

Planning Statement

Sequoia Fields and Barn End,
Wellingtonia Avenue, Crowthorne,
RG45 6AD (Wokingham Council)

Permission in Principle application for the
erection of up to 9 No. dwellings



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been submitted in support of an application for the following development at Sequoia Fields and Barn End, Wellingtonia Avenue, Crowthorne, RG45 6AD (Wokingham Council) (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'):

Permission in Principle application for the erection of up to 9 No. dwellings

- 1.2 The proposed development affects the following Land Registry title(s):

Title Number	Description	Owner
BK192450	<u>SEQUOIA FIELD WELLINGTONIA AVENUE, CROWTHORNE RG45 6AD</u>	The Applicant

- 1.3 The application is accompanied by the following plans and documents:

- 4591.ON – Planning Statement
- 4591.ON – 01 Site Location Plan
- 4591.ON – Planning Statement Appendix 1 Decision 25/02326/PIP
- 4591.ON – Planning Statement Appendix 2 Appeal Decision 3370656
- 4591.ON – Planning Statement Appendix 3 Appeal Decision 3354156

2 Site Context

- 2.1 The subject 0.99 ha Site is located due south of Wellingtonia Avenue, adjacent to the village of Crowthorne. The Site forms part of a wider parcel of land that stretches some 19.4 hectares, which has been used for the farming of Christmas trees, although commercial activity associated with this use has since ceased.
- 2.2 Access to the Site is taken from the Wellingtonia Avenue roundabout via a private single access track approximately 65 m in length, enclosed by steel gates and brick/concrete piers.
- 2.3 To the east side, the main built form is that of Sequoia Field Farm house, which is a substantial, largely two-storey family residence comprising multiple bedrooms, kitchens and living quarters. The dwelling is accessed via the same entry as the subject Site.
- 2.4 This Site is the subject of the following planning constraints and characteristics:
- Crowthorne/Sandhurst Heathland Mosaic
 - Flood Zone 1
 - Tree Preservation Order No.55 1972

3 Relevant History

3.1 The following records are understood to be relevant to the Site:

[Application for Certificate of Lawful use for occupation of farmhouse without complying with the agricultural occupancy condition](#)

Ref. No: 021218 | Status: Approved.

[Proposed erection of replacement entry gates, piers and wing walls to front of dwelling.](#)

Ref. No: 100201 | Status: Approved.

[Proposed erection of a single-storey leisure building, outdoor swimming pool with associated terrace & garden wall. This was to be in the location of the incidental accommodation that exists currently, to the south-east of the main dwelling.](#)

Ref. No: 111758 | Status: Refused (and subsequently dismissed at appeal) on the grounds that the development would result in a significant cumulative increase in volume, mass and spread of built form at the site, as well as harm to the existing trees.

4 Proposed Development

4.1 The application entails the following elements:

- Permission in principle for the erection of up to 9 No. dwellings.
- Proposed access track from the existing entrance to the site from Wokingham Road.

5 Planning Policy

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Court of Appeal has clarified that for a decision maker, this means establishing whether a proposal is in accordance with the development plan as a whole. The question of compliance with one policy should not dictate the outcome of a proposal in the absence of considering compliance with all other relevant policies. Decision makers are therefore tasked with identifying and understanding all relevant policies and material considerations in order to reach a properly informed planning judgment on a proposal, and to avoid an irrational or vulnerable decision that may be subject to criticism in a public law challenge.
- 5.2 Paragraph 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') reiterates what is said in Section 38(6), whilst paragraph 12 of the Framework is clear that the development plan is the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.3 Paragraph 39 of the Framework encourages local planning authorities to approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. It also encourages working proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area, adding that decision-makers should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 5.4 Annex 1 of the Framework confirms that for the purposes of decision-taking, the policies in the plan should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of the Framework. It adds that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the Framework, with greater weight being given to those policies that are closer to the policies in the Framework.

Development Plan

- 5.5 It is understood that the Development Plan for Wokingham Council, within which the Site is located, comprises the following documents:

- Core Strategy (WCS) (adopted 2010)
- Managing Development Delivery (WMDD) (adopted 2014)

5.6 In the WCS, the following policies are considered most relevant in connection with the proposed development:

- CP1 – Sustainable development
- CP3 – General principles for development
- CP5 – Housing mix, density and affordability
- CP9 – Scale and location of development proposals
- CP11 – Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)
- CP17 – Housing delivery

5.7 In the WMDD, the following policies are considered most relevant in connection with the proposed development:

- CC01 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- CC02 – Development limits
- CC04 – Sustainable design and construction
- CC07 – Parking
- TB05 – Housing mix
- TB06 – Development of private residential gardens

Other Material Considerations

The Framework

5.8 In summary, the following paragraphs are considered most relevant as additional material considerations in connection with the proposed development:

- 11 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- 61 – boosting the supply of homes
- 73 – Importance of small and medium sites
- 84 – Rural housing
- 110 – Significant development to be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, and transport solutions to vary between urban and rural areas
- 116 – Highway safety and capacity
- 124 – Making effective use of land
- 125 – Criteria for making effective use of land
- 127 – Reflecting changes in the demand for land

- 128 – alternative uses of land to meet housing needs
- 129 – Achieving appropriate densities
- 187 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

6 Planning Assessment

Key Issues

6.1 The following are considered to be the key issues in the assessment of this application:

1. Location
2. Land Use
3. Quantum

1. Location

6.2 Paragraph 110 of the Framework states that significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable and also accepts that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and that this should be taken into account in decision-making.

6.3 Firstly, the development cannot be described as a significant development as it falls short of what would normally constitute a major development, given less than 10 dwellings are proposed, and the Site is less than 1 hectare in size. The first aspect of paragraph 110 does not, therefore, apply to this development.

6.4 The Site is located in a sustainable and accessible location with convenient access to both rail and bus services. Crowthorne Station is located approximately 300 metres from the Site, equating to a walk of around 3 minutes via continuous pedestrian footways along Dukes Ride. The station provides regular rail services on the North Downs Line, offering direct connections towards Reading, Guildford and Gatwick Airport, with onward access to London and the wider rail network.

6.5 Crowthorne Station is also served by Route 598, which operates on Tuesdays and Thursdays only. Services towards Camberley (Knoll Road) depart from Crowthorne Station at 09:50, 11:20 and 13:20, with return services from Camberley departing at 10:35, 12:35 and 14:05.

6.6 In addition, the Site benefits from bus stops located on Dukes Ride, within approximately 3–5 minutes' walk of the Site. These stops are served by Route 125, which operates on Mondays to Fridays. Services towards Wokingham Town Centre depart at 09:47, 11:52 and 13:57, with corresponding return services from

Wokingham Broad Street to Crowthorne departing at 09:54, 11:59 and 14:04 on the same days.

- 6.7 The Dukes Ride bus stops are also served by Route 125A, which operates on Mondays to Fridays. This service departs Wokingham Broad Street at 15:42, passing through Crowthorne later in the afternoon en route to Pinewood Crossroads, with return services from the Crowthorne area towards Wokingham departing at 17:15 and 18:05.
- 6.8 Should the LPA consider the rail and bus services insufficient in isolation, it is noted that the Site lies within 250 m of Duke's Ride, which comprises numerous amenities such as local stores, multiple hair salons, a charity shop, coffee shop and micro pub, Indian takeaway, bakery, pharmacy, dry cleaners, carpet shop, kitchen shop, bathroom shop, craft shop, pet grooming spa, and a goldsmiths.
- 6.9 The Site is also within 1km of Wellington Business Park, Wellington College, Wellington Sport and Fitness Centre, Tennis Club and East Berkshire Golf Club, providing employment opportunities, education and health opportunities respectively.
- 6.10 It is considered that, by virtue of any required car journeys being brief, the various transport connections being within a 3-minute walk, and the proximity to Duke's Ride, the Site should be considered to be in a sustainable location.
- 6.11 In a recent Permission in Principle in Sevenoaks at the land North West Of Maple Cottage, Maplescombe Lane, Farningham, Kent (25/02326/PIP as shown in **Appendix 1**), the Officer accepted that, even though the Site was within a 7-minute drive to Eynsford, Farningham and West Kingsdown, it could still be considered to be in a sustainable location, taking account of the full wording of paragraph 110 of the Framework.
- 6.12 Given that the subject Site is far less remote than that of the Site in 25/02326/PIP, and would involve less reliance on private vehicles to travel, it is contested that the LPA should adopt the same approach and conclude that the subject Site is within a sustainable location.
- 6.13 Moreover, a recent appeal decision in Gravesham (3370656 as shown in **Appendix 2**) is directly applicable to the subject Site. The Inspector confirmed in paragraph 12 that despite the site being situated approximately 1 mile from the centres of Shorne and Higham, it could still be considered to be within a sustainable location, due to its rural nature.

- 6.14 It was made clear that although the roads may not be desirable to cycle or walk due to not being sufficiently lit, and that there would be a reliance on private vehicle use, the Inspector concluded that the proposal offers a genuine choice of transport modes, commensurate with the site's rural location. That site was also within the Green Belt.
- 6.15 When compared to the subject Site, which is materially less remote than both of the above applications, it is reasonable to consider that the Site is sustainably located for the minor extent of housing proposed, and occupants will be able to benefit from short, lit and direct footways into the adjoining village. It is also noted that the Site practically adjoins an allocated site (SAND5) for 220 dwellings, which would benefit from similar extents of accessibility.

2. Land Use

- 6.16 The Site is bounded by Wellingtonia Avenue (B3348) to the north and Wokingham Road (A321) to the east. The remainder of the borders (south and west) is surrounded by land owned by the Applicant, which historically has been used commercially, but also includes residential uses.
- 6.17 Due north, beyond the B3348, there are a number of large detached dwellings on the opposite side of the road. Further than that is Simon's Wood.
- 6.18 Due east, beyond the A321, there is the aforementioned train station, business park and sports centre. Moreover, the allocated strategic site SAND5 exists to the east for 220 dwellings, including 35% affordable, on the opposite side of Wokingham Road. Although this forms part of a housing allocation within Bracknell Forest, it is still considered to be relevant to the subject Site.
- 6.19 It is considered that the provision of up to nine additional residential units would not be out of keeping with the use of the surrounding land on the basis that it is predominantly surrounded by dwellings.

3. Quantum

- 6.20 The maximum number of proposed dwellings at the Site (9) is considered to be appropriate and relative to the size and shape of the application Site. Each dwelling would have adequate space for landscaping, access and amenity space.
- 6.21 The number of units proposed reflects a modest and proportionate level of development that avoids over-intensification. The surrounding properties are

predominantly detached on extensive parcels of land. The proposed density, at up to 9 dwellings per hectare, is considered to align with the established character of the adjacent settlement of Crowthorne.

- 6.22 This is considered to be in accordance with policy CP5 of the WCS and CC04 of the WMDD, which state that all development must achieve a high standard of design that positively contributes to placemaking and ensures appropriate densities.
- 6.23 Detailed layout, amenity, design and access/highways considerations would be addressed through a subsequent Technical Details Consent application.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 Overall, it is considered that the proposal is an appropriate development adjoining the village of Crowthorne. The proposed dwellings will be adjacent to the established settlement pattern and would only be a short distance away via public transport from local amenities.
- 7.2 Moreover, the proposal is considered to be an appropriate use of the land when considered against the surrounding context of Crowthorne. Furthermore, a lack of five-year housing land supply means that the proposed development would positively contribute to Wokingham's delivery targets. Significant weight must be given to this.
- 7.3 In a recent 'Permission in Principle' appeal decision (3354156 as shown in **Appendix 3**) for 5 houses, an Inspector found that the location was unacceptable, but on balance, with a lack of a five-year housing land supply, plus consideration of the Framework's acknowledgement that "small sites can make an important contribution to meeting housing requirements of an area" in paragraph 35 of the appeal, these factors were given significant weight and should also apply to the subject proposal.
- 7.4 Lastly, the maximum quantum of the proposal is considered to be in keeping with the size of the Site as well as nearby dwellings. It will not result in an over-intensification or over-development of the Site.
- 7.5 The presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11(d) of the Framework) is engaged and the starting position is that permission should be granted. In light of the above, the Applicant adds that there are no disbenefits that could be said to demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 7.6 In consideration of all relevant development plan policies and material considerations, this application should be viewed positively by the authority, and it is respectfully requested that this submission be approved.