PLANNING REF : 262419
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 1 Blackwater View
: Finchampstead, Wokingham
: RG40 3TF
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Nicholas Hall
DATE SUBMITTED : 22/11/2026

COMMENTS:
FORMAL OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 262419
Proposed development: Construction of two residential dwellings on equestrian grazing land off Lower Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead I wish to formally register my objection to planning application 262419, which proposes the construction of two residential dwellings on an existing grazing field off Lower Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead.
I believe this proposal represents inappropriate and unsustainable development within the open countryside and conflicts with the principles and policies of the Wokingham Borough Development Plan. It would result in the permanent loss of valuable grazing land, adversely affect the rural character of the area, raise significant highway safety concerns and potentially damage a local ecological environment.
1. Inappropriate Development Outside the Settlement Boundary - Policy
CP11
The application site is situated outside the defined settlement boundary of Finchampstead, within designated open countryside. Policy CP11 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy seeks to protect the countryside from inappropriate development and strictly control development outside defined settlement limits.
The construction of two permanent residential dwellings on an existing grazing field does not appear to satisfy the limited circumstances in which residential development might be acceptable in the
countryside.
Allowing this development would undermine the Council's established settlement strategy and risk creating an undesirable precedent for furtherspeculative residential development on similar agricultural and equestrian sites along Lower Sandhurst Road.
The cumulative effect of such development could fundamentally alter the character of this rural area.
2. Harm to Rural Landscape Character and the Introduction of Ribbon Development - Policy CP3
Lower Sandhurst Road retains a distinctive rural character, characterised by sporadic residential properties interspersed with substantial areas of open agricultural and equestrian land.
The existing paddocks contribute significantly to this landscape and provide important open spaces between residential properties.
Introducing two additional residential plots would erode this established pattern of development, reduce the visual openness of the countryside and introduce an increasingly suburban appearance.

The loss of this open green space would compromise the rural character of Lower Sandhurst Road and could encourage further infill development, gradually transforming the landscape in a way that would bedifficult, if not impossible, to reverse.

This raises clear concerns under Policy CP3, which seeks to ensure that development respects and protects the character of its surroundings.

3. Highway Safety and the Unsuitability of Lower Sandhurst Road - Pol icy CP6
Lower Sandhurst Road is a narrow rural road, with sections effectively operating as a single-track carriageway. It totally lacks pedestrian pavements, any street lighting and formal passing facilities.
The road is regularly used by walkers, runners, cyclists and horse riders, many of whom use it for recreational purposes. Local running clubs also occasionally organise events which involve the temporary closure of the road.
The introduction of additional residential properties would inevitably increase vehicle movements, including daily commuter traffic, deliveries, service vehicles and construction traffic. This raises significant concerns about the safety of existing road users, particularly vulnerable pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.
Where vehicles meet oncoming traffic, drivers may be required to reverse considerable distances or manoeuvre onto grass verges. This creates potential hazards and risks damage to the roadside environment.
4. Unsustainable Location and Dependence on Private Vehicles - Policy CP1
The application site is poorly located in terms of access to everyday services and facilities.
There are no readily accessible local shops, schools, medical facilities or other essential amenities within c25 minutes walking distance. Public transport provision is also c25 minutes walking distance away. The distance to walk to the nearest services exceeds the recommended distance of 0.6 miles (Planning Policy Guidance PPG3).
During the hours of darkness (from c4.00 pm in winter) it is unsafe, particularly for children, to walk or cycle to and from school on the surrounding roads.
Future residents would therefore be heavily reliant on private motor vehicles for everyday activities, including commuting, shopping, accessing healthcare andtaking children to school.

This would generate additional vehicle journeys, increase carbon emissions and place further pressure on the local road network.
The proposal therefore raises fundamental questions about its sustainability and consistency with Policy CP1 and the Council's wider objectives for sustainable development and reducing reliance on private transport.
5. Biodiversity, Wildlife and Proximity to Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve - Policy TB23
The application site is situated close to Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve, an important local wildlife and recreational area.
The existing grazing land, together with its mature boundary trees and established hedgerows, contributes to the green infrastructure and ecological character of the surroundingcountryside.

These features can provide valuable habitats, foraging opportunities and wildlife corridors for local species.
The introduction of residential development could result in the loss or disturbance of existing habitats through construction activity, landscaping, lighting, increased human activity and the removal or alteration of boundary vegetation.

The applicant should be required to demonstrate that the proposal adequately assesses and protects the ecological value of the site and its relationship with the surrounding nature reserve.

In particular, there should be clear evidence that the development would deliver the required biodiversity net gain and that existing trees, hedgerows and wildlife habitats would be appropriately protected.

6. Potential Impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

The proximity of the application site to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area at Horseshoe Lake raises an additional important planning consideration.

7. The Risk of an Unacceptable Planning Precedent

Finally, and importantly, I am concerned about the wider implications of approving this application.

Lower Sandhurst Road retains much of its rural character precisely because there are areas of open land and equestrian grazing which remain between individual residential properties.

Allowing residential development on this site could create pressure for similar proposals on neighbouring paddocks and other open countryside sites.

Over time, this would lead to the gradual erosion of the rural landscape, the loss of equestrian facilities and the fragmentation of the countryside.

Although each application must be considered on its individual planning merits, the cumulative consequences of permitting development of this nature should notbe overlooked.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons outlined above, I believe planning application 262419 raises serious concerns regarding:

- Conflict with the Council's policies protecting development outside defined settlement boundaries.
- Harm to the rural landscape character of Lower Sandhurst Road.

- The loss of grazing land.
- Highway safety risks on a narrow rural road used extensively by vulnerable recreational users.
- An unsustainable location that would encourage reliance on private vehicles. It failsto meet Planning Policy Guidance PPG3.

- Potential harm to local biodiversity, established hedgerows, mature trees and wildlife habitats.
- The need to properly assess potential impacts on Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area at Horseshoe Lake.
- The risk of establishing an undesirable precedent for further development of open countryside.

I respectfully ask Wokingham Borough Council to give these concerns full consideration and to refuse planning permission for application 262419.

The protection of the rural character, equestrian heritage, ecological value and recreational environment of Lower Sandhurst Road and the surrounding Finchampstead countryside is important to the local community. Once these open spaces have been lost to residential
development, their original character and value cannot readily be

restored.