

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	252129
Site Address:	247 Finchampstead Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3JR
Expiry Date:	20 November 2025
Site Visit Date:	13 November 2025
Proposal: Full application for proposed development of 1no. detached, three bed chalet bungalow.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB06 – Development of Private Residential Gardens TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB22 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM5 - Protection of the Countryside DM10 - Flood Risk DM15 - Site History
Other	National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

	Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan
--	----------------------------------

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
232154	Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. detached five bedroom dwelling with associated access and parking.	Refused: November 2023 (dismissed at appeal)
223614	Full application for the proposed erection of 2no. semi detached 4 bedroom houses following demolition of existing bungalow with associated parking and access.	Approved: April 2023

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Drainage – Request further information
WBC Highways – Request further information
WBC Landscape and Trees – Objection raised
WBC CIL – CIL liable development
WBC Ecology – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Waste Services – No comments
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments

External

None

REPRESENTATIONS

Finchampstead Parish Council	Object to this planning application on the grounds that it constitutes tandem development contrary to FNDP Policy D3.4. It is overdevelopment, has poor access and is out of keeping with the character of the area, contrary to FNDP Policy D3.1b.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received

Neighbours	Two letters received, objecting to the development on the following grounds: • Traffic and Road Safety • Loss of Privacy and Overlooking • Overdevelopment and Harm to Local Character • Noise and Disturbance • Inadequate Notification • Loss of Light • Environmental and Ecological Harm
------------	---

APPRAISAL

Context: The site is a rectangular plot of approximately 0.16 hectares located on the western side of Finchampstead Road, near its junction with Sandhurst Road.

It falls within the settlement limits of Finchampstead North, a modest development location, as per policy CP9 of the Core Strategy. An additional 0.11 hectares of land is within the same ownership but falls within designated countryside and does not form part of the application site. This 0.11ha of land is covered by TPO-1896-2022 as are a number of boundary trees on the site bordering Handpost Corner. Residential properties adjoin the southern boundary and open countryside in association with Sand Martin Golf Course stretching along the west.

The wider site (within the blue line) contains an uninhabited single storey bungalow and associated domestic outbuildings at the front of the site in the existing building line. Mature trees and hedgerow delineated the boundaries but recently these have been cleared from the site.

Commercial development (Ford Garage) occupies the northern side of the application site; residential properties adjoin the southern boundary. This section of Finchampstead Road is characterised by a strong linear form of residential development intersected by Sand Martin Golf Course and associated open spaces. Finchampstead Road is a designated Green Route and existing mature trees and hedgerows on both sides of the road contribute to its sylvan, semi-rural character.

The site has an extant permission to demolish the existing bungalow and erect 2 semi-detached dwellings. This permission has not been implemented. This permission is independent of the proposal and could be implemented regardless of the proposed development in this application. It is noted that the proposed development does not involve the demolition of the existing dwelling. The existing dwelling is outside the red line of the application site.

This application follows the Local Planning Authority's (LPA) previous refusal of planning permission for a dwelling on the same plot under application reference 232154. That decision was subsequently upheld by the Planning Inspectorate following an appeal reference APP/X0360/W/24/3336778. The current proposal differs primarily in the reduced scale of the dwelling, in addition to other alterations that will be discussed throughout this report.

Principle of Development: The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located in the Modest Development Location of Finchampstead North, the rear of the site abuts open Countryside and to the north of the site is the Major Development Location of Wokingham. Development in this location may be considered acceptable in principle, providing it complied with the policies set out in the Development Plan and the WBC Design Guide SPD and all other material considerations. The Development locations are shown at Figure 1 below:

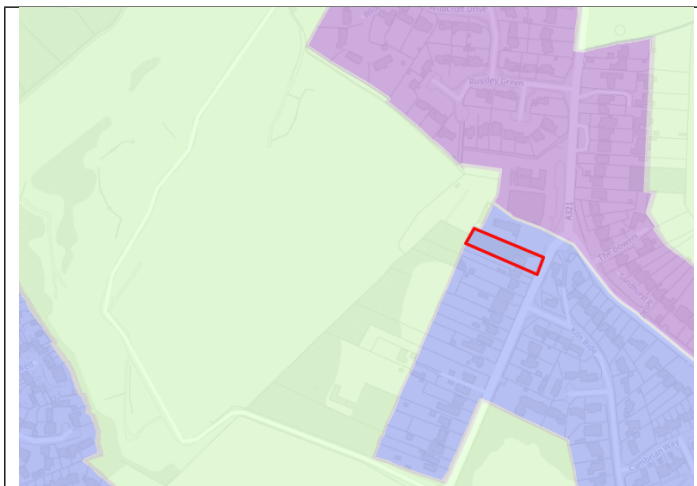


Figure 1: Development Locations (CC02) Green: Countryside; Purple: Wokingham; Blue: Finchampstead North.

Housing Land Supply: As of March 2025, the Council is only able to demonstrate a 2.5-year supply of deliverable housing land against its identified Local Housing Need (LHN). This figure highlights a shortfall in supply relative to the five-year requirement set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In such circumstances, paragraph 11 of the NPPF is engaged, establishing a presumption in favour of sustainable development, often referred to as the 'tilted balance'. Under this approach, planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.

Notwithstanding the above, it is a matter of fact that housing completions within Wokingham Borough have significantly exceeded all assessments of housing need. The strong performance on housing delivery is a material factor that should be considered alongside the technical shortfall in deliverable housing land supply

Having established the tilted balance is 'tempered', Paragraph 11d(ii) requires the proposals to be considered against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole and the three pillars of sustainable development. These will inform the planning balance exercise carried out in the conclusion of this appraisal.

Sustainable Location: The site is located within settlement limits within a modest development location and adjacent to existing residential properties. This area has access to some facilities and public transport. The nearest bus stop is approximately 50m from the site served by No. 125 running (Wokingham and Crowthorne) operates just 6-7 buses a day in each direction Monday–Friday roughly between around 07.30-18.00, with only two buses in each direction on Saturdays and no Sunday service; the other service and No. 145 between Three Mile Cross and Winnersh) operates just one return journey on a Tuesday. 900m from the site is a further bus stop with 3 bus per hour service to Reading/Wokingham. The road has public footpath on both sides with street lighting and passive surveillance from habitable windows of neighbouring properties. It is considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of locational sustainability.

Building Sustainability: Paragraph 162 of the NPPF requires local plans to *“take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change...”* which footnote 61 makes clear should be in line with the Climate Change Act 2008. Paragraphs 167-168 deal with individual development and emphasise the importance of energy efficient, low-carbon development.

Policy CC04 of the MDD Local Plan and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD require sustainable design and conservation and R21 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that new development contribute to environmental sustainability and the mitigation of climate change.

Building design should take advantage of sunlight and use recycled or sustainable building materials, building insulation, energy efficient and water saving appliances (such as an energy efficient gas powered boiler), photovoltaic panels, compost facilities and cycle storage as well as water butts and soak-aways for rainwater reuse, permeable car parking surfaces and maximisation of soft landscaping for natural infiltration.

Overall, there exists a very strong legislative and policy basis for planning decisions to be taken with Climate Emergency considerations at their heart. WBC expects that any new dwelling should meet the requirements set out in the Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement Wokingham Borough Council (December 2022).

As with the previously refused application (Ref: 232154), the scheme includes no defined sustainability measures. While the Planning Statement mentions the use of sustainable building materials, this reference is vague and represents a baseline expectation for any modern housing development. The proposal fails to make any meaningful contribution toward addressing the climate emergency, and the absence of substantive environmental credentials continues to weigh against the scheme.

Character of the Area: Paragraph 139 of the NPPF states *“Development that is not*

well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.” Of relevance to this proposal is NPPF para 75 which states *“Plans should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area”*.

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that *“maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment.”* Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states planning permission will be granted if development is *“of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life.”*

Policy TB06 of the MDD requires that proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage of private residential gardens will only be granted planning permission where the proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of:

- i. The relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area;
- ii. A layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of unit/frontages, parking areas, and
- iii. Existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontage
- iv. Compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area

This is reinforced by the criteria set out in the Borough Design Guide, including:

- R1, which requires that development be designed to contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the area;
- R2, which states that development respond to context, including incorporating existing features, taking advantage of landform and orientation, relating to neighbours and minimising amenity, iconological and drainage impacts;
- R3 and R4, which require housing to relate to the existing network of streets and spaces;
- R7, which requires a consistent and coherent building line; and
- R11, which requires that housing be designed to ensure a coherent street character, including in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion and height

The Borough Design Guide states that *‘on a piecemeal basis, ‘backland’ and in particular ‘tandem’ development will potentially erode the character of an area, in terms of the street frontage, landscape character (particularly where there is a ‘green backdrop’) and impact on neighbours. It may also fail to take opportunities to create a positive character in itself’*.

Finchampstead Road is characterised by a variety of house types, predominantly semi-detached and detached dwellings of various architectural styles. Many of the plots have street trees and hedgerow frontages and significant landscaping features that contribute to the Green Route.

Plots along this section Finchampstead Road have long narrow gardens with woodland to the rear, where the countryside begins. Although there is some development to the rear before the woodland buffer, this predominantly relates to incidental residential/garden buildings. The woodland to the rear of the properties is protected by Tree Protection Order TPO-0893-1997.

Although the site adjoins the Ford garage, this comprises commercial development of a different scale and nature to the proposed development within a separate development location. In this respect, the plot is more closely related to the prevailing residential character to the south than the Ford garage to the north.

The clear linear character as identified through the current and previous submissions is a particularly notable and important feature of the residential lane. This was noted by the Inspector in paragraph 8 of their decision:

“The section of Finchampstead Road that the appeal site sits within is characterised by residential development that varies in its precise scale, form, and appearance, but has a clear linear arrangement. Most dwellings are set along a consistent building line, facing onto the main highway, behind front gardens. This results in the dwellings having a strong presence within the streetscene, and together with their rather generous plots, it creates a largely consistent pattern and grain of development. Dwellings in the wider surrounding area, whilst varying in scale, appearance, and plot sizes, also tend to front onto their respective streets.”

The deterioration of this arrangement caused by the proposed backland development was a key factor in the refusal of the previous application, a position the Inspector supported in paragraph 9 of their decision:

“The proposed development would involve a dwelling of substantial scale in a backland position. Its siting to the rear of the established residential building line, tight to the boundary of the adjacent neighbouring dwelling, and lacking a street frontage, would appear at odds with the predominant layout of surrounding residential development. Indeed, the siting and orientation of the proposed dwelling, together with its plot size and layout, would combine to result in a rather cramped and ill-fitting form of development.”

While the reduced scale of the proposed dwelling would mitigate the “substantial scale” concern raised only, this improvement is limited as none of the other issues are addressed by the proposal. The fundamental issues associated with the subdivision of the site and the resulting tandem development remain significant. The proposal would appear as a piecemeal addition, poorly integrated with the surrounding linear pattern of development. Despite the reduction in size, the dwelling’s siting appears to be driven by the constraints of the site rather than by principles of good design. Its position outside the established building line, combined with the dense quantum of

development, underpins its incompatibility with the character of the area, resulting in a harmful form of development.

Although the dwelling adopts a chalet bungalow style, it would still be relatively large, with a maximum height of approximately 7.2 metres and a footprint of around 139.5 sqm. Given the extensive vegetation removal at the site, the building would remain highly visible, particularly from the approach from Wokingham. The applicant's proposal for evergreen planting along the Ford Garage boundary is not considered an acceptable solution to this problem. As noted by the Inspector in paragraph 12 of the previous decision, vegetation should not be relied upon to screen otherwise unacceptable development, as its long-term retention cannot be guaranteed. Any future planting could fail or be removed, leaving the dwelling as a permanent discordant and prominent feature.

It is acknowledged that the applicant has reorientated the dwelling so that its front elevation faces Finchampstead Road. While this represents a minor improvement to the active frontage, the property would still lack a street frontage due to its backland position, failing to reflect the prevailing development pattern. Furthermore, the subdivided plots would remain significantly smaller than those serving most nearby properties, a matter that the reduced scale and reorientation do not resolve.

Turning to the visual appearance of the dwelling, the design does not achieve the high standard of quality increasingly required by national and local policy. The proposed geometric, minimalist approach lacks coherence with surrounding dwellings and fails to offer meaningful visual interest. In addition, the fenestration appears poorly considered, with irregular placement that results in an unbalanced and unsymmetrical façade. Overall, the scheme does not conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the locality, nor does it respond positively to its context.

For these reasons, the revised scheme does not overcome the first reason for refusal on application 232154. The proposed dwelling would remain an incongruous backland development, detrimentally affecting the character and appearance of the locality. It is therefore contrary to the NPPF, Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3, the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC01, TB06 and TB21, and the Borough Design Guide SPD.

Neighbouring Amenity: Given the dwelling's position at the rear of the plot and the separation distances to neighbouring properties, it is unlikely to result in any significant harm to neighbouring amenity, including loss of light, overlooking, or an overbearing impact.

Housing Amenity: Inadequate living conditions was cited as a secondary reason for refusal imposed on application 232154, with poor quality private amenity space, and a lack of adequate outlook and limited daylight in habitable rooms being a feature of the previous proposal.

Internal Amenity

Policy TB07 of the MDD Local Plan and R17 of the Wokingham Design Guide SPD requires the internal layout of a dwelling to achieve a good level of internal living space. In accordance with the Technical Housing Standards – Nationally described space

standards, a minimum of 102sqm is required for a two storey, three-bedroom, six-person occupancy dwelling. At, 176sqm, the proposed dwelling substantially exceeds these minimum standards and is considered generous in its internal proportions.

The Inspector dismissed previous concerns raised by the LPA through the previous application regarding quality of internal amenity. In reviewing the resubmission, it is evident that further improvements have been made compared to the earlier scheme. Each proposed bedroom now appears well-proportioned and benefits from adequately sized windows, ensuring sufficient natural light. Additionally, the property has been repositioned further east within the site, mitigating earlier concerns about its proximity to the woodland, which was previously thought to restrict sunlight to the nearest habitable rooms. Overall, it is considered that the current application satisfactorily overcomes previous concerns on these grounds.

External Amenity

The reorientation of the dwelling introduces a more conventional layout, providing a rear garden that is broadly consistent with typical arrangements. While this represents a modest improvement over the previous scheme, the fundamental concerns regarding the quality of external amenity space remain unresolved. The majority of the rear garden would still adjoin the adjacent commercial site, significantly compromising its privacy and usability. As highlighted by the Inspector in the earlier decision, additional landscaping along these boundaries would not materially improve the quality or functionality of this space. Additionally to this, significant and meaningful planting such as trees or substantial hedgerow would reduce the useable width of the garden by around 1-2m. Similarly, what is now proposed as the front garden was previously deemed inadequate, and no substantive changes have been made to alter that conclusion.

Overall, despite improvements to internal amenity, the proposal continues to fall short of providing acceptable private outdoor space, and therefore fails to secure suitable living conditions for future occupants.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: The Highways Officer requested additional details and amendments, including the widening of parking spaces, provision of an electric vehicle (EV) charging point, and a swept path analysis. These requests were not pursued as the application is recommended for refusal.

Notwithstanding this, the proposed development does not alter the existing access drive or parking arrangement for the front plot, which has already been approved under application 223614, although this has not yet been implemented. This layout is also identical to that considered under the previously refused application (Ref: 232154), where no swept path analysis was required by the Highways Officer. Accordingly, such analysis is not considered necessary in this instance.

It is noted that the requested widening of parking spaces and inclusion of an EV charging point could have been addressed through minor amendments had the application been supported.

On this basis, there is no highway objection to the proposed development.

Flooding and Drainage: The development is located in Flood Zone 1. The application form states that that surface water runoff from the development will be managed via soakaway method. Upon considering the proposal, the LLFA would have no objection to the principle of the development as represented, however, proposed drainage details about the chosen method (soakaway to deal with the surface water) have not been provided and therefore would have been required via condition.

Landscape and Trees: The Landscape & Trees Officer concurs with the views taken by Officers above relating to character impacts.

With regard to the trees within the site, an Arboricultural Impact Assessment by GHA Trees dated 6th August 2025 has been submitted to support the application. Unfortunately, the information is not very helpful as the only plan that is provided is the Tree Constraints Plan showing the site without the development proposals. Even this is now out of date, as the survey date is 11th October 2022, and it is understood the two trees that make up G13 have now been removed.

If consent was to be given, the LPA would need to have been provided with an up to date and accurate Tree Constraints Plan, as well as an initial Tree Protection Plan showing the proposed development (dwelling and drive / parking area) in relation to the TPO trees. The AIA would have needed to provide detailed information as to the impacts of the proposals on the protected trees and their respective root protection areas. Not providing accurate and up to date information regarding impacts on TPO trees is contrary to Local Plan Policy CC03.

In order to make a preliminary assessment of possible impacts on the protected trees and taking measurements from the Block Plan drawing which shows the details of the location of the proposed dwelling and drive, the Trees Officer makes the following observations:

- The proposed dwelling is in partially within the RPA of tree T8 a category A Sweet Chestnut. BS 5837 Section 5.3 'Proximity of structures to trees' states at 5.3.1 'The default position should be that structures are located outside the RPAs of trees to be retained. However, where there is an overriding justification for construction within the RPA, technical solutions might be available that prevent damage to the trees'. I see no overriding justification for the current proposals to develop within the RPA of an important protected tree.
- A large part of the garden area to the east of the dwelling is under the canopy of T8. Where trees are in close proximity to a dwelling such as in this instance, this can often cause some apprehension to occupiers which is exacerbated by seasonal nuisance such as leaf drop in the autumn, and this case chestnuts and their spiky casings, and shedding of twigs in high winds resulting in pressure to reduce or remove the trees. This tree is an important landscape feature that contributes to the landscape character of the area and therefore its removal would be unacceptable.
- Most of the proposed drive is either within the RPA of T8 or T12, with a significant portion of the RPA of T12 within the site affected by the drive location. The AIA as not provided detailed information as to the effects of this substantial

coverage within the RPA's. Neither has it addressed the existing impacts of the neighbouring hard surfacing associated with the car showroom where impermeable surfacing comes very close to the base of the trunk of T12. In these types of cases, we would normally expect the RPA to be adjusted to take account of offsite influences as highlighted in paragraph 4.6.3 a) of BS 5837.

Based on the above assessment and the absence of detailed information regarding the potential impacts on the TPO protected trees, the Trees Officer considers that the proposed development would result in harm to important trees within and along the site boundaries. Consequently, the scheme is regarded as contrary to Local Plan Policy CC03, and an objection is raised.

While Officers share the Trees Officer's concern regarding the lack of sufficient supporting information, weight must also be given to the Inspector's previous findings. The Inspector concluded that, subject to appropriate conditions addressing matters such as construction practices, service routing, and areas of hardstanding, the health of the remaining trees could be adequately safeguarded. Given that the current proposal does not materially differ from the previous scheme in terms of RPA incursion or the extent of hardstanding, there is no compelling justification to depart from that conclusion. Accordingly, a refusal reason on these grounds would not be substantiated and a pre-commencement condition would be required in the event of an approval.

Ecology: The WBC Ecologist has reviewed the supporting documents and raised no Ecological objections to the development. The application would have been subject to several conditions if recommended for approval.

The proposed development is exempt for the Statutory BNG, as it qualifies as a 'self-build, meeting all criteria; consist of no more than 9 dwellings, on a site no larger than 0.5ha and consist exclusively of self-build dwellings.

The site is within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) and the use has the potential to increase visitor pressure on the SPA. Without adequate mitigation to avoid potential adverse effects it is contrary to Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan, Policy TB23 of the MDD and Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy. The Applicant has previously accepted the requirement for a Section 106 Agreement to mitigate against the impacts on the SPA, however, as the application is recommended for refusal, no work has been undertaken on a legal agreement for the current development, to avoid unnecessary costs for both parties.

Conclusion: Returning to Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, this establishes the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is underpinned by three overarching objectives: economic, social, and environmental.

- Economic – Proposals should contribute to building a strong, responsive, and competitive economy.
- Social – Planning should support strong, vibrant, and healthy communities, creating a high-quality built environment.

- Environmental – Development should protect and enhance the natural, built, and historic environment, while mitigating and adapting to climate change.

This proposal has failed to overcome previous concerns that led to the refusal of application 232154 and the subsequent dismissal of its appeal. The proposed dwelling deviates from the established pattern of development and would therefore cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal also continues to fall short of providing acceptable private outdoor space, and therefore fails to secure suitable living conditions for future occupants, a symptom of the fact the site is unsuitable for residential development of this nature.

In terms of public benefits, the provision of a single dwelling would only make a very limited contribution towards the supply of housing. There would also be modest social and economic benefits arising from the construction period and future spend of occupants giving support to local services and facilities, however, these are non-specific to the application and are considered to hold limited weight in this instance.

As confirmed by the Trees Officer, there remains a lack of adequate information related to protected trees, and no overriding sustainability credentials are identified as part of the proposal. As such, there are a lack of environmental benefits put forward by the application

When assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, the adverse impacts of the proposal as identified would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Therefore, the application is recommended for refusal.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	N/A
Recommendation:	Refuse
Date:	18 November 2025

Earliest date for decision:	16 October 2025
------------------------------------	-----------------

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>JMM</i>
Date:	19 November 2025

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 Screening Assessment and Appropriate Assessment

In the light of the “Sweetman Judgement” (People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta, April 2018), the comments below comprise an Appropriate Assessment which includes advice on necessary avoidance and mitigation measures which is consistent with the advice provided to the Planning Inspectorate on such matters.

Summary of Response

WBC, in consultation with Natural England, has formed the view that any net increase in residential development between 400m and 5km straight-line distance from the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) is likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. An Appropriate Assessment has been carried out which includes regard to mitigation requirements.

This site is located approximately **5 km** (measured from the access road to the application site) from the boundary of the SPA and therefore is likely to result in an adverse effect on the SPA, unless it is carried out together with appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures.

On commencement of the proposed development, a contribution (calculated on a per-bedroom basis) is to be paid to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) towards the cost of measures to avoid and mitigate against the effect upon the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, as set out in WBC’s Infrastructure Delivery Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The strategy is for relevant developments to make financial contributions towards the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) in perpetuity as an alternative recreational location to the SPA and financial contributions towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures.

In this instance, the proposed development would result in a net increase of **1 no 3 bedroom dwelling** within 5km of the SPA which results in a total SANG contribution of **£2,690.93**.

The proposed development is required to make a contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) which is also calculated on a per bedroom basis.

Taking account of the per bedroom contributions this results in a total SAMM contribution of **£1,077.00**.

The total SPA related financial contribution for this proposal is **£3,767.93**. The applicant **must agree** to enter into a S106/s111 agreement to secure this contribution prior to occupation of each dwelling. Subject to the completion of the S106 agreement, the proposal would not lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA and would comply with SEP Saved Policy NRM6, policy CP8 of the Core Strategy, and the NPPF.

1. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended

In accordance with The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended, Regulation 63, a competent authority (in this case Wokingham Borough Council (WBC)), before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which—

- a. is likely to have a significant effect on a European site...(either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and
- b. is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site.

must make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives.

A person applying for any such consent, permission or other authorisation must provide such information as WBC may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment or to enable it to determine whether an appropriate assessment is required.

WBC must for the purposes of the assessment consult Natural England (NE) and have regard to any representations made by that body. It must also, if it considers it appropriate, take the opinion of the general public, and if it does so, it must take such steps for that purpose as it considers appropriate. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, and subject to Regulation 64 (Considerations of overriding public interest), WBC may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

In considering whether a plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of the site, WBC must have regard to the manner in which it is proposed to be carried out or to any conditions or restrictions subject to which it proposes that the consent, permission or other authorisation should be given.

2. Stage 1 Screening for Likely Significant Effects

WBC accepts that this proposal is a 'plan or project' which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site. The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is a European designated site which affects the borough, and WBC must ensure that development does not result in an adverse impact on the SPA. The potential adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA include recreational activities from inside the SPA and air pollution from inside and outside the SPA.

At this stage WBC cannot rule out 'likely significance effects' on the SPA (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) because the proposal could undermine the Conservation Objectives of these sites. This is because the proposal lies within **5 km** of the SPA and:

- represents a net increase in dwellings within 400m - 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) which will lead to an increase in local population and a potential increase in recreational activity on the SPA .

As the 'likely significance effects' cannot be ruled out at this stage an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken.

3. Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment

Based on the information proposed by the applicant, WBC must decide whether or not an adverse effect on site integrity (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) can be ruled out. Mitigation may be able to be provided so that the proposal is altered to avoid or reduce impacts.

The following policies and guidance set out WBC's approach to relevant avoidance and mitigation measures which have been agreed with Natural England. For the majority of housing developments this will comprise the provision of (or contribution towards) Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and a contribution towards the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project. Developers will be required to secure an appropriate financial contribution for the provision of SANG and to the SAMM project through an obligation in a s106 agreement.

For SDL development (and occasionally some other larger non SDL developments) within 5km of the SPA, SANG is required at a minimum of 8 ha per 1,000 new residents, constructed and delivered to Natural England's quality and quantity standards and a contribution towards pan SPA access management and monitoring (as advised by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board). For SDL development (and occasionally some other larger non SDL developments) between 5 and 7km, the proposals will need to be individually assessed but it is likely that SANG will be required on site in line with Natural England's quality and quantity standards, although the exact requirement will be agreed having regard to evidence supplied.

a. Policies and Guidance

For this proposal the following guidance and policies apply:

- South East Plan (May 2009) Policy NRM6 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area)
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100528160926/http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/planning/regionalPlanning/815640/>
- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) Policy CP8 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area) sets out the approach WBC will take in order to protect the TBH SPA <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Final%20adopted%20Core%20Strategy%20inc.%20cover.pdf>
- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) Policy CP7 (Biodiversity) sets out the approach WBC will take in order to protect national and international nature conservation sites <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Final%20adopted%20Core%20Strategy%20inc.%20cover.pdf>
- Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) Policy TB23 (Biodiversity and Development)
<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Adopted%20MDD.pdf>

- Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD (2011)
<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/Adopted%20Infrastructure%20De~nd%20Contributions%20SPD.pdf>

The project as proposed would not adversely impact on the integrity of the SPA if avoidance and mitigation measures are provided as stipulated by these policies and guidance.

b. SPA Avoidance and Mitigation Measures

i) The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and its ongoing maintenance in perpetuity.

In accordance with the development plan, the proposed development will be required to provide alternative land to attract new residents away from the SPA. The term given to this alternative land is Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

As this development is not part of an SDL, the developer may make a payment contribution towards strategic SANGs in line with schedule below (most likely this will be at Rooks Nest Wood SANG although it is subject to SANGs capacity in the right location within Wokingham borough). An occupation restriction will be included in the Section 106 Agreement in order to ensure that the contribution has been made prior to occupation of the dwellings. This gives the certainty required to satisfy the Habitats Regulations in accordance with South East Plan Policy NRM6 (iii) and Core Strategy Policy CP8.

The development will result in a net increase of **1 no dwelling**, broken down as follows: **1 no 3 bedroom dwelling**. Depending on the dwelling mix, the level of SANG payments are set out as follows:

No. of bedrooms	SANG Contribution 5km	Aggregate SANG Contribution
1 bedroom	£1,567.98	
2 bedrooms	£2,049.59	
3 bedrooms	£2,690.93	£2,690.93
4 bedrooms	£3,546.86	
5 bedrooms	£4,240.62	
Total SANG Contribution		£2,690.93

ii. Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Contribution

The proposed development will also be required to make a contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM). This project funds strategic visitor access management measures on the SPA to mitigate the effects of new development on it.

From 1st April 2023 SAMM contributions have been updated across the 11 Local Authorities affected by the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Following engagement with Natural England, the Joint Strategic Partnership Board agreed this change is necessary to ensure sufficient income is raised to cover the costs of the SAMM project in perpetuity.

Without this change the SAMM project would be at risk of being unable to deliver the objectives of the SAMM project, and therefore secure positive outcomes for the SPA

The level of contributions are calculated on a per bedroom basis. The application for this development is for **1 no 3 bedroom dwelling**. Depending on the dwelling mix, the level of SAMM payments are calculated as follows:

No. of bedrooms	SAMM Contribution 5km	Aggregate SAMM Contribution
1 bedroom	£582.00	
2 bedrooms	£810.00	
3 bedrooms	£1,077.00	£1,077.00
4 bedrooms	£1,267.00	
5+ bedrooms	£1,447.00	
Total SAMM Contribution		£1,077.00

Prior to the permission being granted the applicant must enter into a Section 106 Agreement based upon the above measures.

4. Conclusion

An Appropriate Assessment has been carried out for this development in accordance with the Habitats Regulations 2017. Without any appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures the Appropriate Assessment concludes that the development is likely to have a significant effect upon the integrity of the SPA with the result that WBC would be required to refuse a planning application.

Provided that the applicant is prepared to make a financial contribution (see above) towards the costs of SPA avoidance and mitigation measures, the application will be in accordance with the SPA mitigation requirements as set out in the relevant policies above.

WBC is convinced, following consultation with Natural England, that the above measures will prevent an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA. Pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 63(5) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended, and permission may be granted.

If the applicant does not agree with the above mitigation and does not enter into a Section 106 Agreement to secure the measures, then the application must be refused using the following reason for refusal.

5. Example Reason for Refusal

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 (LPA), the LPA is unable to satisfy itself that the proposals include adequate mitigation measures to prevent the proposed development from having an adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, in line with the requirements of Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended and Article 6(3) of Directive

92/43/EEC. The proposal would be contrary to Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan, Policies CP8 and CP4 of the Core Strategy.

Date:

17/11/2025

Signed:

James Fuller

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- *Water Utility Consultation Zones*
- *Contaminated Land Consultation Zone*
- *Local Authorities*
- *Heathrow Aerodrome Consultation Zone*
- *Affordable Housing Thresholds*
- *Bat Roost Habitat Suitability*
- *Borough Parishes*
- *Scale and Location of Development Proposals*
- *Farnborough Aerodrome Consultation Zone*
- *Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone*
- *Nuclear Consultation Zone*
- *Tree Preservation Orders*
- *Borough Wards*
- *Landscape Character Assessment Area*
- *SSSI Impact Risk Zones*
- *Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones*
- *Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone*