
MEMORANDUM

From:	JP		
Service	WBC Highways	App No:	250632
Address:	Land North Of The Vale, Forest Road, Wokingham, RG40 5QY.		
Proposal:	Outline application for the proposed erection of 1 no. dwelling and associated works.		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (1-9)		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Comments On Proposal

Reason for refusal

This memo supports refusal reasons no. 1 and 2 of the planning application 250632, which stated the following:

- *Principle of Development - The proposed development will introduce a new unsustainably located residential dwelling in countryside that would be outside, and unrelated to, any defined settlement boundaries and is contrary to the spatial objectives of the development plan and policies CP1, CP3, CP6 and CP11 of the Core Strategy (2010), CC01, CC03 and TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014), Paragraph 83 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2025) and the guidance contained within the Borough Design Guide SPD.*
- *Unsustainable Location - The application site is within a poorly accessible location that would fail to encourage a modal shift towards sustainable modes of transport, by reason of its countryside location outside of settlement limits, the absence of nearby facilities and services, lack of good public transport links and poor quality of the walking/cycling environment contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2025), policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6 and CP11 of the Core Strategy (2010) and CC01 and CC02 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014).*

Background

The appellant seeks consent for an outline application for new dwelling erection with all highway matters reserved. The appeal site is accessed via the shared private drive off Forest Road.

While the dwelling to the south ('The Vale') was allowed under appeal reference APP/X0360/W/15/3005714, the benefits of the current proposal have to be weighed based on the latest policy, which introduces fundamental differences between the two proposals.

The 2015 appeal was determined under the 2012 version of NPPF, which provided a less rigorous approach to sustainable development. However, the latest NPPF (dated December 2024) has significantly more emphasis on prioritising sustainable travel modes, limiting future car use and promoting well-designed places.

Meanwhile, the WBC is also working towards a Local Plan Update to replace the current Core Strategy (2010) and Managing Development Delivery (2014) local plans to ensure the needs of the community are properly addressed and planned in a sustainable way. The emerging sustainable development principles will expect developments to be located so as to offer the choice of active means of travel and/or public transport, reducing the need to travel by private car for day-to-day activities, and must support the delivery of active and sustainable transport measures.

The appeal site is considered to have poor availability and route environment to local services by sustainable modes. This is contrary to the latest NPPF and emerging local plan.

The full details of these sustainability concerns are set out in the following sections.

Sustainability

It is essential to assess the safety and attractiveness of sustainable travel of the appeal site to be in line with the national and local requirements.

Measuring Accessibility

The Borough Design Guide SPD states that 'if places are to be sustainable then the aim should be to create: Walkable neighbourhoods, with a range of facilities within 10 minutes walking distance of residential areas, which encourage people to travel on foot or by bicycle.'

In addition, walkable neighbourhoods are defined in Manual for Streets as those typically characterised by having a range of facilities within 10 minutes walking distance from residential area. Manual for Streets clarifies that 10 minutes walking distance is roughly 800 metres. This has been reconfirmed in the National Design Guide (2019).

None of these guidance documents expressly distinguish between urban, suburban and rural locations, which implies that the 800m/10-minute threshold is applicable in all contexts.

The IHT's Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot makes the following recommendations for suggested acceptable walking distances for pedestrians without a mobility impairment:

	Town Centres (m)	Commuting/ School (m)	Elsewhere (m)
Desirable	200	500	400
Acceptable	400	1000	800
Preferred Maximum	800	2000	1200

This table suggests that 800m is an acceptable walking distance for locations outside of town centres, which presumably includes rural areas, for journeys other than commuting or travelling to school.

A maximum walk distance of 400m for bus service is applied to align with CIHT's guidance Planning for Walking. The Borough's Local Development Framework (WDLF) also specifies the 'good' standard required for bus service frequency.

Proximity of Facilities and Services

As stated in Paragraph 4.20 of the planning statement dated March 2025, the appellant acknowledges that the closest day-to-day local facilities are located circa 2 miles (3.2km) from the site.

The Highways have re-examined the walking distance and time to access to the local services and facilities as listed below:

Location	Distance (km)	Time (Minutes)
Ashridge Manor Garden Centre / Fletchers Food Market	0.5	7
Kingsclere Day Nursery	1.6	22
Co-op Food - Matthews Green	1.9	25
St Cecilia's CoE Primary School	2.0	27
Nearest Supermarket (Waitrose)	3.2	45
Wokingham Town Centre	3.4	47
Wokingham Train Station	3.3	45
Bus Stops (Spooner Place: 121)	1.9	26

While a garden centre is within the acceptable walking distance (circa 0.5km), together with a nursery and a primary school are within the maximum recommended walking distance (less than 2km), there is a lack of day-to-day local facilities within acceptable walking distance from the site, making the site an unsustainable location for housing development.

While these sites are within the preferred maximum walking distance, there is an absence of proposed pedestrian/cycle infrastructure between the site and the garden centre to make this attractive or safe. This is further discussed in the following section 'Route Environment'.

Route Environment

In addition to the walk distances, the nature of the route environment is also a factor.

Forest Road is a classified B road and is subject to national speed limit. There is no street lighting and segregated pedestrian or cycling network along the site frontage to provide safe and attractive environment for considering sustainable travel modes. The nearest pavement is at the roundabout of Maidenhead Road and Forest Road 1km away from the site, which does not connect to the local facilities and services to the south of the site. There are no dropped kerbs or tactile paving at this location.

The appellant has suggested that cycling is achievable given the flat topography. Based on distance alone, most local services would be within an acceptable cycling distance. However, there is no direct and continuous cycling route to the local

facilities. The best cycling routes will be equivalent to the pedestrian routes, which are unlit and not segregated from vehicles, and thus not attractive for cycling.

Public Transport Level of Service

The nearest bus stops to the site are Spooner Place stops located on Diamond Jubilee Way some 1.9km from the site, which have substantially exceeded the maximum walking distance of 400m.

This pairs of bus stops are served by bus route 121, a circular route between Wokingham Town Centre and Norreys Estate. This service runs twice an hour between Monday and Friday, with 4 daily services on Saturdays. There are no late evening and Sunday Services. Due to the walk distance to bus stops, the use of buses would not be an attractive alternative to the motor car.

No. 122, 129 and 151A services from farther bus stops along Matthewsgreen Road, circa 2.2km from the site, have even less frequent bus services and do not meet the requirement for good bus services.

The appeal site is located circa 2.6km north of Wokingham Station, which has direct services to Reading (four to five services per hour at peak times daily), Gatwick Airport (two services per hour at peak times daily) and London Waterloo (two services per hour at peak times daily). Similar to other local services and facilities, the distance and route environment are not considered safe nor attractive for walking/cycling.

Conclusion

The site is in an area which does not have good accessibility to local services by sustainable modes or the opportunity to transfer away from the car. This would be contrary to principles behind the Borough's design guidance and Manual for Streets and hence not lead to a reduction in the use of the motor car.

It falls significantly short of helping to achieve to the development plan objective of achieving a modal shift away from the use of unsustainable transport modes, and expected to be fundamentally car-dependent. This development is therefore contrary to NPPF, the emerging local plan, Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3, and CP6.

I respectfully request that the appeal to be dismissed.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

If this appeal is allowed:

1. CF3 - PARKING (TO BE APPROVED)
2. CF7 - TURNING (TO BE APPROVED)
3. CF9 - CYCLE PARKING (TO BE APPROVED)
4. CW5 - BIN COLLECTION (TO BE APPROVED)

Date:	26/6/2025	Signed:	JP
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