

PLANNING REF : 250733
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Arborfield Green Community Centre
: Arborfield, Reading
: RG2 9ND
SUBMITTED BY : Barkham Parish Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 12/03/2026

COMMENTS:

Barkham Parish Council continues to object to this application. Our previous objections (set out below) still stand.

In addition, we note that the Wokingham Local Plan Update has now completed its Stage 1 Examination Hearing and the Stage 2 Hearing has been scheduled. This proposed development is not included in the submission currently under examination, and bringing it forward now pre-empts and undermines the outcome of the formal examination process.

Additional Objections (New Information Since Our Previous Response)

1. Sustainability of Local Facilities

There are significant shortcomings in local infrastructure provision that this proposal would worsen:

- The application relies entirely on the proximity of the Arborfield SDL for sustainability, yet SDL facilities were designed for 3,500 homes, and are already under pressure from an additional 1,000 homes in the emerging Local Plan and two further developments of around 50 homes.

- No additional facilities (beyond the SANG) are provided as part of this application.

- Both the primary and secondary schools in Arborfield Green are oversubscribed, with some local children already having to attend schools further afield. Arborfield is identified in the Borough's School Places Strategy as one of only two areas with a projected shortage of primary school places.

- Primary care provision is already inadequate. The "Arborfield Surgery" cited in the application is merely an occasional satellite facility with limited consultation capability.

- Neighbouring surgeries such as Swallowfield are oversubscribed, with many residents having to register in Wokingham, and all are practically inaccessible without a car.

This reinforces our view that the proposal is not sustainable and places further pressure on infrastructure already operating at or beyond capacity.

2. Site Access and Highway Safety

Additional concerns relating to access design:

- The proposed site access onto Observer Way is from a 50 mph road designed for high-speed traffic, raising serious safety concerns.

- The secondary access via the roundabout is tightly spaced between two other exits with only a few metres of external kerb available.

- Drawings in the Design and Access Statement appear to rely on a remodelled roundabout layout, including the removal of one approach lane—yet there is no evidence such a redesign has been agreed or assessed.

These issues add substantially to the

case that the proposal is unsafe and inadequately designed from a highways standpoint.

3. HELAA Findings – Previously Assessed as Unsuitable

The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), which informed the Local Plan Update, previously assessed Ducks Nest Farm as unsuitable for development. Reasons included:

- The site would be out of character with established settlement form.
- Development would have a significant adverse impact on the physical and perceived gap between settlements.
- The site lies within sensitive landscape character areas (Farley Hill Wooded Sands and Gravel Hills; Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay), valued for rural character, wooded skylines, and perceptual qualities of seclusion and remoteness.
- It lies within the proposed Farley Hill Valued Landscape, an area with strongly defined sense of place and heritage significance.
- Direct access onto the A327 was considered inadvisable due to the 50 mph speed limit.
- A Transport Assessment was required to assess cumulative impacts on local roundabouts and known congestion hotspots.

These findings remain highly relevant and reinforce that the proposal is unsuitable, unsustainable, and harmful.

Previous Objections which still stand:

Barkham Parish Council objects to application 250733 for the reasons outlined below, which relate to significant conflict with adopted and emerging planning policy, unacceptable impact on local infrastructure, and concerns over the premature and piecemeal nature of the proposal.

1. Conflict with the Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan Update (LPU) Submission - The proposed residential development is not identified within the Section 19 submission version of the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update. As such, it conflicts with the Borough's spatial development strategy and is contrary to the planned and coordinated approach to housing delivery. Relevant Policies: WBC Policies CP9 (Scale and Location of Development Proposals), CP11 (Proposals Outside Development Limits)

2. Non-Compliance with the Barkham and Arborfield Neighbourhood Plan - The proposal conflicts with several key policies within the Barkham and Arborfield Neighbourhood Plan, which forms part of the statutory development plan:

- Policy IRS1 (preservation and separation of settlements) – The development would erode the physical and visual separation between settlements, undermining their distinct identities.
- Policy IRS2 (Recognise, Respect and Preserve Identity and rural setting of settlements) – The proposal fails to respect the rural setting and unique identity of the area. The scale and density proposed are inappropriate to the character of the area and not justified by local plan evidence.
- Policy IRS4 (Protection and enhancement of historic character of the area – There is insufficient regard to the historic character of

the site and surrounding area.

- Policy AD1 (New developments within settlement boundaries) - The application site lies outside defined settlement boundaries and does not comply with criteria for appropriate development.
- Policy GA1 (Minimise additional traffic on unsuitable Roads) - The transport plan lacks credible mitigation and fails to address existing congestion.
- Policy GA3 (Public transport improvements with long term viability) - The development lacks demonstrable long-term viability in terms of public transport provision. In addition, the development does not constitute sustainable growth and would place undue pressure on local infrastructure and services.

3. Highways and Traffic Impact - The proposed access arrangements would direct a significant volume of traffic onto Langley Common Road, a route already suffering from peak-time congestion and high daily traffic volumes (circa 5,000 vehicles). The absence of meaningful highway mitigation is a major concern, particularly in light of cumulative development pressures in the area. Relevant Policies: Neighbourhood Plan Policies GA1 and GA3; WBC Policies CP3(a) (General Principles of Development), CP4 (Infrastructure)

4. Prematurity and Piecemeal Development - The proposal represents a speculative application that precedes the adoption of the Local Plan Update. Approving this development would undermine the plan-led approach to growth, and risk setting a precedent for further unplanned and uncoordinated expansion in the area. Relevant Policies: WBC Policies CP1 (Sustainability), CP6 (Infrastructure Needs), CP18 (Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location)

5. Inconsistency with Core Strategy and Sustainability Objectives - The proposal is inconsistent with the overarching sustainability principles and strategic development objectives set out in the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy. It fails to demonstrate how it will deliver inclusive, well-supported communities or appropriately located development. Relevant Policies: WBC Policies CP1 (Sustainability), CP2(b) (Inclusive Communities), CP3(a), CP6, CP9, CP11 In summary, this application conflicts with both the adopted Neighbourhood Plan and Wokingham Borough planning policies. It is premature in advance of the new Local Plan, represents piecemeal development outside settlement boundaries, and fails to adequately mitigate its impacts on infrastructure and character. For these reasons, Barkham Parish Council strongly urges the Local Planning Authority to refuse this application.