PLANNING REF : 241933
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Vinewillow House
: Old Wokingham Road, Wokingham, Berkshire
: RG40 3BT
SUBMITTED BY : Cllr Colin Wright
DATE SUBMITTED : 14/09/2026

COMMENTS:
counts.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 establishes the statutory plan-led basis for decision-making: development is to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory framework remains central to the determination of planning applications.

The Council therefore needs to state plainly whether it considers this application:

A. compliant with the development plan; or

B. contrary to the development plan but nevertheless justified by identified material considerations.

It cannot have it both ways.

3. POTENTIAL DOUBLE-COUNTING OF OPEN SPACE

This is arguably even more serious.

The applicant's letter says the residual area of Parks and Gardens is intended to contribute towards the policy requirement for another application.

The other development is identified as the Priors Farm/ Pearces Farm planning context, with the overall SDL Extension promoted as approximately 1,030 homes 850 at Priors Farm and 180 at Pearces Farm.

That raises a fundamental question:

Is the same land being used to satisfy the open-space requirements of two separate developments?

If so, the Council must explain how that is legally and planning-policy compliant.

Open space does not magically become twice as valuable because two planning applications happen to be adjacent.

If 1 hectare is required to serve Development A, and that same hectare is subsequently relied upon to meet the requirement for Development B, the Council must demonstrate that both developments are actually receiving the required provision.

The Council must rule out double-counting before permission is granted.

4. THE APPLICATION CANNOT BE CONSIDERED IN ISOLATION

This is not an isolated 850-home development.

The applicant's own material identifies the wider South Wokingham SDL Extension as comprising:

Priors Farm - up to 850 homes
Pearces Farm - up to 180 homes
associated infrastructure connecting the developments.

Crowthorne Parish Council has already formally recommended refusal of 241933, citing the cumulative effect of 1,030 additional homes, existing infrastructure pressures and impacts upon roads, water and sewage.

The Council must therefore consider the real-world cumulative impact, not artificially compartmentalise each application.

A road does not know which planning application generated a car.

A sewage network does not know which application generated a toilet flush.

A school does not know which application generated a child.

And a road junction does not become less congested because the houses approaching it were approved under two application numbers rather than one.

5. TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAY CAPACITY

The development proposes a new access and significant changes to the Old Wokingham Road/Easthampstead Road network.

The applicant's May 2026 submission itself refers to revised junction arrangements and pedestrian/active-travel crossing arrangements.

That demonstrates that the highway solution has continued to evolve during the application process.

The question for the Council is therefore not simply whether a
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FORMAL OBJECTION - APPLICATION 241933
Land west of Old Wokingham Road and north and south of Easthampstead Road

I object to this application and request that planning permission be refused.

This is not simply an objection to the principle of housing elopment. There are fundamental questions concerning policy

compliance, the evidential basis for the proposal, infrastructure capacity, cumulative impacts and the legality and transparency of the Council's apparent approach to open-space provision.

The Council should not grant permission until these matters have been properly and transparently resolved.

1. THE COUNCIL CANNOT SIMPLY "RELAX" ITS PLANNING POLICY FOR THIS APPLICATION

The applicant's letter of 19 May 2026 contains an extraordinary admission.

It states that 0.48 hectares of Parks and Gardens has been reassigned to amenity green space because WBC confirmed that the developer could attribute 0.48 hectares of open space on the site as Parks and
Gardens, following the Council's relaxation of its guidance that such land should form part of an area of at least 2 hectares.

That requires a very simple question:

Where is the lawful decision which authorised that relaxation?

The Council should identify:

the policy being relaxed;
the officer or committee who authorised it;

the delegated authority relied upon;
the date of the decision;
the evidence supporting the departure;
the reason why the requirement was relaxed for this development; and whether the same relaxation has been offered to other applicants.

This is particularly important because the adopted MDD Local Plan Policy TB08 states that residential development must demonstrate how it meets the Council's open-space standards, including 1.1 hectares of Parks and Public Gardens per 1,000 population.

A planning authority cannot simply change the meaning or practical effect of its adopted policy by private agreement with a developer.

Tesco Stores Ltd v Dundee City Council [2012] UKSC 13

The Supreme Court made clear that planning authorities must proceed upon a proper understanding of the development plan. Policy is to be interpreted objectively according to its language and context.

Lord Reed's warning is particularly relevant: planning authorities do not have the freedom to make the development plan mean whatever they would like it to mean.

If WBC has genuinely changed the policy approach, then it needs to demonstrate the lawful planning mechanism by which that change occurred.

If it has not changed the policy, then the officer's report must explain precisely how 0.48 hectares satisfies the applicable policy requirements.

An undocumented "relaxation" is not a substitute for a planning policy.

2. THE 0.48 HECTARE ISSUE IS NOT A TECHNICALITY IT GOES TO THE LEGALITY OF THE DECISION

The Council cannot first establish a quantitative requirement and then retrospectively decide that a substantially smaller area will count because the development otherwise struggles to comply.

That is putting the cart before the horse.

The proper sequence is:

What does the adopted policy require?

Does the proposal comply?

If it does not, what material considerations justify departing from it?

That is fundamentally different from:

The proposal does not meet the requirement, so we will redefine what drawing can technically accommodate traffic.

It must establish whether the actual cumulative traffic generated by the development can be accommodated safely and sustainably, taking account of existing and committed development.

Crowthorne Parish Council has already identified the Old Wokingham Road/A329 corridor and surrounding infrastructure as a significant cumulative concern.

The current NPPF expressly places sustainable transport and the relationship between development and transport infrastructure at the centre of development management. The Government's current planning framework emphasises a vision-led approach, addressing potential impacts on transport networks and considering the scale, location and density of development that the network can accommodate.

Accordingly, "we can mitigate it" is not an answer unless the Council can demonstrate exactly what the mitigation is, who will deliver it, when it will be delivered and whether it will be operational before the development depends upon it.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE CANNOT BE DEFERRED TO SOME FUTURE PROMISE

The proposal is for up to 850 homes.

That creates demand for:

schools;
healthcare;
utilities;

drainage;
roads;
public transport;

walking and cycling infrastructure;
open space;
recreation;
community facilities.

Crowthorne Parish Council has specifically recorded concerns that existing roads, water and sewage infrastructure are already struggling with existing development and that a further 1,030 homes would intensify those pressures.

The Council must therefore distinguish between:

infrastructure that exists,

infrastructure that is funded,

infrastructure that is legally secured,

and

infrastructure that is merely proposed.

They are not the same thing.

A planning permission should not be granted on the assumption that somebody will eventually find the money to fix the infrastructure.

7. THE DEVELOPMENT SHOULD NOT BE TREATED AS SUSTAINABLE SIMPLY BECAUSE A SANG IS PROVIDED

The proposal includes a substantial SANG.

That may address a particular ecological/recreational mitigation issue.

It does not automatically make an 850-home development sustainable in every other respect.

SANG does not:

widen Old Wokingham Road;

create a GP surgery;
increase sewage capacity;
create a secondary school;
eliminate congestion;
provide a railway station;
or make an inadequate junction safe.

The planning balance must consider the whole development.

8. THE EMERGING LOCAL PLAN CANNOT SIMPLY BE TREATED AS IF IT WERE ALREADY ADOPTED

The developer's own website identifies the three applications as

relating to emerging Policy SS12 of the Local Plan Update.

That distinction matters.

An emerging policy may carry weight depending upon its stage of preparation, unresolved objections and consistency with national policy.

But an emerging allocation is not automatically an adopted allocation.

The Council must therefore identify the precise weight it gives the emerging policy and explain why.

It should not allow the development application to effectively determine the outcome of the plan-making process backwards.

Otherwise the sequence becomes:

"We want the land allocated, therefore it should be granted permission; because permission is being granted, the allocation must have been justified."

That is circular.

9. THE COUNCIL MUST DEAL WITH THE ACTUAL EVIDENCE NOT JUST THE DEVELOPER'S ASSERTIONS

The Supreme Court authority in Tesco v Dundee is important here because a planning authority must properly understand and apply relevant policy.

And the Court of Appeal's longstanding North Wiltshire principle establishes the importance of consistency in planning decision-making. Like cases should be treated alike, with reasons given where the decision-maker departs from previous approaches.

That is directly relevant to the alleged relaxation of the open-space
requirement.

If WBC previously required a particular standard and is now departing from it, the decision-maker needs to explain why.

Otherwise the public is entitled to ask whether policy is being applied consistently or negotiated application-by-application.

10. REQUEST FOR A PROPERLY REASONED OFFICER REPORT

I specifically request that the eventual officer report does not mply state that the proposal is acceptable.

It should explicitly identify:

The adopted policies governing Parks and Gardens.
The precise quantitative requirement.
The 2-hectare requirement and its policy/evidential origin. The legal basis for the alleged relaxation.

Who authorised it.
Whether the decision was delegated.
Whether the relaxation is available to other applicants.
Whether the 0.48 ha is being counted elsewhere.
Whether any land is being double-counted between applications 241933 and 242279.
The cumulative infrastructure consequences of the wider 1,030-home scheme.
The cumulative highway impact.
The deliverability and funding of mitigation.
The weight given to emerging Policy SS12.
The extent to which the application conflicts with the adopted development plan.
What material considerations are relied upon to justify any conflict.

Anything less risks leaving the decision vulnerable to challenge.

CONCLUSION

This application should be refused.

The issue is not whether Wokingham needs homes.

The issue is whether the Council is prepared to apply its planning policies properly, consistently and transparently.

The applicant's own documentation appears to disclose an arrangement whereby the Council has relaxed an established open-space approach, allowing 0.48 hectares to be treated as Parks and Gardens, while the remaining land is intended to assist another planning application.

That is not something that should be waved through as an administrative detail.

Where an adopted policy is being departed from, the public is entitled to know why, on what evidence, by whom and under what legal authority.

If the Council believes the proposal complies with policy, it should demonstrate that compliance.

If it does not comply, the Council should identify the conflict and explain the material considerations that justify departing from the development plan.

What it should not do is quietly redefine the requirement so that a non-compliant proposal becomes compliant on paper.

The courts have repeatedly recognised the importance of proper policy interpretation, consistency and lawful decision-making in planning. Tesco v Dundee makes clear that a planning authority cannot simply make its development plan mean whatever it wants it to mean.

I therefore request refusal of application 241933 unless and until the Council can demonstrate, with a clear evidential and legal basis, that the development complies with the adopted development

plan, that open-space provision has not been double-counted, and that the
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