density, which would in turn require the arboricultural submissions to be comprehensively revised.

Ecology: The Council's Ecologist has reviewed the submitted ecological information. With regard to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) matters, the baseline habitat assessment and biodiversity metric are accepted as robust and are subsequently agreed. However, the scheme relies in part on habitats located within private domestic gardens which cannot be secured, monitored or managed for the required 30-year period, and therefore cannot be relied upon to deliver biodiversity net gain

The site contains areas of wet woodland, classified as a Habitat of Principal Importance. The proposal would result in the loss of sections of this woodland, and the submitted information does not adequately demonstrate that this loss would be appropriately mitigated or compensated. Enhancement of retained woodland alone is not considered sufficient, and like-for-like woodland compensation would be required to avoid a net loss of woodland canopy. Insufficient justification has been provided to demonstrate that the need for the development outweighs the requirement to safeguard this habitat.

In addition, the submitted surveys are incomplete in respect of protected species. In particular, no Ground Level Tree Assessment has been undertaken for trees proposed for removal, meaning the potential impacts on roosting bats cannot be assessed. Further bat activity surveys are also required to understand impacts on foraging and commuting bats. Evidence of badger activity has been recorded on site, but further survey work has not been undertaken to establish sett status or likely impacts. While a reptile survey has identified a low population of slow worm and appropriate mitigation has been outlined, this alone does not resolve the wider ecological concerns.

Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy states that where development is likely to have an effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA), it is required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered. The subject application includes a net increase of seven dwellings on a site that is within 5km of the TBH SPA. Policy CP8 states that where there is a net increase in dwellings within 5km of the SPA, an Appropriate Assessment is required to be undertaken. The TBH SPA is designed to mitigate the impacts of allocated development and windfall sites in accordance with the Council's Development Plan. The application site is located outside of development limits and is not allocated for development, meaning alternative SPA mitigation would need to be sought. Therefore, it is unlikely that the Council would facilitate SPA mitigation for this site as it would undermine the strategic objective of mitigating development set out in the development plan.

Overall, insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that impacts on priority habitats and protected species would be avoided, mitigated or adequately compensated. The proposal therefore fails to demonstrate compliance with biodiversity policy and relevant legislation, and this matter weighs against the scheme.

Affordable Housing: The threshold for the provision of affordable housing applies to residential developments of five or more dwellings on sites of 0.16 hectares or greater. The application site exceeds this threshold and therefore triggers a requirement for affordable housing. No affordable housing provision has been made as part of the proposal and no viability information has been submitted.

In accordance with Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy, the site is located outside a defined development location, where a minimum of 40% of the net number of dwellings should be provided as affordable housing. Based on the proposed development of eight dwellings, this would equate to 3.2 affordable units.

Given the site's location and the nature of the proposed dwellings, officers agree that the only realistic and practical mechanism for securing affordable housing would be through the payment of a commuted sum, calculated in accordance with the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document and index-linked towards the provision of affordable housing within the Borough.

Policy CP5 and the guidance contained within the SPD pre-dates the NPPF. Paragraph 65 of the NPPF requires that the provision of affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments (10 or more dwellings), other than in designated rural areas (where policies may set out a lower threshold of 5 units or fewer). The Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) reinforces this approach, stating specifically that planning obligations for affordable housing should only be sought for residential developments that are major developments. The PPG also confirms that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is the most appropriate mechanism for capturing developer contributions from small developments

Policy CP5 and accompanying guidance has a degree of inconsistency with the NPPF and predates it; but is recognised as being out-of-date in accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, as it sits alongside those other identified policies which are considered most important for determining applications for new housing.

Notwithstanding this, due to the acute need of affordable housing in the Borough, the Inspector has held CP5 with greater than limited weight despite the degree of inconsistency and has reinforced this in a number of recent appeal decisions.

However, as the application is being recommended for refusal on other substantive planning grounds, no legal agreement has been sought to secure an affordable housing contribution. In the absence of any mechanism to deliver affordable housing, the proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CP1 and CP5 of the Core Strategy (2010), Policy TB05 and Appendix 12 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014), and the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (2013).

Building Sustainability: Policy CC04 of the MDD Local Plan and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD require sustainable design and conservation and R21 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that new development contribute to environmental sustainability and the mitigation of climate change.

As outlined above, each dwelling proposed is intended to meet 'Passive House' certification which would result in highly energy-efficient and sustainable homes.

An Energy Statement has been submitted in support of the application, which sets out a comprehensive strategy to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable design across the proposed dwellings. The approach follows the energy hierarchy, prioritising energy demand reduction through enhanced fabric specifications, efficient heating systems, airtight construction, double glazing, and passive solar design. All new lighting would be energy efficient, and natural/passive ventilation strategies are incorporated.

The submitted statement confirms that the development is designed to be net-zero ready, with measures in place to future-proof the dwellings against evolving sustainability targets. Overall, the scheme demonstrates a strong commitment to energy efficiency and low-carbon design, which is a positive aspect of the development and shall be considered in the planning balance at the end of this report.

Archaeology: Berkshire Archaeology advises that the site lies within an area of archaeological potential and that groundworks associated with the development could impact buried remains. However, any potential archaeological interest can be satisfactorily addressed through a pre-commencement condition requiring an agreed programme of archaeological investigation.

Conclusion: The starting point for decision making is the development plan. Section 70[2] of the TCPA 1990 & 38[6] of the PCPA 2004 states that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The plan-led approach advocated by law is reinforced numerous times throughout the NPPF including paragraph 47:

'Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.'

The Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing supply and therefore the development must be assessed in line with Paragraph 11d(ii) and against the policies

in the NPPF taken as a whole. The three overarching objectives contained within paragraph 8 of the Framework seek to balance growth and local community needs against protection of the natural, built and historic environment. The benefits and disbenefits are therefore considered against these three broad topic areas below. Whilst the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date by virtue of the absence of a 5 year housing land supply, that does not mean the policies carry no weight. The weight attached to the development plan policies is a matter for the decision maker(s).

Economic: It is acknowledged that the site would perform a limited short term economic role as a result of the construction period, and a modest longer-term economic role via consumer spend and CIL liable payments. As the number of homes proposed is modest however, the weight afforded to their provision is limited. These are residual consequences of any housing development.

Social: It is acknowledged that the redevelopment of partly previously developed land and the delivery of additional housing attract some weight in favour of the proposal. Similarly to the economic performance though, the limited number of homes proposed also limits the weight applied to their benefits in the planning balance.

Environmental: The application demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental sustainability, with a comprehensive energy strategy that prioritises both fabric efficiency and the integration of renewable technologies. There would also be an ability to impose conditions securing biodiversity enhancements to the site, as well as new/additional landscaping. However, these measures would not outweigh the already highlighted landscape harm, and the fact the occupiers of the dwellings would be overly reliant on private motor vehicles to access basic amenities and services. Overall, the environmental performance of the development is considered neutral.

Overall, these benefits and neutral considerations are limited in nature and do not address the principal harms arising from the development.

The Council's primary concern relates to the density, layout and form of the proposed development, which would introduce a consolidated and regimented group of seven dwellings served from a large access road, in a cul-de-sac style. This form of development would be markedly out of keeping with the prevailing settlement pattern of Heath Ride and the surrounding area, which is characterised by low-density development, individual accesses, generous plot sizes and irregular spacing framed by extensive woodland and vegetated gaps. The proposal represents an overdevelopment of the site and would introduce an unduly suburban and urbanising form into a location defined by informality, openness and rural form.

In accordance with the above, significant weight is also attached to the harm to landscape character. The site lies within a highly sensitive landscape with a low capacity for change, and within a valued 'Forests and Rides' landscape. The proposed density and layout would erode the openness of the site, fragment existing woodland character, and weaken the historic and scenic qualities of Heath Ride as a forest ride. While landscaping and tree retention are proposed, these measures would not sufficiently mitigate the fundamental harm arising from the scale, density and form of the proposed development.

Further weight is also afforded to the unsustainable location of the site. The development is proposed in a countryside location, remote from day-to-day services, facilities and employment opportunities, and not well served by public transport or good quality pedestrian infrastructure. As a result, future occupiers would be heavily reliant on the private car for most daily journeys, reinforcing car-dependent travel patterns. This reliance would be intensified by the scale of development proposed and further undermines the sustainability credentials of the scheme, adding to the overall harm when assessed as part of the planning balance.

In engaging the tilted balance, those adverse impacts (as set out in the foregoing) as a result of the proposed development are considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of this scheme when assessed against the framework as whole. The recommendation is therefore to refuse planning permission.

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 reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. 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:	N/A
Recommendation:	Refuse
Date:	9 April 2026
Earliest date for decision:	11 February 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	10 April 2026

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 Screening Assessment and Appropriate Assessment

In the light of the “Sweetman Judgement” (People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta, April 2018), the comments below comprise an Appropriate Assessment which includes advice on necessary avoidance and mitigation measures which is consistent with the advice provided to the Planning Inspectorate on such matters.

Summary of Response

WBC, in consultation with Natural England, has formed the view that any net increase in residential development between 400m and 5km straight-line distance from the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) is likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. An Appropriate Assessment has been carried out which includes regard to mitigation requirements.

This site is located within **5km** (measured from the access road to the application site) from the boundary of the SPA and therefore is likely to result in an adverse effect on the SPA, unless it is carried out together with appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures.

On commencement of the proposed development, a contribution (calculated on a per-bedroom basis) is to be paid to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) towards the cost of measures to avoid and mitigate against the effect upon the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, as set out in WBC’s Infrastructure Delivery Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The strategy is for relevant developments to make financial contributions towards the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) in perpetuity as an alternative recreational location to the SPA and financial contributions towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures.

In this instance, the proposed development would result in a net increase of **6no 5bedroom dwellings and 1no 4bedroom dwelling**, within 5km of the SPA which results in a total SANG contribution of **£28,990.59**

The proposed development is required to make a contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) which is also calculated on a per bedroom basis. Taking account of the per bedroom contributions this results in a total SAMM contribution of **£9,949.00**

The total SPA related financial contribution for this proposal is **£38,939.59**. The applicant **must agree** to enter into a S106/s111 agreement to secure this contribution prior to occupation of each dwelling. Subject to the completion of the S106 agreement, the proposal would not lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA and would comply with SEP Saved Policy NRM6, policy CP8 of the Core Strategy, and the NPPF.

1. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended

In accordance with The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended, Regulation 63, a competent authority (in this case Wokingham Borough Council

(WBC)), before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which—

- a. is likely to have a significant effect on a European site...(either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and
- b. is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site.

must make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives.

A person applying for any such consent, permission or other authorisation must provide such information as WBC may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment or to enable it to determine whether an appropriate assessment is required.

WBC must for the purposes of the assessment consult Natural England (NE) and have regard to any representations made by that body. It must also, if it considers it appropriate, take the opinion of the general public, and if it does so, it must take such steps for that purpose as it considers appropriate. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, and subject to Regulation 64 (Considerations of overriding public interest), WBC may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

In considering whether a plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of the site, WBC must have regard to the manner in which it is proposed to be carried out or to any conditions or restrictions subject to which it proposes that the consent, permission or other authorisation should be given.

2. Stage 1 Screening for Likely Significant Effects

WBC accepts that this proposal is a 'plan or project' which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site. The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is a European designated site which affects the borough, and WBC must ensure that development does not result in an adverse impact on the SPA. The potential adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA include recreational activities from inside the SPA and air pollution from inside and outside the SPA.

At this stage WBC cannot rule out 'likely significance effects' on the SPA (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) because the proposal could undermine the Conservation Objectives of these sites. This is because the proposal lies within **5km** of the SPA and:

- represents a net increase in dwellings within 400m - 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) which will lead to an increase in local population and a potential increase in recreational activity on the SPA

As the 'likely significance effects' cannot be ruled out at this stage an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken.

3. Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment

Based on the information proposed by the applicant, WBC must decide whether or not an adverse effect on site integrity (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) can be

ruled out. Mitigation may be able to be provided so that the proposal is altered to avoid or reduce impacts.

The following policies and guidance set out WBC's approach to relevant avoidance and mitigation measures which have been agreed with Natural England. For the majority of housing developments this will comprise the provision of (or contribution towards) Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and a contribution towards the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project. Developers will be required to secure an appropriate financial contribution for the provision of SANG and to the SAMM project through an obligation in a s106 agreement.

For SDL development (and occasionally some other larger non SDL developments) within 5km of the SPA, SANG is required at a minimum of 8 ha per 1,000 new residents, constructed and delivered to Natural England's quality and quantity standards and a contribution towards pan SPA access management and monitoring (as advised by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board). For SDL development (and occasionally some other larger non SDL developments) between 5 and 7km, the proposals will need to be individually assessed but it is likely that SANG will be required on site in line with Natural England's quality and quantity standards, although the exact requirement will be agreed having regard to evidence supplied.

a. Policies and Guidance

For this proposal the following guidance and policies apply:

- South East Plan (May 2009) Policy NRM6 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area)
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100528160926/http://www.gos.gov.uk/gos/planning/regionalPlanning/815640/>
- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) Policy CP8 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area) sets out the approach WBC will take in order to protect the TBH SPA <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Final%20adopted%20Core%20Strategy%20inc.%20cover.pdf>
- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) Policy CP7 (Biodiversity) sets out the approach WBC will take in order to protect national and international nature conservation sites <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Final%20adopted%20Core%20Strategy%20inc.%20cover.pdf>
- Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) Policy TB23 (Biodiversity and Development)
<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Adopted%20MDD.pdf>
- Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD (2011)
<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Adopted%20Infrastructure%20De~nd%20Contributions%20SPD.pdf>

The project as proposed would not adversely impact on the integrity of the SPA if avoidance and mitigation measures are provided as stipulated by these policies and guidance.

b. SPA Avoidance and Mitigation Measures

i) The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and its ongoing maintenance in perpetuity.

In accordance with the development plan, the proposed development will be required to provide alternative land to attract new residents away from the SPA. The term given to this alternative land is Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

As this development is not part of an SDL, the developer may make a payment contribution towards strategic SANGs in line with schedule below (most likely this will be at Rooks Nest Wood SANG although it is subject to SANGs capacity in the right location within Wokingham borough). An occupation restriction will be included in the Section 106 Agreement in order to ensure that the contribution has been made prior to occupation of the dwellings. This gives the certainty required to satisfy the Habitats Regulations in accordance with South East Plan Policy NRM6 (iii) and Core Strategy Policy CP8

The development will result in a net increase of **7no dwellings**, broken down as follows: **6no 5 bedroom dwellings and 1no 4 bedroom dwelling**. Depending on the dwelling mix, the level of SANG payments are set out as follows:

No. of bedrooms	SANG Contribution 5km	Aggregate SANG Contribution
1 bedroom	£1,567.98	
2 bedrooms	£2,049.59	
3 bedrooms	£2,690.93	
4 bedrooms	£3,546.86	£3,546.86
5 bedrooms	£4,240.62	£25,443.73
Total SANG Contribution		£28,990.59

ii. Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Contribution

The proposed development will also be required to make a contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM). This project funds strategic visitor access management measures on the SPA to mitigate the effects of new development on it.

From 1st April 2023 SAMM contributions have been updated across the 11 Local Authorities affected by the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Following engagement with Natural England, the Joint Strategic Partnership Board agreed this change is necessary to ensure sufficient income is raised to cover the costs of the SAMM project in perpetuity. Without this change the SAMM project would be at risk of being unable to deliver the objectives of the SAMM project, and therefore secure positive outcomes for the SPA

The level of contributions are calculated on a per bedroom basis. The application for this development is for **1no 2 bedroom dwelling**. Depending on the dwelling mix, the level of SAMM payments are calculated as follows:

No. of bedrooms	SAMM Contribution 5km	Aggregate SAMM Contribution
1 bedroom	£582.00	
2 bedrooms	£810.00	

3 bedrooms	£1,077.00	
4 bedrooms	£1,267.00	£1,267.00
5+ bedrooms	£1,447.00	£8,682.00
Total SAMM Contribution		£9,949.00

Prior to the permission being granted the applicant must enter into a Section 106 Agreement based upon the above measures.

4. Conclusion

An Appropriate Assessment has been carried out for this development in accordance with the Habitats Regulations 2017. Without any appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures the Appropriate Assessment concludes that the development is likely to have a significant effect upon the integrity of the SPA with the result that WBC would be required to refuse a planning application.

Provided that the applicant is prepared to make a financial contribution (see above) towards the costs of SPA avoidance and mitigation measures, the application will be in accordance with the SPA mitigation requirements as set out in the relevant policies above.

WBC is convinced, following consultation with Natural England, that the above measures will prevent an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA. Pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 63(5) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended, and permission may be granted.

If the applicant does not agree with the above mitigation and does not enter into a Section 106 Agreement to secure the measures, then the application must be refused using the following reason for refusal.

5. Example Reason for Refusal

In the absence of a planning obligation to secure suitable avoidance and mitigation measures 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.

Date:	10/04/2026	Signed:	<i>James Fuller</i>
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PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- *Water Utility Consultation Zones*
- *Affordable Housing Thresholds*
- *Bat Roost Habitat Suitability*
- *Scale and Location of Development Proposals – **Countryside (CP11)***
- *Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone – **Red and Amber Risk Zones***
- *Local Wildlife Site - **Simon's Wood and Heath Pond***
- *Nuclear Consultation Zone – **Special Case Zone***
- *Landscape Character Assessment Area*
- *SSSI Impact Risk Zones*
- *Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones – **5km Linear Mitigation Zone***
- *PRoW Within WB Consultation Zone*
- *Ordinary Watercourses Consultation Zone*
- *Ordinary Watercourse*