

PLANNING REF : 261059
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 27 Archer Grove
: Arborfield Green, Berkshire
: RG2 9TB
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Darryl Tott
DATE SUBMITTED : 01/07/2026

COMMENTS:

Dear Planning Case Officer,

I am writing to object to Planning Application 261059 in its current form.

I have framed this objection around material planning considerations, including planning policy compliance, housing density, highway safety, traffic, parking, residential amenity, overlooking/loss of privacy, biodiversity, ancient woodland and tree impacts, SANG provision, the red-line boundary, and inconsistencies within the submitted application documents.

I recognise that Barkham Square is identified in the emerging Wokingham Local Plan Update. My objection is not simply to the principle of plan-led development. My objection is that this application, as submitted, does not properly reflect the emerging Local Plan evidence base, materially increases the proposed housing quantum, places inappropriate infrastructure in the sensitive south-eastern part of the site, relies on a new access through the Commonfield Lane tree line while a TPO request remains undetermined, and contains important discrepancies between the submitted documents.

For those reasons, I ask that the application is refused in its current form, or at minimum not determined until the applicant has amended the scheme and resolved the matters set out below.

1) The Commonfield Lane access is premature while the TPO request remains undetermined

I submitted a request in December 2024 for the Commonfield Lane tree line to be considered for Tree Preservation Order protection. WBC acknowledged the request and later confirmed in January 2026 that the request remains under consideration and that I would be notified once the assessment had been completed.

The application now seeks approval for access, including a Commonfield Lane access to serve the allotments and SANG car park. Because access is not reserved, the Council is being asked to approve the principle and location of this access now. That should not happen before the outstanding TPO request is determined.

The tree line has important public amenity, landscape, ecological and historic value. It forms part of the established green character of

Commonfield Lane and contributes to the wider Barkham Brook / Longmoor Bog ecological context. Approving an access that may require removal, cutting through or alteration of this tree line would

prejudice the TPO assessment and undermine the Council's ability to protect trees that may be considered worthy of protection.

I ask that the Council's Tree Officer formally determines the outstanding TPO request before this application is reported to committee or otherwise determined.

2) The application exceeds the Barkham Square housing quantum in the Local Plan Update

Draft Policy SS11 in the Wokingham Local Plan Update identifies 600 dwellings on land north of Arborfield Studios, known as Barkham Square. The submitted application seeks up to 660 residential dwellings, plus elderly care accommodation. That is a material uplift of at least 10% over the Barkham Square figure in the emerging Local Plan, before the final quantum and nature of the elderly care element is fully known.

The applicant's own Planning Supporting Statement acknowledges that emerging Policy SS11 refers to 600 dwellings at Barkham Square, but then relies on wider housing-need arguments to justify up to 660 dwellings. That is not a minor detail. It changes the density, likely population, traffic, infrastructure burden, SANG requirement, open-space requirement and ecological mitigation required from the site.

If the applicant wishes to promote a higher figure than the emerging Local Plan, that should be tested through the Local Plan examination process or supported by a clear and robust site-specific justification. It should not be accepted through an outline planning application where the resulting pressure is then used to justify placing allotments, a SANG car park and a new vehicle access in the most sensitive south-eastern part of the site.

I therefore request that the Council gives significant weight to the 600-dwelling figure in draft Policy SS11 and requires the applicant to demonstrate a 600-dwelling layout before any higher figure is considered.

3) The proposed location of the allotments and car park is not justified

WBC officers confirmed in writing that the Barkham Square site shown in the Local Plan Update is as shown in Figure 6 on page 74 of the Proposed Submission Plan, and that by excluding some land east of Barkham Brook, the Crest masterplan consulted on did not correspond to the whole of the site area referenced in the LPU. Officers also confirmed that the location of allotments is not fixed and would be assessed through the planning application.

That matters because the current application appears to treat the submitted red-line boundary and the south-eastern allotment/car-park location as effectively fixed, when they are not. The applicant has not adequately demonstrated why the allotments and SANG car park must be placed on the Commonfield Lane edge, close to existing homes, adjacent to a sensitive tree line, and within the part of the site identified through the LPU evidence base as needing to be delivered as greenspace in perpetuity.

If the Council considers that allotments and an associated car park

are required, they should be located within the main Barkham Square development area, not on the south-eastern land identified through the LPU evidence base as needing to be protected as greenspace in perpetuity. The applicant is already seeking to increase the housing quantum from 600 dwellings to 660 dwellings, and the submitted layout therefore demonstrates that the main development area is capable of being intensified and reconfigured. The operational land uses associated with allotments and parking should be absorbed within that developed area, rather than displaced onto the most sensitive -eastern greenspace.

The increase from 600 to 660 dwellings appears to have intensified pressure on the land take and resulted in a poorer layout. It is not reasonable for the applicant to seek the benefit of a higher-density scheme while pushing the operational consequences of that density onto the very land the LPU evidence base identifies for long-term greenspace protection.

The Council should require the applicant to submit a genuine alternatives assessment for the allotments, SANG car park and onfield Lane access before any approval is considered.

4) The south-eastern part of the site should be secured as greenspace in perpetuity

The LPU Sustainability Appraisal is clear that Barkham Square is constrained by a stream corridor, bankside woodland, ancient woodland and proximity to Longmoor Bog SSSI. It states that, from a biodiversity perspective, there is a need to ensure the south-east part of the site is delivered as greenspace in perpetuity.

The current application does not adequately secure that outcome. Instead, the south-eastern area includes allotments, a SANG car park, vehicle access and associated activity. Allotments may be a form of green infrastructure, but they are not the same as natural greenspace or SANG. They can include fencing, sheds, storage, composting areas, vehicle trips, lighting/security pressures, intermittent occupation, fly-tipping risk and disturbance. A car park is plainly not natural greenspace.

In my view, locating allotments and a car park on this land conflicts with, and undermines, the core planning objectives of the emerging LPU for this part of the site. The LPU evidence base identifies the south-eastern area as needing to be delivered as greenspace in perpetuity because of its biodiversity role, proximity to Longmoor Bog SSSI, relationship with the stream corridor and bankside woodland, and the need to consider cumulative ecological pressures. The proposed allotments and car park would harm the character and function that the LPU is seeking to protect.

The Council should not leave the protection of the south-eastern land to future reserved matters or informal management intentions. The protection must be secured through binding legal mechanisms as part of this application, including a clearly defined plan, Section 106 obligations, long-term management and maintenance arrangements, transfer or dedication of any SANG/open-space land where

appropriate, and enforceable restrictions preventing the land from later being used for car parking, allotment expansion, built development or other non-natural greenspace uses.

The applicant must clearly explain:

1. how the south-eastern area will be legally secured as greenspace in perpetuity;
2. how the land will be protected from future development if parts are outside the SANG or outside the application's enforceable controls; and
3. how Natural England and the Council's ecology officers are satisfied that the proposal properly mitigates effects on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Longmoor Bog SSSI.

A planning condition at reserved matters stage would not be sufficient. This is a strategic mitigation and land-use issue that goes to the acceptability of the outline application itself.

5) Wildlife, deer, badgers, bats and cumulative ecological impacts have not been adequately addressed

The south-eastern part of Barkham Square is not simply spare land available for operational uses. It is used by wildlife, including multiple deers, bats and badgers, and forms part of a wider green corridor and ecological buffer associated with Barkham Brook, existing tree lines, bankside woodland and the wider landscape around Longmoor Bog.

I raised this issue in my consultation response before the application was submitted. The adjacent solar farm on Commonfield Lane is likely to displace local deer populations and create additional ecological pressure. Without a comprehensive green infrastructure strategy, these impacts will be compounded by the Barkham Square development. The current plans fail to provide sufficient greenspace buffers or biodiversity corridors to support displaced wildlife. This is a critical oversight and is directly relevant to the LPU Sustainability Appraisal's requirement that the south-eastern part of the site is delivered as greenspace in perpetuity.

The south-eastern area is one of the last remaining undeveloped greenspace refuges and movement corridors on this edge of Arborfield Green. Placing allotments, a car park and a new vehicle access into this area would reduce its value as a quiet wildlife corridor and refuge. It would also introduce additional disturbance through vehicle movements, people, dogs, lighting/security pressures, maintenance activity, storage, sheds, fencing and potential fly-tipping.

The Council should require a specific cumulative ecological assessment of the combined effects of the Barkham Square development, the Commonfield Lane solar farm, existing nearby development, Reading FC Training Ground, Greenacres, Arborfield SDL intensification and other committed or emerging local development pressures. The Council should also require a clear plan showing how deer, bats, badgers and other wildlife movement will be maintained, how ecological connectivity will be protected, and how the south-eastern greenspace will be legally secured in perpetuity.

6) The applicant's tree evidence conflicts with the highway/access evidence

The applicant's Arboricultural Implications Report concludes that the arboricultural impact is negligible and that no ancient, veteran, notable or mature trees, no category A or B trees and no trees of high landscape or biodiversity value are to be removed.

However, the access and highway material identifies a new Commonfield Lane access and visibility requirements in a location where existing vegetation and trees are present. This creates a material inconsistency. The Council cannot safely conclude that the tree impacts are negligible without a clear, reconciled plan showing how the visibility splays, vehicle access, tree protection, hedgerow retention, root protection areas and TPO request are all compatible.

The Council should require the applicant to provide a reconciled plan showing:

1. the exact visibility-splay footprint;
2. every tree, group and hedge affected by that splay;
3. whether any TPO, veteran, notable, mature, ancient woodland buffer, root protection area or ecological corridor is affected;
4. how the access design is compatible with the Arboricultural Implications Report; and
5. whether an alternative access strategy would avoid or reduce harm.

Unless that is resolved, the Commonfield Lane access should not be approved.

7) Commonfield Lane is unsuitable for additional car-based access

The submitted material identifies Commonfield Lane as a rural lane. It is narrow, constrained and not designed to function as a car-accessed destination for a new SANG car park and allotments. The proposed access would serve the allotments and SANG car park, meaning traffic would be intermittent, visitor-based and likely to include people unfamiliar with the lane. It would also create turning, parking, security and maintenance pressures in an area that is currently rural and visually enclosed by trees.

It cannot reasonably be assumed that allotment users would walk from the new development. The proposed allotments are not positioned close to the main development area, and allotment users commonly need to carry tools, plants, compost, water containers, produce and other materials. This increases the likelihood of vehicle trips to and from the allotments, including trips around and down Commonfield Lane. The proposed location therefore risks making the allotments a car-accessed destination rather than a genuinely walkable or cycle-accessible community facility.

Finchampstead Parish Council has also objected to increased traffic on Commonfield Lane, including access to allotments and the SANG

car

park, and raised concern that the allotments risk becoming a car-accessed destination rather than a facility reached naturally on foot or by cycle.

The proposal is therefore contrary to the objectives of active travel, safe access, healthy communities and integrated sustainable development. If the Council considers that allotments and associated parking are required, they should be located within the main Barkham Square development area, where the applicant's proposed increase from 600 to 660 dwellings demonstrates that the main site is capable of being intensified and reconfigured to absorb these uses. They should not be placed on the south-eastern greenspace or accessed from Commonfield Lane.

8) Residential amenity, overlooking and loss of privacy

The issue here is not loss of a private view. The issue is the change in land use, activity, traffic, parking, noise, lighting/security pressure, visual clutter, overlooking, loss of privacy and residential amenity impacts arising from placing allotments and a SANG car park on the Commonfield Lane edge.

The proposal would replace open agricultural land adjacent to existing homes with a more intensive managed use involving allotment plots, sheds, fencing, vehicle trips, parking, activity, potential noise, security lighting, storage and possible anti-social behaviour or fly-tipping.

The proposed allotments would also introduce overlooking and loss of privacy impacts for existing residents through regular public activity, plot use, structures, storage, maintenance activity and vehicle movements close to existing homes and garden boundaries. Overlooking/loss of privacy is a material planning consideration and should be assessed separately from any non-material issue of private view.

This is a material change in the character and amenity of the edge of the existing residential area. The submitted layout places the operational impacts of the allotments and car park on existing residents and on the sensitive south-eastern greenspace, rather than designing those uses into the main development area where they would be better planned, better overlooked, better integrated and less harmful to the environmental function of the land.

9) The submitted documents contain material discrepancies and should not be relied upon without clarification

There are several inconsistencies in the submitted application documents that should be resolved before determination.

First, the application form gives the site area as 41.80 hectares, while the Environmental Statement refers to a total site area of circa 44.89 hectares, and other documents refer to circa 44.9 or 45 hectares. That discrepancy is material because site area affects density, open-space provision, SANG calculations, BNG calculations, landscape assessment and the relationship to the LPU concept area.

Second, the Planning Supporting Statement states that there are no specific landscape or ecological designations within the site boundary, while the same application suite acknowledges parcels of ancient woodland, TPOs, mature trees, Barkham Brook, the Thames Basin Heaths SPA mitigation zone and proximity to Longmoor Bog SSSI. If the applicant's position is that these are not "designations within the site boundary" in a technical sense, the documents should say so clearly and consistently. At present, the wording risks understating the environmental constraints.

Third, the application is outline with all matters reserved except access. It is therefore not acceptable to leave unresolved conflicts about the Commonfield Lane access, visibility splays, tree loss and highway safety to reserved matters. Access is the matter being determined now.

Fourth, the Planning Supporting Statement relies on the emerging Local Plan to support the principle of development, but departs from the same emerging Local Plan by increasing the Barkham Square quantum from 600 to 660 dwellings, with additional elderly care. That should be treated as a material inconsistency in the planning balance.

Fifth, the application does not adequately explain how the proposed allotments and car park are compatible with the LPU Sustainability Appraisal's stated need for the south-eastern part of the site to be delivered as greenspace in perpetuity. The allotments and car park are operational land uses and would materially alter the function, character and ecological value of the land.

10) Further document inconsistencies: mature, notable and veteran trees, incomplete arboricultural information, and consultation-process concern

The arboricultural submission is also unclear and potentially incomplete. The Arboricultural Implications Report expressly lists Appendix 4 as the Tree Protection Plan, reference "SJA TPP 23205-041a". The report then relies on that Tree Protection Plan to show which trees/groups are affected, which trees are to be retained, how retained trees will be protected, and where removals are marked. It also states that trees to be removed are shown on the Tree Protection Plan by red crosses.

That plan is therefore central to the applicant's conclusion that the arboricultural impact is "negligible" and that no important trees will be removed. It is not a background document; it is a core evidential document.

However, I have not been able to identify a clearly published, legible and complete Tree Protection Plan matching Appendix 4 / "SJA TPP 23205-041a" within the submitted documents available for public review. If it has been submitted, the Council should identify exactly where it is published. If it has not been submitted, or if it is not clearly accessible to the public, the arboricultural assessment is incomplete and the application should not be determined until Appendix 4 has been published and residents have had the opportunity to review and comment on it.

This is particularly important because access is being determined

now, the Commonfield Lane access interacts directly with existing trees and boundary vegetation, and the outstanding TPO request for the Commonfield Lane tree line remains unresolved. The Council should not accept a conclusion of negligible tree impact without the full Tree Protection Plan, the tree schedule, the access drawings and the visibility-splay requirements being reviewed together by the Tree Officer.

There is also an apparent internal document-control inconsistency. The report contents identify Appendix 1 as Methodology, Appendix 2 as the Outline Arboricultural Method Statement, Appendix 3 as the Tree Survey Schedule, and Appendix 4 as the Tree Protection Plan. However, the report summary refers to measures recommended on the Tree Protection Plan and "set out at Appendix 1". The Council should require the applicant to clarify the appendix references and confirm that the submitted arboricultural package is complete, consistent and sufficient for determination.

These points reinforce my wider concern that the application should not be determined in its current form. The Council is being asked to approve access as part of the outline application, but the submitted documents do not clearly and consistently demonstrate how that access can be delivered without harm to the Commonfield Lane tree line, mature and notable trees, hedgerows, root protection areas, the wider ecological corridor, or the south-eastern greenspace identified through the LPU evidence base as needing long-term protection.

11) Consultation-process concern

I am also concerned that the original Barkham Square consultation website (<https://www.barkhamsquareconsultation.co.uk/>) contains an error in its email link. The footer displayed the consultation email address as barkhamsquareconsultation@cratus.co.uk, but the underlying mailto link appeared to direct users to a different email address: consultation@southallthegreen.co.uk - this is still present on the website today. This means that residents who attempted to respond by clicking the email link may have sent their feedback to the wrong address, and their consultation comments may not have been received or recorded.

The Council should require the applicant to confirm whether the consultation website email link was correct throughout the consultation period, whether any misdirected consultation responses may have occurred, and whether the Statement of Community Involvement accurately records all feedback received. If the email link was incorrect, this should be treated as a consultation-process flaw and the Council should consider whether further consultation, clarification or correction is required before the application is determined.

12) Requested outcome

For the reasons above, I request that Wokingham Borough Council refuses the application in its current form.

If the Council is minded not to refuse it, I request that determination is deferred and the applicant is required to submit an amended scheme that:

1. reduces the Barkham Square residential quantum to the 600 dwellings identified in draft Policy SS11, unless a robust, independently tested justification for any uplift is provided;
2. clearly defines the number, form and planning status of the elderly care accommodation;
3. removes the proposed Commonfield Lane vehicle access unless and until the TPO issue, tree impacts, ecological impacts and highway safety issues are fully resolved;
4. relocates the allotments and any associated parking within the main Barkham Square development area, rather than on the south-eastern land identified through the LPU evidence base as needing to be protected as greenspace in perpetuity;
5. demonstrates how the applicant's proposed uplift from 600 to 660 dwellings can be reconfigured to absorb the allotments and any associated parking within the main development site, rather than displacing those uses onto the protected south-eastern greenspace;
6. secures the south-eastern part of the site as greenspace in perpetuity through binding legal mechanisms, including a clearly defined plan, Section 106 obligations, long-term management and maintenance arrangements, transfer or dedication of any SANG/open-space land where appropriate, and enforceable restrictions preventing future car parking, allotment expansion, built development or other non-natural greenspace uses;
7. provides an updated arboricultural assessment reconciling the Commonfield Lane access and visibility-splay requirements with the claim of negligible tree impact;
8. provides a cumulative ecological assessment addressing wildlife movement, deer displacement, the adjacent Commonfield Lane solar farm, Longmoor Bog SSSI, Barkham Brook, ancient woodland, protected trees and the wider ecological corridor;
9. provides Natural England, WBC ecology and WBC tree officer confirmation that the proposal will not harm Longmoor Bog SSSI, ancient woodland, protected trees or the wider ecological corridor; and
10. corrects the inconsistencies in site area, red-line boundary, ecological constraints, SANG provision, allotment location and document terminology across the application suite.

This is a strategic site in a sensitive location. It should be delivered, if at all, in accordance with the emerging Local Plan evidence base, with proper protection for the south-eastern greenspace, Commonfield Lane trees, existing residents and the wider ecological network.

The proposal, as currently submitted, conflicts with the LPU evidence base and undermines the core planning objective that the south-eastern part of the site should be delivered as greenspace in perpetuity. Locating allotments, a car park and associated vehicle access on this land would harm the character, ecological function and long-term protection that the LPU is seeking to secure.

I therefore respectfully request that the Council refuses the application in its current form, or defers determination until the applicant has resolved the policy, ecological, tree, access, SANG,

red-line boundary, legal protection and document-consistency issues identified above.

Yours faithfully,

Darryl Tott