

# Objection to Application 253110: development of 7 houses at Brunninghams Farm

I wish to register a strong objection to this application on the following grounds:

## 1) Planning history since 1998

Applications to build additional properties on Heath Ride (from Kiln Ride Extension to Hollybush Ride) since at least 1998 have never been approved, and with good reason as the road is mainly outside the development area, is far from most amenities has no pavements or street lighting, poor sightlines is not designated as a carriageway and has not been adopted.

There have been numerous planning applications to build new houses on Heath Ride during this period. The outcomes of these applications is as follows:

Replacement dwellings (1 for 1):- were generally approved (17 out of 19 applications)

Newbuilds on vacant sites:- Never approved (12 dwellings asked for on seven sites, none granted)

Granting approval for no less than seven new builds on a site currently designated as farmland in the centre of this countryside area would drive a coach and horses through this long established planning practice.

Several applications for 2 new houses at Broughton Farm were recently refused (and at appeal) with the WBC officer stating “the proposal is located within an unsuitable location for residential development” and also saying “The occupants of the dwellings would be overly reliant on private motor vehicles to access basic amenities and services”.

## 2) Backland Development

The proposal is to build houses four deep behind Heath Ride. This is unprecedented, is a type of development that has been repeatedly rejected and is inappropriate to a countryside setting such as this, and contrary to the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan which does not envisage mass development in countryside areas.

## 3) Precedent

This development would set an unwelcome precedent for further development on an unsuitable road in an area designated as countryside, contrary to the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan.

## 4) Drainage

**Policy CP1 Sustainable development** requires that developments:

*4) Ensure the provision of adequate drainage;*

*9) Avoid increasing (and where possible reduce) risks of or from all forms of flooding (including from groundwater)*

This application fails to meet these requirements.

There is no mains drainage, and no prospect of this becoming available. Private sewage disposal is not encouraged, and these properties will discharge treated sewage ultimately onto Heath Ride. Heath Ride already tends to flood after heavy or persistent rain and this will exacerbate the problem. Poor maintenance of drainage ditches at Brunninghams Farm is not the only problem as water already floods down the road from the southeast which is higher. The flood risk assessment by Lanmor Consulting found that test boreholes on site failed to drain and the site is not suitable for infiltration lending weight to objections to the proposal which centre on the tendency of Heath Ride to flood from runoff during periods of significant rainfall.

Lanmor Consulting acknowledge in section 4.2.2 of their report that the EA surface water flood mapping they rely on has limitations and state: “these maps cannot definitely show that an area of land or property is, or is not, at risk of flooding, and the maps are not suitable for use at an individual property level”. Specifically, these maps do not capture the degree of surface water runoff that affects Heath Ride. Nor was Lanmors survey carried out at a time of year when heavy rainfall was likely, and so they have not observed the degree to which this occurs.

In fact, the water runoff on Heath Ride already has significant adverse consequences to the road surface, which suffers from serious issues with potholes each winter, with water penetration and freeze/thaw cycles. This damage has to be rectified by the residents at their own expense as the road is not adopted by WBC.

In the first iteration of this proposal (pre-planning stages) the applicant included a pond at the south end of the site, and stated that this would mitigate water runoff from the land at the rear. This pond has been removed

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from the current proposals but there is no indication of other means to provide the same mitigation to water running from the woods at the back.

Section 6.4 (Safe Access) of the Lanmor report proposes a site evacuation route to the northeast. This is across Heath Ride and into properties on the other side of the road which are mostly lower lying, and are not accessible to the public! A route along Heath Ride itself (i.e. to the Southeast) would be along a route that is itself prone to flooding as already noted.

Sections 7.4.3 and 7.5.2 of Lanmors report are in fact misleading or inaccurate due to the limitations of the survey carried out by Lanmor which did not take place at an appropriate time of year and therefore did not observe the state of Heath Ride under heavy rainfall conditions.

Section 8.2.1 proposes piping treated sewage outflow into the drainage ditch alongside the road. Section 8.2.5 adds surface water drainage to this same ditch. All of this is inappropriate to an already overloaded drainage ditch which leads to flooding of the road even without this additional load.

I have personally witnessed surface water pouring down Heath Ride on numerous occasions.

### 5) Traffic/transport

**Policy CP1 Sustainable development** requires that developments:

*11) Demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car in line with CP6*

**Policy CP6 - Managing Travel Demand**

*Planning permission will be granted for schemes that:*

*f) Enhance road safety*

This application fails to meet these requirements, and similar applications in this area have been refused with officers comments highlighting concerns of this kind.

Likely purchasers for this kind of property are older people (not first time buyers!) who are unlikely to use bicycles. In fact bicycles are rarely seen in use on Heath Ride, and this will also be the case for new properties. The bicycle sheds included in the design are, in practice, pointless.

Previous applications have been refused with distance to amenities and poor public transport links cited - encouraging car use.

Heath Ride is not built or maintained to current safety standards - sightlines in general are poor. There is a complete lack of pavements. There is no street lighting. The road is subject to frequent flooding during heavy or persistent rain which leads to potholes in winter which is a significant risk of tripping and subsequent injury to walkers during darkness.

The road is used by horses, children walking to school, dog walkers and older walkers

Local bus services do not meet the WDLF definition of "good public transport services" (**Note 1 at end**)

### 6) Vehicle Access

The proposed development site is located at the narrowest part of Heath Ride and has very poor sightlines onto the road. Vehicles exiting the site are a serious hazard to other traffic, pedestrians and horse riders. This is particularly dangerous at night, when pedestrians would be difficult to see from vehicles moving onto the Ride

### 7) Height

The proposed properties are full 9.145m ridge height 2-storey houses, to be built on rising ground, adjacent to properties that were not permitted to build to the height of 9.145m. For comparison, "Hillop" was restricted to a ridge height of 7.2m and is chalet style. Brock House is also much lower.

The applicant claims that residents are supportive of 2 storey properties but this is in general a false claim. In the public consultation residents were only offered the option of choosing 3 storey or 2 storey designs, but 3 storey designs are contrary to the Finchampstead neighbourhood plan and would never be approved. No other alternatives were offered.

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### 8) Style

**Policy CP3 - General Principles for development** states that

*Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:*

*a) Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life*

This application does not meet the requirements on scale, mass, height or character and is at odds with Core Strategy paragraph 4.19 which requires developments to respect the unique character and distinctiveness of each area.

The proposed building style is entirely at odds with the character of the area. Firstly, as it consists of a small estate of near identical houses built in two straight lines more reminiscent of an urban development. Secondly, the architecture is not compatible with existing architectural styles, with awkwardly shaped overhanging roofs which dominate the design and are not reflective of any nearby building styles. There is a significant strength of opinion that these designs are ugly. This is amplified by the seven-fold repetition of the style.

The designs have no architectural significance despite the applicants claiming there is. When one of the developers was asked about this at the informal consultation with residents on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025 he was unable to give any reason why it should be considered significant.

### 9) Restricted Byway status

Heath Ride was designated as a “Road used as a Public Pathway” (RUPP) and was never converted to a “Byway Open to All Traffic” (BOAT). Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 this was automatically converted to a “Restricted Byway” which is prohibited for motor traffic making it an offence to drive a mechanically propelled vehicle on it. **(Note 2: CROW 47 (2) and schedule 7 5 1 (b))**

This clearly creates a presumption that no housing should be built that relies on the unlawful use of motor vehicles.

There is a specific local exemption for existing householders and their visitors vehicles to prevent existing properties on Heath Ride from essentially becoming worthless.

### 10) Consultation misrepresentations

1. Residents would like to see the semi-derelict existing buildings removed, but this does not mean they welcome additional housing which was claimed by the developer.
2. Residents concerns about construction traffic including damage to the ride has not been addressed. The developer says that “new homes will contribute to upkeep of the road”. This does not help during construction phase.
3. Concerns about increased traffic are not limited to construction traffic. Traffic will increase permanently with safety implications. There is no duty on new residents to contribute to upkeep of Heath Ride, and they may choose to provide for upkeep only of the proposed new section of road on Brunninghams. None of the proposed properties has a frontage to Heath Ride. Any additional contributions to road maintenance would be swallowed up by maintaining the extra roads hedges and drainage systems in front of the new properties.
4. The charts with green stickers did not allow residents to properly express an opinion. Only options selected by the applicant are offered, and this should not be regarded as a full consultation.

### 11) NPPF11

Wokingham does not currently have a compliant 5 year housing plan. However, in all previous years it has greatly exceeded the required housing provision, despite not having compliant plans.

NPPF 11(d) (ii) states that planning applications should be approved unless:

*“any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination”*

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This application fails that test because:

The application does not mitigate climate change because it is in an unsuitable location to promote sustainable transport

The application is not located within the local development area

The application does not provide any affordable homes

The application does not align with the Finchampstead Neighbourhood plan

The Planning Inspector has recently rejected a 2 house proposal at Broughtons Farm specifically under the current NPPF framework, and explicitly stated this in the decision (**Note 3**). This application fails on the same grounds, and with even more force due to its scale.

### **12) Proposed new road**

I object specifically to the extension of the road serving the proposed properties significantly past the furthest property, and beyond the marked rear building line. There is no need for the road to go past the last property entrance, apart from the provision of a suitable turning area .

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## Notes:

### Note 1.

From the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework  
Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document January 2010

*4.37 In line with the WDLP definition, good public transport services meet the following requirements:*

- a) At least a thirty minute service frequency during peak times (7:00 to 9:00 and 16:00 to 19:00 Monday to Saturday); and*
- b) At least an hourly service frequency during off-peak hours (9:00 to 16:00 and 19:00 to 22:00 Monday to Saturday and between 7:00 and 22:00 on Sundays)*

### Note 2.

The Countryside Rights of Way Act (CROW) makes the following provisions:

#### Section 47 (2)

*Every way which, immediately before the commencement of this section, is shown in any definitive map and statement as a road used as a public path shall be treated instead as shown as a restricted byway; and the expression "road used as a public path" shall not be used in any definitive map and statement to describe any way.*

#### Schedule 7. 5

*(1) Subject to the provisions of this section, if without lawful authority a person drives a mechanically propelled vehicle—*

- (a) on to or upon any common land, moorland or land of any other description, not being land forming part of a road, or*
- (b) on any road being a footpath, bridleway or restricted byway,*

*he is guilty of an offence.*

### Note 3.

The Planning Inspector included the following comments in her decision regarding Broughtons Farm

*5. Since the appeal was made, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 12 December 2024. I have taken the revised Framework into account as part of the determination of this appeal.*

*38 I have found that the location of the proposal would be suitable, having regard to the accessibility of services and facilities. However, I have found harm to the character and appearance of the area, as well as finding conflict with the development strategy for the area, by virtue of the site being outside of any defined settlement boundary and it not being allocated for housing. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole. The harms would be significant and long lasting. They would accordingly attract substantial weight.*

