

TITLE: **Planning Support Statement**
CLIENT: Mr & Mrs Draggon
LOCATION: Land North of Barkham Road, Wokingham, RG41 4TJ
ISSUED: Tuesday, 4 August 2026

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
Documents included within this Planning Application	4
2. Site Description	6
3. Planning History	8
Pre-application engagement with Wokingham Borough Council	8
Design Review Panel	10
4. The Proposal	11
5. Planning Policy	14
Statutory framework and National Planning Policy Framework	14
The development plan	15
Emerging Local Plan Update	16
Five-year housing land supply	16
Self-build, CIL and protected-site mitigation	16
6. Material Planning Considerations	18
Decision Making	18
Principle of development	18
Isolation and Paragraph 84(e)	19
Exceptional design: Paragraph 84(e) first limb	19
Exceptional design: Paragraph 84(e) second limb	21
Design Review Panel and design evolution	22
Landscape and visual impact	22
Trees, hedgerows and woodland	23
Ecology, protected species and biodiversity enhancement	24
Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Habitats Regulations	25
Access and highways	25
Parking, cycle storage, EV charging and refuse	26
Flood risk and drainage	26
Sustainability, energy and carbon	27
Dark skies and lighting	28
Residential amenity and noise	28
Heritage and archaeology	28
Contamination, land stability and construction	29
Utilities and other site constraints	29
Self-build, BNG exemption, CIL and affordable housing	29
Policy compliance summary	30
7. Planning Balance	32
8. Conclusion	35

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Support Statement has been prepared by Daniel Gender-Sherry, Director at Axiom Planning, on behalf of Mr & Mrs Draggon in support of a full planning application at Land North of Barkham Road, Wokingham, RG41 4TJ.
- 1.2. The application proposes the erection of one detached self-build dwelling, detached garage and store building, with associated access, parking, drainage, landscaping and woodland management.
- 1.3. The application site is defined by a red line extending to 2,940 square metres, or 0.294 hectares. The landscape, ecological and woodland management strategy also considers adjoining land in the applicants' ownership, but the planning application site is the 0.294-hectare red-line area.
- 1.4. The proposal is advanced pursuant to Paragraph 84(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 84(e) provides a specific national policy route for isolated homes in the countryside where the design is of exceptional quality, is truly outstanding, reflects the highest standards in architecture, helps to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas, significantly enhances its immediate setting and is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.
- 1.5. This is not a conventional countryside dwelling. House of the Woods is a landscape-led, ecology-led and architecture-led response to a particular woodland site. It has evolved through two rounds of formal pre-application engagement with Wokingham Borough Council, three independent Design Review Panel sessions, specialist landscape and visual assessment, ecological and arboricultural assessment, flood-risk and drainage design, structural testing and energy modelling.
- 1.6. The application acknowledges that the adopted development plan ordinarily restricts new market housing outside development limits. That locational conflict is addressed openly. National policy, the Council's housing-land-supply position, independent design-review endorsement and the submitted technical evidence are material considerations indicating that permission should nevertheless be granted.
- 1.7. The principal planning case is that:
 - the site is isolated for the purposes of Paragraph 84;

- the proposal is of exceptional quality and the final Design Review Panel concluded that it meets the very high Paragraph 84(e) threshold;
- the five-volume pavilion arrangement and falling-leaves roof concept reflect the highest standards in architecture;
- the scheme demonstrates a transferable approach to landscape-led, low-carbon rural design and will help raise design standards;
- the landscape and woodland strategy significantly enhances the immediate setting rather than merely screening the dwelling;
- the proposal is sensitive to Barkham's wooded landscape, dispersed settlement pattern, road-edge vegetation, topography, watercourse and material character;
- the current 2.5-year housing-land-supply position engages the presumption in favour of sustainable development; and
- landscape, ecology, trees, flood risk, drainage, access, amenity, lighting, sustainability and protected-site mitigation are appropriately addressed.

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED WITHIN THIS PLANNING APPLICATION

1.8. The application is supported by the following principal drawings, statements, assessments and engagement records. Administrative application forms and ownership certificates are additional to this schedule.

Document type	Document title / reference	Author	Date / status
Application drawings	2000 Site Location Plan; 2001 Existing Site Plan; 3000 Proposed Site Plan; 3001 Proposed Block Plan Overlaid with Tree Survey; 3002 Proposed Masterplan; 3003 Proposed Building Plan; 3004 Access, Bins and Bikes; 3005 Visibility Splays; 3006 Roof Plan; 3100–3101 Proposed Building Elevations; 3102 Proposed Garage Elevations.	Hawkes Architecture	July / August 2026;
Design and Access Statement	681_DO_DD_08 Design Document for Planning, Chapters 1–10.	Hawkes Architecture with PAD Landscapes and project-team input	July / August 2026;
Landscape	Landscape Design and Access Statement, House of the Wood.	PAD Landscapes / Phil Allen Design Ltd	2 June 2026;

Landscape and visual	DPLC/431/LVIA – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.	David Parfitt Landscape Consultancy	21 July 2026
Ecology	Updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (including Ground Level Tree Assessment for Bats), Ref. R2354_UpPEA_c.	John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP	June 2026; Rev c
Protected species	Updated Reptile Survey, Ref. R2354_UpdRS_a.	John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP	June 2026; Rev a
Ecological implementation	Ecological Letter of Intent.	John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP	22 June 2026
Great crested newt	Great Crested Newt Statement.	Axiom Planning, based on JWEC evidence	24 July 2026
Trees and arboriculture	BS5837 Tree Constraints, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection information.	Blake James Utting Tree Care / B.J. Unwin Forestry Consultancy	16 June 2026
Flood risk	26191-C-R-001 Flood Risk Assessment, Issue B.	Monson Engineering	29 July 2026
Drainage	26191-C-R-002 Drainage Strategy, Issue B.	Monson Engineering	29 July 2026
Energy	Full SAP Calculation, assessment reference 3716; Predicted Energy Performance Certificate.	Nick Gill / Pebble Energy	3 June 2026
Design review	Design Review Panel feedback: 30 April 2025, 14 November 2025 and 22 June 2026.	The Design Review Panel	Final feedback reports
Pre-application	Wokingham Borough Council pre-application responses 240473 and 242870, together with Ecology Officer responses.	Wokingham Borough Council	June 2024 and February 2025
Planning history / legal	Relevant historic decision and appeal material; copy of historic signed Section 106 Agreement.	Wokingham Borough Council / Planning Inspectorate / parties	Historic reference material
Planning	Planning Support Statement.	Axiom Planning	4 August 2026;

2. Site Description

- 2.1. The application site comprises 0.294 hectares of land on the northern side of Barkham Road, Wokingham. It forms part of a wider area of woodland, scrub and grassland within the applicants' ownership.
- 2.2. The site lies outside defined development limits and is treated as countryside for development-plan purposes. It is not within the Green Belt, a National Landscape or a conservation area.
- 2.3. Barkham Road forms the southern boundary. It is a well-trafficked route with a footway adjoining the site. Open agricultural land lies to the south of the road, providing a marked contrast with the wooded northern side.
- 2.4. Immediately east are three pairs of semi-detached dwellings known as Bridge Cottages. To the west is Caldwell House, a detached dwelling in substantial wooded grounds. Barkham Brook runs along the northern edge of the wider land, beyond which the land rises into open fields.
- 2.5. The land falls by approximately four metres from Barkham Road towards Barkham Brook. This topography, together with the enclosed woodland structure, creates a strong sense of separation from the road and surrounding development.
- 2.6. The application area is principally other neutral grassland, blackthorn scrub and scattered trees. The wider land contains secondary oak and alder-dominated lowland mixed deciduous woodland and a native roadside hedgerow. The woodland and hedgerow are habitats of principal importance and are of local ecological value.
- 2.7. The woodland and trees are subject to Tree Preservation Order 1597/2017, comprising an area order to the east and a woodland order to the west. The submitted arboricultural assessment records 153 individual trees or groups: 18 are of moderate quality, 133 of low quality and two are unsuitable for retention. No Category A trees are recorded.
- 2.8. The site contains no pond. A flowing ditch and Barkham Brook lie at the northern boundary. The nearest mapped pond is approximately 194 metres to the south-west at Handpost Farm and has been assessed as poor habitat for great crested newts.
- 2.9. The Coombes Local Wildlife Site lies approximately 200 metres to the north-east. The site also lies within the five-kilometre mitigation zone for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and within the impact-risk zone for Longmoor Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest.

- 2.10. No public right of way crosses the site. The nearest public routes include BARK 7 to the south and BARK 6 to the east. The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment confirms that the proposal will not be visible from those routes.
- 2.11. The site falls mainly within the Arborfield and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay landscape character area, with the northern part influenced by the Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills character area. The defining qualities are wooded stream corridors, mature hedgerow trees, irregular woodland blocks, rural enclosure and dispersed development.
- 2.12. The principal built-development area is outside the modelled design flood extent associated with Barkham Brook. The Environment Agency Product 6 information establishes a design flood level of 47.24 metres AOD for the one-in-100-year event including climate change.
- 2.13. A medium-pressure gas main crosses the wider land. The building location has been developed around the known utility constraint; detailed works near the main and the cathodic-protection installation will remain subject to the utility operator's requirements.
- 2.14. The site does not contain a designated heritage asset. Bearwood House registered park and garden and scheduled moated sites lie in the wider area, but distance, topography and intervening vegetation prevent the proposal from affecting their significance.

3. Planning History

- 3.1. The site has been the subject of three previous applications for a dwelling. Those proposals were conventional residential schemes and were not supported by a developed Paragraph 84(e) design case.

Reference	Description	Outcome
F/2010/1692	Proposed erection of a new dwelling.	Refused 25 October 2010.
F/2011/1412	Proposed erection of a new dwelling.	Refused 19 August 2011.
F/2013/0461	Erection of a dwelling on land between Caldwell House and 6 Bridge Cottages.	Refused 14 June 2013; appeal dismissed 13 March 2014.

- 3.2. The principal reasons for refusal concerned the countryside location, character and appearance, infrastructure, Thames Basin Heaths mitigation, biodiversity and, in earlier schemes, flood and tree impacts. The 2014 Inspector also found that the dwelling then proposed would add to the existing limited development in a manner harmful to the rural surroundings.
- 3.3. That decision is a material site-specific consideration, but it does not determine the present application. The current proposal has a different red line, siting, architectural concept and landscape relationship; is supported by current ecology, arboriculture, flood, drainage, energy and landscape evidence; has undergone three design-review stages; and is expressly promoted under Paragraph 84(e).
- 3.4. The present scheme responds directly to the former concern that additional built form would merely extend ribbon development. The dwelling is conceived as a contained composition within a woodland setting, with a deliberately limited domestic area, a recessive access and a long-term landscape-management strategy.

PRE-APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT WITH WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

- 3.5. Two formal pre-application processes were undertaken under references 240473 and 242870. The Council's advice was cautious and, in relation to the then schemes, negative. It identified the adopted spatial-strategy conflict and required the application to demonstrate that the exceptional national-policy threshold, rather than ordinary good design, was met.

- 3.6. The final application has not treated those responses as matters to be argued away. They have informed material changes to the design, red line, landscape strategy and technical package.

Pre-application issue	Final application response
Countryside principle and CP11 conflict	The conflict is acknowledged. The application relies on Paragraph 84(e), the current tilted balance, DRP endorsement and substantial design, landscape and sustainability benefits.
Isolation	The Council accepted that Bridge Cottages do not constitute a settlement and that, on the ground, the dwelling would be detached from neighbouring development by woodland. The final statement applies the Braintree and Bramshill principles.
Extent of site and domestication	The application red line is 0.294ha. Domestic functions are concentrated around the dwelling; the wider woodland remains a managed ecological and landscape resource rather than conventional garden.
Design quality	The former T-shaped scheme has been replaced by five pavilion-like volumes and an integrated falling-leaves roof canopy. DRP 3 concluded that the final proposal meets Paragraph 84(e).
Landscape and visual impact	The final LVIA, landscape DAS and masterplan demonstrate containment, boundary reinforcement, naturalistic management and beneficial woodland-character effects.
Trees and TPO woodland	The principal woodland is retained. The corrected arboricultural package identifies limited low-quality removals, tree-protection measures, construction controls and long-term management.
Habitats and protected species	The final PEA, GLTA, reptile survey, Great Crested Newt Statement and ecological commitments address direct and indirect effects, lighting, construction safeguards and management.
Access and visibility	Drawing 3005 demonstrates 2.4m x 120m visibility to the west and 2.4m x 43m to the east. Parking, turning, cycles, EV charging and refuse are shown on drawing 3004.
Flooding and drainage	Issue B reports incorporate Environment Agency Product 6 data. The dwelling FFL is 47.85m AOD, above the 47.24m AOD design flood level, and the SuDS strategy provides controlled discharge and exceedance routes.
Sustainability	Project-specific SAP modelling confirms an A99 rating, very low regulated emissions, high-performance fabric, heat-pump technology, MVHR and on-site photovoltaic generation.
Thames Basin Heaths SPA	The applicant accepts a current SANG and SAMM contribution secured through an appropriate legal agreement.

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

- 3.7. The proposal was reviewed independently on 30 April 2025, 14 November 2025 and 22 June 2026. The first review included a site visit. The sequence demonstrates a genuine iterative design process rather than post-rationalisation of a fixed scheme.

Review date	Panel position and design response
30 April 2025	The site was considered capable of accommodating a Paragraph 84(e) dwelling and the isolation criterion was accepted. The panel supported a light-touch pavilion approach but found that the design had not yet met the exceptional threshold. It sought stronger local-character analysis, optioneering, curtilage control, woodland integration, lighting and sustainability evidence.
14 November 2025	The revised pavilion arrangement was regarded as a meaningful positive shift. The House of the Woods narrative, glade and canopy analysis, contextual work and landscape zoning were welcomed. The panel considered the scheme to be moving towards Paragraph 84(e), subject to roof, garage, water, light and detailed refinement.
22 June 2026	The panel concluded that the proposal now meets the very high Paragraph 84(e) threshold. It found the architecture exceptional, the response sensitive to local characteristics and the landscape capable of significantly enhancing the setting. Remaining comments related to refinement, explanation and detailed control but did not detract from the conclusion that the proposal met the very high bar of Paragraph 84(e).

- 3.8. The final review was undertaken by a multidisciplinary panel and considered the architectural, landscape, ecological, arboricultural and structural information together. The outcome is an important material consideration under Paragraph 138 of the NPPF.

The Panel considers that the proposal now meets the very high bar set by Paragraph 84(e).

- 3.9. The final application responds to the residual recommendations through the building/tree overlay, the explanation of the five volumes, roof proof-of-concept work, a reduced and recessive garage, the landscape-management strategy, integrated water management and detailed controls on glazing and light spill

4. The Proposal

- 4.1. The application proposes House of the Woods: a four-bedroom, single-storey self-build dwelling of exceptional quality, with a detached garage and store building, access, parking, turning, drainage, landscape works, ecological enhancement and woodland management.
- 4.2. The dwelling has a gross internal area of 286 square metres and a volume of approximately 1,140 cubic metres. The detached garage and store have a gross internal area of 56 square metres and a volume of approximately 199 cubic metres. The SAP treated floor area is 283 square metres.
- 4.3. The dwelling is organised as five principal pavilion-like volumes. Their positions and orientations respond to the existing tree structure, root-protection areas, light, outlook, arrival, privacy, movement and the client brief. The volumes frame a central open-plan 'glade' and create filtered views into the woodland.
- 4.4. The layered roof canopy is derived from leaves falling and overlapping on the woodland floor. Each roof plane has a clear hierarchy and is shaped to provide shelter, solar control, roof lighting and controlled rainwater collection. The roof structure has been developed with structural engineers HRW to demonstrate technical feasibility.
- 4.5. The dwelling finished-floor level is 47.85 metres AOD. The consistent internal datum allows the building to sit above lower ground and the modelled flood level while retaining a close relationship with the surrounding land.
- 4.6. The material palette is deliberately earthy and recessive. It comprises natural vertical timber cladding, darker charred timber and fins, dark standing-seam metal roofing, weathered copper accents, triple glazing, matt-black louvres and shadow gaps, and rain chains.
- 4.7. The garage is detached and subordinate. Its darker treatment, reduced mass and position behind the principal arrival view ensure that it reads as a secondary woodland building rather than competing with the dwelling.
- 4.8. Vehicular access uses the existing entrance at the south-eastern corner. The design provides the visibility splays requested by the Highway Authority, a bound entrance treatment, a driveway with a rural character, at least three parking spaces, a double garage, forward-gear turning, secure cycle storage, an electric-vehicle charging point and an integrated refuse arrangement.

- 4.9. The landscape strategy is part of the architecture. It does not rely on ornamental screening. It retains the main woodland and roadside vegetation, reinforces boundaries, creates managed glades, introduces native understorey, restores meadow character, integrates water and wet woodland, and defines a controlled transition between domestic amenity and naturalistic woodland.
- 4.10. The principal landscape and woodland measures include:
- retention and protection of the oak- and alder-dominated woodland and native roadside hedgerow;
 - selective removal of diseased ash, unsuitable trees and limited non-native specimens, with deadwood retained where safe;
 - limited coppice restoration, with no more than four stools cut in any one year and at least 25% retained as mature standards;
 - non-intervention management of the oak-dominated woodland;
 - formation and management of woodland glades and scalloped scrub edges;
 - native tree, shrub and ground-flora planting appropriate to the existing woodland and soil conditions;
 - species-rich meadow and areas of varied mowing, with mown and bark-mulch paths;
 - a naturalistic pond, wet woodland and drainage features integrated into the landscape;
 - small, clearly defined amenity areas including morning and afternoon seating and a productive garden; and
 - long-term ecological and landscape management through an approved management plan.
- 4.11. The sustainability strategy adopts a fabric-first approach. It includes high levels of insulation, a design air-permeability target of $2.0\text{m}^3/(\text{h}\cdot\text{m}^2)$ at 50Pa, triple glazing, an air-source heat pump, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, high-efficiency lighting, photovoltaic generation, battery-storage capability, rainwater harvesting and post-occupancy evaluation.
- 4.12. The proposal's external-lighting strategy is based on restraint. Essential lighting will be low-level, warm-colour, directional and controlled. Boundary and woodland-edge dark corridors

will remain unlit. Overhangs, louvres, solar-control glass and internal blinds will minimise operational light spill.

- 4.13. The drainage strategy uses source control and reuse before controlled discharge. Roof water is collected in three water butts, a rainwater-harvesting tank and a feature pond; the driveway uses pervious construction; additional attenuation provides capacity for the one-in-100-year event plus 45% climate change; and discharge to Barkham Brook is restricted to the greenfield rate.
- 4.14. The scheme is self-build and will be commissioned and occupied by the applicants. The proposal therefore adds a bespoke, high-quality home to the Borough's housing stock while enabling long-term stewardship of the woodland.

5. Planning Policy

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires the decision-maker to have regard to the development plan, local finance considerations and other material considerations.
- 5.2. The National Planning Policy Framework published in December 2024 and amended in February 2025 is a material consideration. It does not displace the statutory primacy of the development plan, but can indicate that permission should be granted where national policy provides a clear basis.
- 5.3. Paragraph 11 establishes the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Where the policies most important for determining an application are out of date, permission should be granted unless the application of protected-area policies provides a strong reason for refusal, or adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole.
- 5.4. Paragraph 39 requires positive and creative decision-taking. Paragraph 73 recognises the contribution of small sites and expects authorities to seek opportunities for self-build and custom-build housing.
- 5.5. Paragraph 84 states that isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless one or more specified circumstances apply. Paragraph 84(e) applies where the design is of exceptional quality, in that it is truly outstanding, reflects the highest standards in architecture, helps raise standards of design more generally in rural areas, significantly enhances its immediate setting and is sensitive to local defining characteristics.
- 5.6. Paragraphs 110, 115 and 116 require the location and transport implications of development to be considered in context, safe and suitable access to be achieved, and refusal on highway grounds only where safety impacts are unacceptable or residual network impacts are severe.
- 5.7. Paragraph 131 identifies high-quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings as fundamental. Paragraphs 138 and 139 expect appropriate use of design review and significant weight to be given to outstanding or innovative design which promotes sustainability or raises design standards.

- 5.8. Paragraphs 187 and 193 require development to contribute to and enhance the natural environment, apply the mitigation hierarchy and integrate biodiversity improvement. Paragraph 195 addresses Habitats Regulations sites and the relationship with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 5.9. The adopted development plan comprises the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2010, the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014, the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan 2019–2036 made in April 2020, and relevant minerals and waste policies.

Plan	Relevant policies
Core Strategy	CP1 Sustainable Development; CP2 Inclusive Communities; CP3 General Principles for Development; CP4 Infrastructure Requirements; CP5 Housing Mix, Density and Affordability; CP6 Managing Travel Demand; CP7 Biodiversity; CP8 Thames Basin Heaths SPA; CP9 Scale and Location; CP11 Proposals Outside Development Limits; CP17 Housing Delivery; CP18 Arborfield Garrison SDL.
Managing Development Delivery Local Plan	CC01 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development; CC02 Development Limits; CC03 Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping; CC04 Sustainable Design and Construction; CC05 Renewable Energy; CC06 Noise; CC07 Parking; CC09 Development and Flood Risk; CC10 Sustainable Drainage; TB05 Housing Mix; TB07 Internal Space Standards; TB21 Landscape Character; TB23 Biodiversity and Development; SAL05 SPA mitigation.
Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan	IRS1 Separation of Settlements; IRS2 Identity and Rural Setting; IRS3 Natural Environment and Green Spaces; IRS4 Historic Character; AD2 Local Housing Needs; AD3 High-Quality Development and Landscaping; AD4 Local Flood Risk; GA1 Traffic on Unsuitable Roads; GA2 Green Routes.

- 5.10. Core Strategy Policy CP11 is the principal adopted locational policy. It states that development outside development limits will not normally be permitted except within specified categories. A new market self-build dwelling is not one of those categories. MDD Policy CC02 and Neighbourhood Plan Policy IRS1 reinforce the spatial strategy.
- 5.11. The proposal therefore conflicts with the adopted development plan in relation to the location of new housing. It responds positively, however, to the plan's detailed requirements for design, landscape, ecology, trees, sustainable construction, drainage, flood risk, access, parking and amenity.

EMERGING LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

- 5.12. Wokingham Borough Council's Local Plan Update 2023–2040 was submitted for examination in February 2025 and the examination has continued through 2026. It is an advanced material consideration, but the statutory starting point remains the adopted development plan and the weight of emerging policies depends on their stage, unresolved objections and consistency with national policy.
- 5.13. Relevant emerging policies include SS1 Sustainable Development, SS2 Spatial Strategy, SS5 Countryside, SS10 Housing Needs, SS15 Infrastructure, CE1 Efficient Buildings, CE3 Residential Environmental Standards, CE5 Embodied Carbon, CE7 Renewable Energy, C1–C5 Transport, H1 Housing Standards, H3 Affordable Housing, H6 Self-build, FD1–FD3 Flooding and Drainage, NE1–NE6 Natural Environment, DH1–DH2 Design and HC7–HC9 Amenity and pollution.
- 5.14. The emerging plan continues to direct housing to settlements and protect the countryside. It also gives strong support to design quality, self-build, low-carbon construction, biodiversity, landscape and sustainable drainage. Those objectives are integrated into the proposal.

FIVE-YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

- 5.15. The Council's Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement, based on the position at 31 March 2025 and published in August 2025, identifies a deliverable supply of 2.5 years. The Council expressly recognises that Paragraph 11 of the NPPF is engaged.
- 5.16. The shortfall is substantial. The policies most important for determining housing location are therefore out of date for the purposes of Paragraph 11(d). This does not erase the development-plan conflict, but it reduces the weight of restrictive housing policies and engages the tilted balance.
- 5.17. The Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan remains part of the statutory development plan, but it was made more than five years ago. The protective provision in Paragraph 14 of the NPPF does not disapply the tilted balance.

SELF-BUILD, CIL AND PROTECTED-SITE MITIGATION

- 5.18. National policy supports self-build opportunities. The Council's latest published information records continuing demand on its self-build register. The application will provide a bespoke self-build home and can be secured as such through an appropriate condition or obligation if necessary.

- 5.19. The dwelling is liable to Community Infrastructure Levy in principle. Self-build relief is available subject to the prescribed process, including claiming relief before commencement and occupying the completed dwelling as the applicants' sole or main residence for the required period.
- 5.20. The site lies within five kilometres of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. A net additional dwelling requires SANG and SAMM mitigation. For a four-bedroom dwelling, current published rates indicate £3,546.86 towards SANG and £1,306.00 towards SAMM, a total of £4,852.86, subject to indexation and confirmation at the date of completion of the legal agreement.
- 5.21. The proposal qualifies for the statutory self-build biodiversity-net-gain exemption because it comprises one qualifying self-build dwelling on a site of 0.294 hectares. The application does not claim a statutory metric gain; it nevertheless delivers substantial qualitative habitat enhancement.

6. Material Planning Considerations

DECISION MAKING

- 6.1. The decision must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF, Paragraph 84(e), the Design Review Panel outcome, housing-land-supply shortfall, self-build status and submitted technical evidence are material considerations.
- 6.2. The proposal conflicts with the adopted spatial strategy because it introduces a dwelling outside development limits. That conflict carries weight. The assessment is therefore not advanced on the basis that CP11 is irrelevant or that Paragraph 84(e) automatically overrides the development plan.
- 6.3. The correct approach is to identify the conflict, evaluate the proposal against Paragraph 84(e), consider compliance with the remaining development-plan policies, apply the tilted balance and determine whether the material considerations indicate that permission should be granted. They do.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 6.4. The application is not promoted as an ordinary market dwelling in the countryside. It is a single self-build dwelling designed expressly to meet the exceptional national-policy test in Paragraph 84(e).
- 6.5. Paragraph 84(e) is one of the key NPPF policies identified for directing development to sustainable locations. It recognises that, in exceptional circumstances, an isolated rural home can represent sustainable development because of the quality of its design and its enhancement of place.
- 6.6. The Council's 2.5-year supply position independently engages Paragraph 11(d). The delivery of one dwelling attracts moderate weight in quantitative terms, but the housing benefit is reinforced by the proposal's self-build status, rapid deliverability and exceptional quality.
- 6.7. The development plan's detailed objectives are met: the scheme is of high design quality; protects settlement separation; avoids coalescence; conserves landscape character; retains the principal woodland; provides ecological enhancement; achieves safe access; manages flood risk and drainage; protects amenity; and substantially exceeds normal energy-performance expectations.

- 6.8. The locational conflict is therefore narrow. It is outweighed by the specific Paragraph 84(e) case and the wider planning balance set out below.

ISOLATION AND PARAGRAPH 84(E)

- 6.9. The term 'isolated' is not defined in the NPPF. In *Braintree District Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* [2018] EWCA Civ 610, the Court of Appeal held that it connotes a dwelling physically separate or remote from a settlement. *City and Country Bramshill Ltd v Secretary of State* [2021] EWCA Civ 320 confirmed that the assessment is a matter of planning judgement.
- 6.10. A settlement can include a hamlet or cluster, but the question is whether the nearby group of buildings functions and reads as a settlement, not merely whether other dwellings are visible or close in distance.
- 6.11. Bridge Cottages comprise six dwellings in three semi-detached pairs. The Council's first pre-application response expressly accepted that those cottages do not make up a settlement. The dwelling would be separated from them on the ground by vegetation and its woodland setting.
- 6.12. The site is also physically and perceptually separate from the wider built-up areas of Barkham, Arborfield Cross, Arborfield Green and Wokingham. Barkham Road, open fields, Barkham Brook, woodland blocks and intervening gaps prevent the proposal from being experienced as an extension of a defined settlement.
- 6.13. The Design Review Panel, after visiting the site, likewise considered that the isolation criterion was met. Its assessment reflects the site's enclosed, peaceful and unexpectedly remote character notwithstanding the presence of the road and scattered nearby dwellings.
- 6.14. The site is therefore isolated for the purposes of Paragraph 84 and Paragraph 84(e) is engaged.

EXCEPTIONAL DESIGN: PARAGRAPH 84(E) FIRST LIMB

- 6.15. The first limb requires more than good or contextually acceptable architecture. It requires a truly outstanding design reflecting the highest standards and helping raise rural design standards. The proposal meets that test through its concept, process, technical resolution, environmental performance and site relationship.
- 6.16. The architecture begins with the woodland rather than a predetermined house type. The five principal volumes are positioned in response to trees, root zones, views, light, movement and enclosure. Their scale corresponds with canopy gaps and trunk spacing, so the plan is generated by the place rather than imposed upon it.

- 6.17. The central glade provides the organising spatial idea. Open living areas occupy the interstitial space between more cellular pavilions, enabling long internal axes, filtered daylight and views through multiple parts of the woodland. This produces a distinctive sequence of enclosure and release.
- 6.18. The roof is the scheme's primary architectural gesture. Overlapping planes, informed by fallen leaves, bring the five volumes together while preserving their legibility. The roof responds simultaneously to hierarchy, solar control, daylight, structure and water collection.
- 6.19. The design team has not relied on imagery alone. HRW has modelled the roof's structural principles, sized primary and secondary elements and tested load paths. Indicative sections demonstrate how rooflights, junctions, vapour control, drainage, soffits and exposed structure can be resolved.
- 6.20. The material strategy is sophisticated and place-specific. Natural and dark timber reflect the tones and vertical rhythm of trunks; dark seamed roofing reads as a shadowed canopy; copper elements weather naturally; and glazing is framed and controlled so that the building remains recessive by day and night.
- 6.21. The dwelling is designed as a high-performance environmental system. Building fabric, structure, ventilation, energy, water, shading and landscape have been developed together. This integration is a hallmark of the highest architectural standards.
- 6.22. Independent design review provides objective confirmation. DRP 1 withheld support and required more ambition. DRP 2 recognised substantial progress. DRP 3, after reviewing the refined design and technical work, concluded that the proposal meets the very high Paragraph 84(e) threshold.
- 6.23. The proposal will help raise rural design standards because its lessons are transferable:
- use of woodland structure as the generator of plan, mass and experience;
 - reinterpretation of rural typology without pastiche;
 - integration of landscape, ecology and architecture from inception;
 - structural proof-of-concept before submission for an ambitious roof form;
 - a restrained, high-performance material palette linked to place;
 - designing water collection and SuDS as visible architectural and landscape elements;

- combining fabric-first performance, renewable energy, post-occupancy evaluation and low-impact construction;
- controlling domestic curtilage and artificial light as part of the design; and
- using independent review as a genuine iterative process.

6.24. The first limb of Paragraph 84(e) is satisfied.

EXCEPTIONAL DESIGN: PARAGRAPH 84(E) SECOND LIMB

- 6.25. The second limb requires significant enhancement of the immediate setting and sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area. It is not enough for a dwelling to be screened or to cause little harm. The proposal must leave the setting materially better.
- 6.26. The baseline comprises a valuable but largely unmanaged mosaic: locally important secondary woodland and hedgerow, together with grassland and blackthorn scrub within the development area, diseased ash, limited understorey in shaded areas, over-mature coppice and areas where scrub has displaced grassland.
- 6.27. The defining local characteristics include wooded stream corridors, oak and alder woodland, mature roadside trees, irregular woodland blocks, a scattered settlement pattern, buildings set back from the road, varied architecture, long wooded approaches, topographic enclosure and the transition between Barkham Road and open countryside.
- 6.28. The proposal responds by locating built form in the lower-value grassland and scrub area rather than the principal woodland, retaining the wooded road frontage, working with the fall towards Barkham Brook, maintaining gaps between settlements and keeping the architecture below and within the canopy structure.
- 6.29. The setting is significantly enhanced through active stewardship. Diseased and unsuitable trees are selectively removed; new native understorey is introduced; glades and varied edge conditions increase light and structural diversity; oak woodland is retained as non-intervention habitat; coppice is restored carefully; deadwood is retained; and meadow, wet woodland and water habitats are created or strengthened.
- 6.30. The landscape does not become a conventional suburban garden. Amenity is concentrated close to the dwelling, with naturalistic sward, bark paths, woodland understorey and clear management regimes beyond. This avoids the gradual spread of domestic paraphernalia identified as a concern by the Council.

- 6.31. Boundary reinforcement preserves the woodland block as experienced from Barkham Road. The arrival sequence balances concealment and reveal, allowing the architecture to be understood without exposing it as an intrusive roadside object.
- 6.32. The LVIA concludes that the overall effect on landscape character is negligible and beneficial and that visual effects are insignificant, with only a minor local effect from the road opposite the entrance. The proposal is not visible from nearby public rights of way.
- 6.33. These measures improve the condition, resilience, biodiversity, visual structure and experiential quality of the site. The proposal therefore does more than fit into the woodland: it provides the mechanism and design framework for its long-term enhancement.
- 6.34. The second limb of Paragraph 84(e) is satisfied.

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL AND DESIGN EVOLUTION

- 6.35. The three-stage DRP process is central to the reliability of the exceptional-design case. The final endorsement is persuasive because it followed, rather than preceded, substantial criticism and redesign.
- 6.36. The T-shaped early plan was abandoned. The building was broken into smaller volumes; the garage was detached, reduced and subordinated; local-character analysis was expanded; domestic and non-domestic landscape zones were clarified; the roof was structurally tested; water became integral to the experience; and the arrival sequence was refined.
- 6.37. The final panel's remaining suggestions are matters capable of detailed control. They concern the continued refinement of roof edges, junctions, window treatments, garage expression and management wording. They do not undermine the panel's conclusion that the policy threshold is met.
- 6.38. Paragraph 138 requires the decision-maker to have regard to the outcome of design review. The Council retains its planning judgement, but there is no equivalent independent design evidence contradicting the final panel conclusion.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

- 6.39. Policies CP1, CP3, CC03, TB21, IRS1-IRS3 and AD3 require the countryside, settlement separation, landscape character, trees and green infrastructure to be conserved or enhanced.
- 6.40. The LVIA identifies a visually contained site. Existing woodland, scrub, roadside vegetation, topography and adjacent development restrict the visual envelope. The building will be glimpsed within trees rather than read as an exposed extension of settlement.

- 6.41. From the principal public receptor on Barkham Road opposite the entrance, the effect is assessed as minor and of low significance. The visibility is brief and framed by retained and proposed vegetation. No material effects are identified from BARK 6, BARK 7 or more distant routes.
- 6.42. The proposal maintains the separation between settlements. It does not close a strategic gap or create visual coalescence. The wider woodland block continues to mark a transition between the scattered built form and open fields.
- 6.43. Landscape measures are tied to a long-term management strategy. Their purpose is not temporary screening but restoration of local character: woodland structure, stream-edge habitat, native understorey, meadow, hedgerow reinforcement and water management.
- 6.44. The proposal accords with the landscape objectives of the adopted plan and materially exceeds the requirement merely to avoid harm. It contributes to the significant-enhancement test in Paragraph 84(e).

TREES, HEDGEROWS AND WOODLAND

- 6.45. The arboricultural assessment records no Category A trees. The principal moderate-quality trees and woodland structure are retained and inform the siting.
- 6.46. Limited removals comprise low-quality trees, scrub and unsuitable specimens necessary to accommodate the dwelling and restore woodland condition. The application does not pretend that no tree work occurs; it demonstrates why the work is selective, proportionate and integrated with ecological advice.
- 6.47. Tree-protection measures include root-protection areas, protective fencing, exclusion zones, controlled access, specialist construction methods, arboricultural supervision and replacement planting.
- 6.48. The TPO does not prohibit development. It requires the value and future contribution of protected trees and woodland to be assessed and safeguarded. The submitted overlay and method statement demonstrate that the building has been shaped around the retained tree framework.
- 6.49. The long-term management approach is ecologically specific: oak-dominated woodland remains largely non-intervention; alder coppice is restored gradually; native structural diversity is increased; and deadwood is retained wherever safe. The proposal accords with CP7, CC03, TB21, TB23 and IRS3.

ECOLOGY, PROTECTED SPECIES AND BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT

- 6.50. The Updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy identifies the principal woodland and native hedgerow as habitats of principal importance and of local value. Grassland and blackthorn scrub in the development area are of site and local value.
- 6.51. The design follows the mitigation hierarchy. It avoids the principal woodland, minimises loss of scrub and grassland, protects retained habitats during construction, provides compensatory and enhancement planting, and secures long-term management.
- 6.52. A Construction Environmental Management Plan for Biodiversity will control fencing, pollution prevention, material storage, vegetation clearance, ecological supervision, lighting and unexpected finds. A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan will secure the approved woodland, scrub, grassland, pond and understorey regime.
- 6.53. The 2026 reptile survey recorded one adult male slow-worm and therefore identifies a low population. It did not record grass snake, although a good population was recorded historically in 2008. The final mitigation will include capture and translocation during the active season, supervised phased clearance, suitable receptor habitat and hibernacula.
- 6.54. The Great Crested Newt Statement identifies a low or very low terrestrial risk. There is no pond on the site; the nearest mapped pond is poor habitat; and no local records or relevant licence data were identified. Reasonable avoidance measures, ecological supervision and a stop-work procedure are committed.
- 6.55. Bat foraging and commuting habitat is retained through dark woodland and boundary corridors. Any work to a tree with potential roost features will follow the inspection, soft-felling and licensing safeguards set out by the ecologist. New bat-roosting features will be provided.
- 6.56. Vegetation clearance will avoid the nesting-bird season or follow a pre-clearance check. An updated badger check will precede clearance. Hedgehog permeability, deadwood, log piles, habitat stacks and native planting provide wider enhancement.
- 6.57. The proposal is exempt from mandatory BNG, and no unsupported percentage gain is claimed. The ecological benefit remains material: habitat structure, woodland edge, grassland diversity, scrub age structure, wet habitat, deadwood and species features will all improve.
- 6.58. The proposal accords with CP7, CC03, TB23, IRS3 and the relevant NPPF biodiversity policies.

THAMES BASIN HEATHS SPA AND HABITATS REGULATIONS

- 6.59. The site lies within five kilometres of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. A new dwelling could contribute to recreational pressure in combination with other residential development.
- 6.60. The established avoidance strategy is the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring. The applicants accept the current contribution and an appropriate Section 106 mechanism. The precise indexed amount will be confirmed by the Council at completion.
- 6.61. On the present four-bedroom basis, the published 2026 rates total £4,852.86. With that mitigation secured, the competent authority can conclude through appropriate assessment that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA.
- 6.62. The historic signed Section 106 agreement is included for legal and title context, but the application does not rely on it as discharging the present proposal's obligations. A current agreement or deed will be completed.
- 6.63. The SPA policies do not provide a strong reason for refusal under Paragraph 11(d)(i) because a proven mitigation route is available and accepted.

ACCESS AND HIGHWAYS

- 6.64. The proposal uses an existing access from Barkham Road. A single dwelling generates a limited number of vehicle movements and will not have a severe effect on the highway network.
- 6.65. Drawing 3005 demonstrates visibility splays of 2.4 metres by 120 metres to the west and 2.4 metres by 43 metres to the east, matching the Highway Authority's pre-application requirements. The splays are coordinated with the arboricultural and landscape proposals.
- 6.66. The entrance will be surfaced in a bound material for the required initial length, with any gate set back and opening inwards. The remainder of the drive will have a permeable, visually recessive treatment appropriate to the woodland.
- 6.67. Vehicles can enter and leave in forward gear. The arrangement provides safe access for residents, visitors, deliveries and emergency services.
- 6.68. The site is rural and future occupants will use private vehicles for many journeys. That is an adverse locational factor and is not dismissed. Paragraph 110 recognises, however, that opportunities for sustainable transport vary between urban and rural areas.

- 6.69. The proposal is one dwelling, not a car-dependent strategic allocation. EV charging and cycle storage are provided; local bus stops and services are available along Barkham Road; and the limited transport harm does not justify refusal under CP6, CC07 or NPPF paragraphs 115-116.

PARKING, CYCLE STORAGE, EV CHARGING AND REFUSE

- 6.70. At least three parking spaces are provided within the red line, including the double garage. The parking and turning area is integrated with the arrival landscape and does not dominate the dwelling.
- 6.71. The garage provides secure covered storage for at least three cycles and an electric-vehicle charging point. Its internal dimensions and access will be secured through the approved plans.
- 6.72. Refuse storage is incorporated near the access/garage arrangement. Collection will be managed so that bins can be presented without obstructing Barkham Road or requiring uncontrolled vehicle movements within the woodland.
- 6.73. The arrangements accord with MDD Policy CC07 and the Council's parking standards.

FLOOD RISK AND DRAINAGE

- 6.74. The wider site includes Flood Zones 2 and 3 associated with Barkham Brook. The building and principal development area have been located outside the modelled floodplain and above the design flood level.
- 6.75. The Environment Agency Product 6 data establishes a one-in-100-year plus climate-change flood level of 47.24 metres AOD. The dwelling FFL is 47.85 metres AOD, providing approximately 610mm freeboard.
- 6.76. The FRA identifies very low groundwater risk, no mapped surface-water risk to the dwelling and no known historic flooding. Reservoir risk is managed through the statutory monitoring of Longmoor Lake and the site's flood-warning arrangements.
- 6.77. The drainage strategy follows the SuDS hierarchy. Infiltration is not relied upon because of the clay-dominated ground. Rainwater is first collected for non-potable use and then attenuated before controlled discharge to Barkham Brook.
- 6.78. The drainage catchment comprises 1,176 square metres of roof, access and parking. The controlled discharge rate is 5.5 litres per second. Storage for the one-in-100-year plus 45% climate-change event totals approximately 56 cubic metres across water butts, rainwater harvesting, the permeable sub-base and an attenuation tank.

- 6.79. The feature pond, water butts and rain chains make water legible within the architecture and landscape. Exceedance flows are directed north towards Barkham Brook without passing through the dwelling or garage.
- 6.80. Foul water will be treated by a package plant designed for a ten-person loading, with treated effluent discharged separately in accordance with Environment Agency requirements. Any exemption or permit will be registered before the relevant works.
- 6.81. Maintenance schedules cover pervious paving, pipes, chambers, storage, pumps, the treatment plant and pond. Final details can be secured by condition. The proposal accords with CC09, CC10 and AD4.

SUSTAINABILITY, ENERGY AND CARBON

- 6.82. Sustainability is integral to the Paragraph 84(e) case. The proposal is designed to minimise demand before supplying remaining demand efficiently and through renewable generation.
- 6.83. The SAP 10.2 calculation prepared by Pebble Energy assesses a treated floor area of 283 square metres and confirms an A99 energy-efficiency rating and A99 environmental-impact rating.
- 6.84. The Dwelling Emission Rate is $0.55\text{kgCO}_2/\text{m}^2/\text{year}$ against a Target Emission Rate of $8.75\text{kgCO}_2/\text{m}^2/\text{year}$, a 93.71% improvement. The Dwelling Primary Energy Rate is $3.71\text{kWh}/\text{m}^2/\text{year}$ against a target of 50.46, a 92.66% improvement.
- 6.85. Fabric performance is strong: walls and roof achieve $0.12\text{W}/\text{m}^2\text{K}$, the floor $0.11\text{W}/\text{m}^2\text{K}$ and windows approximately $0.78\text{W}/\text{m}^2\text{K}$. The design air permeability is $2.0\text{m}^3/(\text{h}\cdot\text{m}^2)$ at 50Pa.
- 6.86. An air-source heat pump provides space and water heating, supported by MVHR with an assessed in-use efficiency of 83.7%. Photovoltaic generation is modelled at approximately 5.6-5.9MWh per year.
- 6.87. The building is designed for prefabrication, accurate digital coordination, reduced site waste, durable and repairable materials, and eventual disassembly or reuse where practicable. A post-occupancy evaluation will compare predicted and actual performance.
- 6.88. These measures substantially exceed normal regulatory performance and demonstrate how environmental ambition can reinforce architectural quality. The proposal accords with CP1, CC04, CC05 and the emerging carbon policies.

DARK SKIES AND LIGHTING

- 6.89. The site is not within the darkest national category, but the woodland, bats, rural setting and relationship with Barkham Brook require careful control of light.
- 6.90. External lighting will be limited to essential safety and access functions. It will use warm white sources at 2700K or below, low mounting heights, directional fittings, shielding and controls. No lighting will illuminate woodland, hedgerows or the brook corridor.
- 6.91. Internal spill is controlled through roof overhangs, louvres, solar-control glazing and blinds. Automated dusk-to-dawn blinds are proposed in sensitive glazed areas where appropriate.
- 6.92. These measures protect ecological corridors, tranquillity and the perception of a dark woodland block. Final specifications and lux information can be secured by condition.

RESIDENTIAL AMENITY AND NOISE

- 6.93. The dwelling is separated from neighbouring homes by distance, vegetation and its location within the site. Its single-storey form, orientation and controlled glazing avoid unacceptable overlooking, enclosure, loss of light or overbearing effect.
- 6.94. The dwelling provides generous internal space and private external amenity immediately around the building. Outlook, daylight and access to landscape have been central to the five-volume arrangement.
- 6.95. Barkham Road is a source of traffic noise. The dwelling is set well back behind the wooded frontage and its high-performance envelope, triple glazing and MVHR reduce reliance on open windows. There is no evidence that the site cannot provide acceptable living conditions.
- 6.96. Normal activity from one dwelling will not cause unacceptable noise or disturbance. Any detailed plant noise limit can be secured through condition if required. The proposal accords with CP3, CC06 and TB07.

HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGY

- 6.97. There is no designated heritage asset within the site and the site is outside a conservation area. The closest scheduled and registered assets are separated by substantial distance, landform, vegetation and intervening development.
- 6.98. The architecture draws from local character but does not imitate a heritage asset. There is no identified intervisibility or pathway by which the proposal would harm the significance of a listed building, scheduled monument or registered park and garden.

- 6.99. The long history of agricultural, orchard and undeveloped use does not indicate a high archaeological risk within the development footprint. If the Council identifies a residual archaeological interest, a proportionate watching brief can be secured by condition.
- 6.100. No heritage harm weighs against the proposal.

CONTAMINATION, LAND STABILITY AND CONSTRUCTION

- 6.101. The Council's Environmental Health Officer recorded no specific information indicating contamination on or around the site. The proposed residential use is sensitive, so an unexpected-contamination condition is appropriate.
- 6.102. If previously unidentified contamination is encountered, works will stop in the affected area and a risk assessment and remediation strategy will be agreed before work continues.
- 6.103. Detailed foundation design will follow ground investigation and structural design. The architecture has been developed to minimise ground disturbance, and screw piles or other low-impact foundation methods will be considered where technically suitable.

UTILITIES AND OTHER SITE CONSTRAINTS

- 6.104. The known gas main, easement and cathodic-protection equipment have informed the buildable-area analysis. The dwelling is located away from the principal pipeline constraint.
- 6.105. No construction will take place within the protected utility corridor without the operator's approval. Access, drainage and landscape works in the vicinity will comply with current plant-protection requirements.
- 6.106. The constraint does not prevent development and can be managed through detailed design and statutory undertaker controls.

SELF-BUILD, BNG EXEMPTION, CIL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 6.107. The proposal is a genuine self-build dwelling for Mr & Mrs Draggan, who are registered on the Local Authority's Self-Build Register. It responds to national support for small self-build sites and will be delivered without reliance on a volume-housebuilding programme.
- 6.108. The development comprises no more than nine dwellings and the site is 0.294 hectares. It therefore qualifies for the self-build exemption from mandatory BNG, subject to the prescribed declaration. Qualitative biodiversity enhancement remains a significant benefit.

6.109. The applicants intend to claim self-build CIL relief in accordance with the statutory process. Relief is procedural and will not be assumed unless the required forms are submitted before commencement and occupancy requirements are observed.

6.110. The proposal is for one dwelling and is not major development. National policy does not require affordable housing from non-major residential development, and the Council's pre-application advice accepted that an affordable-housing contribution was unlikely to be required.

6.111. A legal agreement will secure the current Thames Basin Heaths contribution and any other obligation that meets the statutory tests.

POLICY COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

Issue	Policies	Planning conclusion
Housing location	CP11, CC02, IRS1; emerging SS2/SS5	Conflict acknowledged: one dwelling outside development limits. Paragraph 84(e), the tilted balance and benefits indicate approval.
Sustainable development	CP1, CC01, NPPF 11	2.5-year supply engages the tilted balance. Protected-site and flood matters are capable of satisfactory mitigation.
Design	CP3, AD3, NPPF 131, 138, 139	Exceptional site-specific architecture, three-stage DRP process and final independent endorsement.
Isolation / rural housing	NPPF 84(e)	Bridge Cottages are not a settlement; the site is physically and perceptually separate from defined settlements. Both limbs are met.
Landscape and settlement separation	TB21, IRS1–IRS3, AD3	No coalescence; woodland character retained and enhanced; negligible beneficial overall landscape effect.
Trees and green infrastructure	CC03, CP7, TB23	Principal woodland retained; limited low-quality removals; protection, replacement and long-term management secured.
Ecology	CP7, TB23, IRS3, NPPF 193	Mitigation hierarchy applied; protected-species measures, CEMP and LEMP; substantial qualitative enhancement.
SPA	CP8, SAL05	SANG and SAMM contribution accepted and to be secured by current legal agreement.
Access and transport	CP6, CC07, GA1, NPPF 110/115/116	Safe access and required visibility achieved; traffic limited; rural car reliance acknowledged.
Flood and drainage	CC09, CC10, AD4	FFL above design flood; 56m ³ distributed storage; controlled 5.5l/s discharge; no increased off-site risk.

Sustainable construction	CC04, CC05	SAP A99, strong fabric, ASHP, MVHR, PV and post-occupancy evaluation.
Amenity and noise	CP3, CC06, TB07	No unacceptable neighbour effect; generous occupier amenity; high-performance envelope addresses road-noise context.
Self-build / CIL / BNG	NPPF 73; emerging H6; CIL/BNG regulations	Genuine self-build; BNG exemption applies; CIL relief available subject to procedure.

7. Planning Balance

- 7.1. The proposal conflicts with the adopted development plan insofar as it introduces a new dwelling outside development limits. That conflict is real and is afforded weight.
- 7.2. The conflict is limited to the location and principle of ordinary countryside housing. The proposal otherwise responds positively to the plan's design, landscape, trees, ecology, drainage, highway, amenity, infrastructure and sustainable-construction policies.
- 7.3. The most important restrictive housing policies are out of date because the Council can demonstrate only 2.5 years of deliverable supply. Paragraph 11(d) is engaged.
- 7.4. The application of protected-area policies does not provide a strong reason for refusal. Thames Basin Heaths effects are addressed through the established SANG/SAMM strategy; the development footprint is outside the design flood extent and protected by freeboard and SuDS; and there is no Green Belt, National Landscape, conservation-area or heritage-asset designation on the site.
- 7.5. The principal adverse considerations are:
- conflict with CP11, CC02 and the neighbourhood-plan spatial strategy;
 - the introduction of built form and residential activity into undeveloped countryside;
 - an increased reliance on private vehicles;
 - limited removal and disturbance of grassland, scrub and low-quality trees;
 - a localised visual change from Barkham Road; and
 - construction and drainage activity near woodland and Barkham Brook.
- 7.6. Those effects are limited and controlled. The red line is 0.294ha; the architecture is contained within woodland; domestic curtilage is constrained; the main woodland and hedgerow are retained; traffic generation is small; visibility is safe; protected-species and construction measures are committed; and flood and drainage risks are managed.
- 7.7. The principal benefits are:
- delivery of an additional self-build dwelling during a substantial housing-supply shortfall;
 - a proposal satisfying the specific national policy in Paragraph 84(e);

- architecture independently confirmed as exceptional and reflective of the highest standards;
- a demonstrable contribution to raising rural design standards;
- significant enhancement of the immediate setting through woodland, meadow, scrub-edge, water and understorey management;
- long-term stewardship of locally important woodland and habitat;
- an A99 energy and environmental rating, with regulated emissions and primary-energy demand substantially below targets;
- qualitative biodiversity enhancement notwithstanding the statutory exemption;
- safe access, permeable surfacing, EV charging and integrated cycle/refuse provision;
- a coordinated SuDS system providing water reuse, attenuation, habitat and controlled discharge; and
- short-term construction employment and continuing demand for specialist landscape and woodland management.

- 7.8. The Paragraph 84(e) benefit carries substantial weight because it is not asserted by the applicant alone. It is supported by three stages of independent review, a final supportive conclusion, a detailed DAS, structural proof-of-concept, LVIA, landscape strategy and project-specific energy evidence.
- 7.9. The setting-enhancement and sustainability benefits also carry substantial weight. Housing delivery and self-build provision attract moderate weight, while economic benefits from one dwelling attract limited to moderate weight.
- 7.10. The locational policy conflict and localised landscape change do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the combined benefits. The tilted balance therefore supports permission.
- 7.11. Even applying Section 38(6) without the tilted balance, Paragraph 84(e), DRP endorsement, significant setting enhancement, self-build provision and technical evidence are material considerations of sufficient weight to justify permission notwithstanding the narrow spatial-strategy conflict.

Matter	Weight	Planning response
Locational policy conflict	Moderate / substantial adverse	Acknowledged; restrictive policies out of date and the proposal meets a specific national exception.
Countryside and visual change	Moderate local adverse	Contained by woodland and topography; minor public effect; balanced by significant landscape enhancement.
Transport sustainability	Limited adverse	One dwelling; safe access; EV/cycles; rural context recognised by NPPF.
Habitat / tree disturbance	Limited adverse	Avoided and minimised; low-quality removals; species mitigation; long-term enhancement.
Exceptional design / Paragraph 84(e)	Substantial beneficial	Both limbs met; final DRP endorsement; design and technical evidence.
Setting enhancement	Substantial beneficial	Woodland stewardship, meadow, native understorey, glades, wet habitat and controlled curtilage.
Sustainability	Substantial beneficial	A99, high-performance fabric, ASHP, MVHR, PV, rainwater reuse and POE.
Housing / self-build	Moderate beneficial	Deliverable dwelling during 2.5-year supply shortfall; genuine self-build.
Overall balance	In favour	Adverse impacts do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits; material considerations indicate approval.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. This Planning Support Statement supports a full application by Mr & Mrs Draggon for House of the Woods, a detached self-build dwelling of exceptional quality with a detached garage and store, access, drainage, landscaping and woodland management.
- 8.2. The proposal is located outside development limits and conflicts with the adopted policies controlling the location of ordinary housing. That conflict has been identified and assessed rather than obscured.
- 8.3. The site is isolated for the purposes of Paragraph 84. Bridge Cottages do not constitute a settlement; the site is physically and perceptually separate from defined settlements; and the enclosed woodland, brook, road and open-field context reinforce that separation.
- 8.4. The design satisfies the first limb of Paragraph 84(e). The five-volume composition, central glade, falling-leaves roof canopy, site-led plan, refined material palette, structural development, high environmental performance and iterative review demonstrate truly outstanding architecture reflecting the highest standards.
- 8.5. The proposal will help raise rural design standards by demonstrating a transferable approach to woodland-led planning, contemporary rural architecture without pastiche, integrated ecology and water, controlled domestic curtilage, low-carbon performance and rigorous design review.
- 8.6. The second limb is also satisfied. The proposal significantly enhances its immediate setting through selective woodland restoration, native understorey, glades, careful coppice management, meadow, scrub-edge diversity, wet habitat, deadwood retention, boundary reinforcement and long-term stewardship.
- 8.7. The design is sensitive to the defining characteristics of Barkham: wooded stream valleys, mature roadside vegetation, irregular woodland blocks, dispersed settlement, varied architecture, topographic enclosure, open land to the south and the transition between road, woodland and brook.
- 8.8. The final Design Review Panel concluded that the proposal meets the very high Paragraph 84(e) bar and is supportive. That independent outcome carries significant weight and is corroborated by the submitted design, landscape and technical evidence.
- 8.9. The application is acceptable in relation to landscape and visual impact, trees, ecology, protected species, SPA mitigation, access, parking, flood risk, drainage, energy, dark skies,

amenity, heritage, contamination and utilities. Appropriate details can be secured by condition or legal agreement.

- 8.10. The Council can demonstrate only 2.5 years of housing supply. The tilted balance is engaged and there is no strong reason for refusal arising from protected-area policies once the committed mitigation is secured.
- 8.11. The adverse impacts do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Paragraph 84(e), exceptional design, significant setting enhancement, DRP support, self-build delivery, housing need, ecological stewardship and A99 performance indicate that planning permission should be granted.
- 8.12. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted without delay, subject to the completion of the necessary legal agreement and the imposition of reasonable and necessary conditions.
- 8.13. If the Local Planning Authority identifies any issue that could prevent approval, the applicants request an opportunity to respond and, where appropriate, agree a condition or proportionate amendment before determination.
- 8.14. This concludes the Planning Support Statement.



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Registered office: Avebury House, 6 St Peter Street, Winchester, SO23 8BN.



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