

BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL
PLACE DIRECTORATE
Time Square, Market Street, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1JD

Local Authority - Wokingham Borough Council
Planning Services
PO Box 157 Shute End
RG40 1W

Consultation Response

Dear Sir/Madam

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

REFERENCE:	PA/2026/0417
DESCRIPTION:	Request for observations on an application for permission in principle for the erection of up to 9 No. dwellings.
LOCATION:	SEQUOIA FIELD and BARN END, WELLINGTONIA AVENUE, FINCHAMPSTEAD, RG45 6AD

I refer to your consultation on the above application received on . My comments are;

Application PA/2026/0209 - permission in principle (PIP) for the erection of up to 9 dwellings was refused by Bracknell Forest Council on 30 March 2026 for the following reasons:

1. *The proposal is not development that is considered acceptable in the Countryside in principle. It would result in an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area by reason of location and land use which would have an urbanising impact on the open and rural setting of the site and result in encroachment into the Countryside. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies LP 1, LP 2, LP 28, LP 35, LP 36 and LP 50 of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.*

2. *The proposal constitutes habitats development. Permission in principle must not be granted for habitats development. Furthermore, planning obligations cannot be secured at the permission in principle stage. In the absence of a planning obligation to secure suitable avoidance and mitigation measures and access management monitoring arrangements, in terms that are satisfactory to the Local Planning Authority, the proposal would be contrary to Regulation 63(5) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan, Policies LP 31 and LP 32 of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan, and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document (2025).*

The site is located on land outside of defined settlement, otherwise known as Countryside, as designated by the Bracknell Forest Policies Maps (2024).

The LPA considered that the proposal for residential development in the Countryside does not meet any of the exceptions listed in Policy LP 35 (development in the countryside) of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan (BFLP). Policy LP 2 of the BFLP states that development in the countryside should require a countryside location, meets an essential local rural need or supports rural diversification. The proposal for up to 9 dwellings does not require a countryside location, would not meet an essential local rural need and would not support rural diversification.

The proposal would encroach into the Countryside and have an urbanising impact on the character and appearance of the area.

A further material consideration is that the site lies within the 400m-5km Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA) buffer zone.

Under Article 5B of The Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) (Amendment) Order 2017, as amended, the legislation states:

A local planning authority may not grant permission in principle, on an application to the authority, in relation to development which is...

(b) habitats development;

The Order defines:

habitats development as - *development which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site; European offshore marine site as having the meaning given in regulation 18 of the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.*

The proposed development would impact upon a habitats site. Article 5B of The Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) (Amendment) Order 2017 (as amended) states that a LPA may not grant permission in principle for habitats development. Planning Practice Guidance relating to permissions in principle (published July 2017 and updated March 2019) is also explicit on this. The PPG is also explicit that planning obligations cannot be secured at permission in principle stage. As a planning obligation cannot be secured, there is no mechanism to avoid and mitigate against the effects of the development upon the SPA and therefore the proposal would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basins Heath SPA.

RECOMMENDATION

In summary, Bracknell Forest Council recommends that Wokingham Borough Council refuse the application for permission in principle for up to 9 dwellings as the site is located within the Countryside and the proposal would result in unacceptable impacts to the character and appearance of the area. Further, the development is habitats development and planning obligations cannot be secured at permission in principle stage.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Horwood

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Planning
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