

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	261842
Address:	Land at Forest Road, Wokingham, RG40 5SA.		
Proposal:	Permission in principle application for the proposed erection of 4no. residential dwellings.		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (1-9) PiP		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

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

Comments On Proposal

Site Setting and Location

The site is located along Forest Road, Hurst which is a Green Route as per the designations plan. The site is the countryside and Policy CP11 is relevant which seeks to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. There are no protected trees on the site, but there is an existing mature hedgerow with young trees to the southern site boundary with the road. There is also a farm gate access. The site backs onto an area of Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) known as 'Tippens Wood' also a Local Wildlife Site.

Landscape Character

The site is within Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment Area I1 'Ashridge Farmed Clay Lowland', a moderate quality landscape. Key Characteristics of LCA I1 include;

Large scale rolling to gently undulating landform between 40m AOD and 75 AOD, large geometric blocks of deciduous woodland of BAP priority habitat and some of ancient origin such as Tippens Wood adjacent to the northern site boundary. The agricultural landscape is defined by open, geometric arable fields of irregular shape where hedgerows are lost or denuded, although mature oak standards remain a common feature of fields along roadsides.

There is a sparse settlement pattern comprising ribbon settlement along straight and narrow roads where there are often banks and ditches. There is a peaceful rural character of open landscape which allows framed and distant views over the surrounding area.

The Landscape Strategy is to conserve and enhance the existing rural character where key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are characteristic wooded ridges and woodland, including ancient woodland. In particular, there are opportunities to restore coppice management and reinstate and repair key hedgerows with hedgerow standards. In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern through controlling development.

Existing Pattern of Development – Features of the Green Route

The site is to the north side of Forest Road and follows a distinctive pattern of development consisting of very long narrow plots of land. The narrowest plots appear to be 'Meadows' and 'South View' which are 6.72m and 6.10m wide respectively. Their gardens stretch to over 150m in length. The site is located 70m to the east of 'Tailend', beyond the sister PIP application to this which is 23m to the west of this site. Between 'Tailend' and this larger site are 2 undeveloped strips of land.

The pattern of development in this particular area of Forest Road is mostly characterised by wide open and uninterrupted views to the south consisting of arable fields surrounded by native hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees. Some of the field edges have tree or hedged vegetation particularly when close to development on the south side of Forest Road. The site is like its sister PIP site, is opposite Binfield Vineyard and an area of garden space. Mature Oak and other trees and native hedgerow are present along the southern side of Forest Road and there is a native hedgerow with young trees lining the northern roadside of the site along with a telephone line with regularly spaced telegraph poles.

The existing planted character contributes to the Green Route, along with a consistent native hedgerow that stretches from Tailend dwelling to the junction with Green Lane and Binfield Road at the eastern edge of the district. The landscape character to the front of dwellings is not consistent due to the narrow plots facing the road and availability of access space, nonetheless there are trees present in the front of larger plots and the deep front garden / driveways provide opportunity to enhance the plot boundaries with trees and hedgerows whilst still maintaining views across farmland to the south.

The prevailing building line / setback of dwellings is a feature of the pattern of development along Forest Road where front gardens show incremental increases in depth resulting in a staggering of built footprint set back from the road. The character of built development is a mix of either detached single plots, or semi-detached cottages starting relatively close to the road with Little Binfield House in the west set back from the road by 19.5m and reducing at Holly Tree House being set back by 10.6m. After Kingsclere set back by 7.65m, Gatcombe House is set back almost the whole depth of Kingsclere driveway and building by 22.50m which sets a new building line eastwards. It's a gently staggered pattern of setbacks and mostly small dwellings with long plots that back onto woodland much of which is

protected by TPO 0560-1992 and known as Tippens Wood which is ancient semi-natural woodland and a lowland mixed deciduous woodland – priority habitat.

Site Proposals

The plot subject of this application is 60m to the east of the last dwelling 'Tailend'. The 'Site Context Plan' shows the size of the application site is 51m wide x 56m long. There is a remaining area to the north of the application site (edged in blue) is 62m long x 51m wide. It is suggested on the 'Indicative Site Layout' (submitted with PA 261841 but not PA 261842) that this land will be used for BNG improvements, and the inclusion of a 15m buffer to the ASNW of Tippens Wood, an approach that would visually continue in part the pattern of very long landscaped plots associated with the existing dwellings, and contribute to the landscape character. This additional space must not lead to further housing development.

I am concerned this development does not follow the existing building line and has narrow fields between this and the sister application. This application is a wider site and I have concerns about the continuation of incremental urban creep of development and loss of openness between 'Tailend' dwelling and the edge of Binfield. The sites are in the countryside – and although there is an existing pattern of development along the north side of Forest Road it is not a consistent linear development but is separated by rural features such as woodland and arable fields. The remaining fields along the north side of Forest Road between Tailend and Bracknell district are few but they contribute to the open space between settlements. There is development on the south side of Forest Road but again this is not continuous but scattered.

An 'Indicative Layout Principles' – May 2026 shows a proposed layout with 4 dwellings arranged in 2 plots of 2 dwellings with the dwellings on the second plot staggered backwards by 6m and 10m whereas the first house on the first plot is set a small distance backwards of the 2nd house. Although the formation is similar the gap of the intervening field is a pause in the arrangement. The back gardens contain 'secure cycle parking and parking in garage outbuildings'. The 2 dwellings in the 2 plots share an access.

The 'Indicative Layout Principles' drawing shows a more worked up plan but the plot boundaries seem to disappear. The construction of the 2 access points and facilitating visibility splays might be an issue with regard to retaining the hedges. As much of the native hedgerow/young hedgerow trees as possible need to be retained and space made for enhancement planting, which is crucial to the scheme. We need to understand the impact of the development on existing landscape features with information provided in an Arboricultural Implications Assessment to BS5837:2012. As this is development in the countryside a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is required to assess the impact on the landscape character and the visual impact. A Landscape Strategy will evolve from the LIVA which needs to be compliant with Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Local Plan.

The development will be directly onto Forest Road which is a long straight road and is close to a change in vehicle speed to 40 mph and the zone where the first 3 dwellings are located is where vehicles start to gather speed. There is narrow

footway on the north side of Forest Road but this is close to fast traffic and not comfortable to walk on.

Summary

As with the recent pre-application on this site there is very minimal information submitted such that we cannot assess the proposals in relation to the Core Strategy Policies CP1 or CP3 which is especially important to understand as the site is outside any settlement boundary and within the countryside.

The site is located within the countryside and therefore is contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP11 which states that development outside the settlement boundary would NOT normally be permitted except in specific circumstances. None of the exemptions listed in points 1 – 7 of this policy relates to the proposed development on this site. This is backed up by Chapter 4 of the NPPF 2026 which supports development on suitable land within settlements whilst limiting development away from settlements to help safeguard the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

In order to understand the effects of the proposed development on the surrounding landscape character, the application will need to be accompanied by a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) to support new development within the countryside as required by Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21. The LVIA will need to fully consider how the proposals address the key characteristics of this landscape character area and specifically how the impacts of the development can be reduced and mitigated by sympathetic and appropriate design principles. No information has been provided with the application to assess landscape character and therefore the application is contrary to Local Plan policy TB21.

No information has been provided with regard to the existing tree resource adjacent to Forest Road and the within and adjacent to the north of the site as required by MDD Local Plan Policy CC03. A tree survey and arboricultural impact assessment to BS 5837:2012 will need to be provided to identify the tree resource within and adjacent to the site and to help inform design and layout of the site in relation to RPA's of trees and hedgerows.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Date:	26.8.26	Signed:	BRC
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