

Date: 22 July 2025
Application: 251486



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy)

Development Management &
Compliance

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Dear WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy),

Full Planning Approval Consultation

Application Number: 251486

Applicant: Mr T Northey

Site Address: Land west of Edney's Hill, Barkham Road, Barkham

Parish: Barkham

Grid Reference: Easting - 478470, Northing - 167162

Type of Development: Major Dwellings (10+)

Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 16 no. dwellings with new access off Edney's Hill, plus footpaths, car ports, parking, landscaping and associated works.

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Development Management has received the above application and we require your comments on the proposal using the recommended memorandum below. The documents associated with this are available to view in NEC DM using the application number 251486. Alternatively, public documents are available to view on the Council's planning application search page: [Wokingham Borough Council Online Planning](#).

Please index your response into NEC DM against the application. If you are recommending conditions, you should give a reason with reference to relevant policies. A list of standard conditions can be found on the Z Drive at: [Z:\Standard Planning Conditions](#).

Your observations are required in respect of this application within **10 working days** of the above date or **15 working days** if the development type is classed as a major development.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	Heather Read Senior Planning Policy Officer		
Service	WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy)	App No:	251486
Address:	Land west of Edney's Hill, Barkham Road, Barkham.		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed erection of 16 no. dwellings with new access off Edney's Hill, plus footpaths, car ports, parking, landscaping and associated works.		
Type of Development:	Major Dwellings (10+)		
Site Visit Made:	No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☐ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☐ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

Please use this section to detail any positive, satisfactory or negative aspects of the proposals relating to planning matters. Any additional information or negotiations required can also be detailed in this section.

This application seeks permission for the erection of 16 no. dwellings with new access off Edney's Hill, plus footpaths, car ports, parking, landscaping and associated works.

Planning history

Two planning applications were submitted in 2016; one for x8 custom-build dwellings and one for x5 custom-build dwellings, under refs. 161412 and 162084 respectively.

Both applications were refused permission and were the subject of appeals which were dealt with jointly, with the appeal decision issued under ref. APP/X0360/W/16/3161362. It should be noted that the appeal sites both had a similar site area to the current application site, albeit slightly larger.

In the appeal decision, the Inspector notes the open, rural character of the site and its prominent position at the top of the hill, as well as its location, outside of the settlement limits, within designated countryside.

In paragraph 9, the Inspector concludes:

'The erection of new dwellings would erode the open character and quality of the area by extending the built development in an undesirable fashion. In this respect, both developments would give rise to significant harm to the rural character of the area.'

At paragraph 11, the Inspector attests:

'For the above reasons, the proposed developments would give rise to significant harm to the character and appearance of the area contrary to Policies CP3 and CP11 of the CS and Policies CC02 and TB21 of the MDD which amongst other matters seek to seek to protect the character and appearance of the area.'

In paragraphs 33 and 34 of the appeal decision, the Inspector discusses WBC's 5 year housing land supply position. At the time of the appeal, WBC could demonstrate 5.5 year housing land supply, though this was contested by the appellant. In paragraph 34, the Inspector states:

'...from the limited evidence before me, it is unclear whether the Council does have a five year housing land supply. Notwithstanding that, even if there was not a five year housing land supply, the Framework indicates that permission should not be granted if the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole.'

Principle of development under the development plan

The site is located within designated countryside, adjacent to the Limited Development Location of Barkham Hill. The northern, eastern and western boundaries of the site abut the settlement boundary, but the southern boundary of the site opens out onto countryside.

Policy CP9 (Scale and location of development proposals) of the Core Strategy (2010) directs development to within development limits and states that *"the scale of development proposals in Wokingham borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility."*

Development proposals in the designated countryside, should be assessed against Core Strategy Policy CP11 (Proposals outside Development Limits).

The application proposal does not meet any of the specified exceptions in CP11 and is therefore contrary to Policy CP11.

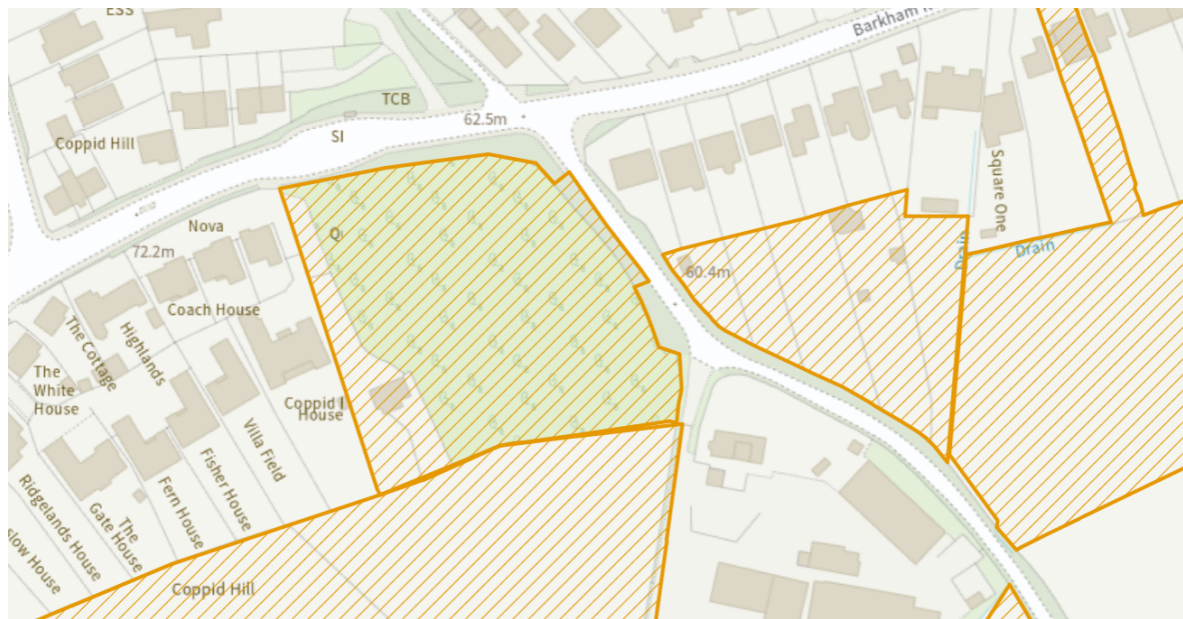
Policy CC02 (Development Limits) of the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) local plan (2014) supports development proposals on the edge of settlements, provided it can be demonstrated that the development is “*within development limits and respects the transition between the built-up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape*”. This policy reinforces that development plan policy seeks to guide development to locations within defined development limits.

In summary, the development proposal is considered to be contrary to policies CP9, CP11 and CC02 of the Core Strategy and MDDD.

Principle of development under the emerging Local Plan Update

The Local Plan Update (LPU) will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and MDD local plans. The LPU sets out the long-term development strategy for the borough to 2040, including proposed site allocations and planning policies. The LPU was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination on 28th February 2025.

The application site closely resembles Call for Sites promotion 5BA017 (see map below), albeit the application site does not extend as far west as the site promotion.



Site 5BA017 was promoted for the development of between 8-14 dwellings. The site was assessed through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) (2024) and published alongside the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Plan. The site was considered unsuitable for development, as a result of the erosion of the open, rural character of the site and the lack of services and facilities within a 10-minute walk of the site, as it would increase reliance on private car usage and therefore undermine the site's sustainability. The above planning history and Inspector's conclusions were referenced within the assessment. The site was therefore excluded at Stage 2c of the HELAA and has not therefore been proposed for allocation in the Regulation 19 Submission Plan, nor any earlier consultation

version of the local plan. It should be noted that the Barkham Hill is classed as a Minor Settlement within the LPU Settlement Hierarchy.

The Proposed Submission Plan has been submitted for examination, but most policies are likely to have limited weight when determining planning applications, based on NPPF paragraph 49. In addition, the assessment of land in the HELAA is high level with the purpose of informing options within plan-making. It is not comparable to a planning application.

Housing land supply position and the 'tilted balance'

The latest published assessment of housing land supply concluded a deliverable supply of 2.5 years at 31st March 2025. This supply position takes into account the increase in Local Housing Need (LHN) following the changes to standard method introduced by the government in December 2024. The LHN for Wokingham Borough set out in the Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement is 1,316 dwellings per annum.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) states under paragraph 11d. that where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date (including where a local authority is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites) planning permission for housing development should be granted. It continues to advise that unless there are specific policies in the NPPF protecting the land in question, 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. This presumption in favour of sustainable development outlined in paragraph 11 of the NPPF is commonly referred to as the 'tilted balance'.

It should be noted that the application of paragraph 11 of the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. This is clearly set out in paragraph 12 of the NPPF and is a matter of law. Material to decisions on planning applications involving housing is the underlying reasons for the shortfall in deliverable housing sites. The shortfall is not as a result of non-delivery of housing but due to the significant over delivery in recent years reducing the bank of land with extant planning permissions, and the recent increase in LHN.

The council's record of housing delivery been recognised by Inspectors in recent appeal decisions, including:

- Land east of Lodge Road (application ref 220458, appeal ref APP/X0360/W/22/3309202)
- Land off Watmore Lane / Maidensfield (application ref 230208, appeal ref APP/X0360/W/22/3309202)

Conclusion

The site is located outside of settlement boundaries, within designated countryside.

The proposed development does not satisfy any of the exceptions set out in Policy CP11 concerning development beyond development limits in countryside locations. The proposed development is contrary to the overall aim of Policies CP11, CP9 and CC02 to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment.

The LPU is currently being examined, with hearing sessions anticipated later this year. The site was promoted for development and has not been proposed as an allocation in the LPU for the reasons set out above. It should be noted that the current application seeks permission for 16 dwellings whereas the previous appeals were for 5 and 8 self-build dwellings. The application site area is less than that of the previous appeals, as indicated in the maps above. The proposed increase in housing density will require further consideration.

By virtue of the Council's acknowledged housing land supply position, the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF at paragraph 11 is engaged in the decision-making process. Accordingly, an assessment will need to be made of whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. The context of the housing land supply shortfall being within a bigger picture of housing delivery acts to maintain the significance of development plan policy.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Please use this section to detail any conditions that are required to make this development acceptable in planning terms. All conditions should be accompanied by reasons.

N/a

Date:	12 th August 2025	Signed:	<i>H. Read</i>
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