

PLANNING REF : 261597
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Oakley Cottage
: Old Forest Road, Wokingham
: RG41 1JA
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Tony Hitti
DATE SUBMITTED : 13/08/2026

COMMENTS:

To: Planning Department, Wokingham Borough Council

Re: Formal Objection to Application Reference 261597 - Land off Old Forest Road

I am writing to register my strong objection to application 261597. The applicant is attempting to fundamentally alter a permission (ref: 251421) that was granted only a few months ago in May 2026, switching out an approved mixed-tenure scheme without providing proper justification.

While I fully support the provision of affordable housing in Wokingham, this proposal raises serious policy, procedural, and legal concerns that cannot be overlooked.

1. Abandonment of a Balanced, Mixed-Tenure Community

The decision in May 2026 appropriately secured a balanced mix of 32 market rate and 21 affordable homes. The officer report at the time rightly highlighted the importance of integrating affordable units throughout the site to foster a sustainable, tenure-blind community.

By removing the mixed-tenure framework, this application directly conflicts with:

* **Core Strategy Policies CP2 and CP5**

* **Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Policy TB05**

* **The Council's Affordable Housing SPD**

A shift away from inclusive, mixed communities represents a major policy departure, not a minor tweak.

2. Misleading "100% Affordable" Claims

The draft Deed of Variation is deeply problematic. While Option B is marketed as a 100% affordable housing development, a look at the actual wording shows that **only 21 dwellings are legally bound as affordable housing** the exact same number as the original consent. The remaining 32 homes are still classified as Open Market Dwellings and explicitly excluded from affordable housing covenants.

If Option B does not legally secure any extra affordable homes beyond the original 21, the Council must make this explicitly clear to the public before making a decision.

3. Loss of Vital Infrastructure Funding (CIL)

The application references Social Housing Relief from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). If granting this variation removes CIL liability across the entire 53-home development, the local community stands to lose substantial funding for local roads, schools, and services.

The Council must calculate and publish the exact loss of CIL revenue prior to determination so the public can weigh the financial impact on local infrastructure.

4. Quiet Removal of Local Connection Rules & Safeguards

The modified deed appears to remove local connection requirements for shared ownership units and alters existing mortgagee protection clauses. These are major changes to the S106 agreement that strip away key protections for Wokingham residents. The Council should publish the exact text of the proposed changes alongside the existing agreement to ensure full transparency.

5. Lack of Process Transparency and Timing

The timeline here is troubling. Permission was granted on 22 May 2026, yet the applicant submitted requests to amend the Section 106 agreement just days later, acknowledging prior discussions with officers and a Registered Provider.

If an alternative tenure model was already on the table, it should have been put to the public during the original application process. The Council needs to clarify:

1. Exactly when discussions around an alternative tenure setup began.
2. Why this possibility was withheld from the public during the determination of 251421.
3. What material planning considerations have genuinely changed since May 2026 to justify this U-turn.

6. Conflict with Strategic Housing Policy

The Council's *Affordable Housing Strategy 2024-2028* clearly indicates that 100% affordable schemes should generally be capped at a maximum of 50 units. At 53 homes, this site exceeds that policy limit. Any decision to ignore the Council's own strategic policy threshold requires a full and public justification.

7. Flaws in the Section 73 Application

Allowing an approved plans condition that references two completely different layout options creates legal vagueness. A planning consent must be precise; allowing a developer to pick between two materially different tenure layouts post-permission undermines certainty and breaches basic planning principles.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, **applications 261597 should be refused**.

If the Council considers proceeding, it must first publish the completed draft deed, provide a full calculation of lost CIL funding, clarify the local connection amendments, and refer the decision to the **Planning Committee** for debate in a public forum.