

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
250407	16/05/2025	Charvil	Thames

Applicant	Edward Mather
Site Address	Land South of Oak Tree, Waingels Road, Charvil
Proposal	Permission in principle application for a residential development comprising the erection of a minimum and a maximum of 9 dwellings.
Type	Permission in Principle
Officer	James Fuller
Reason for determination by committee	Listed by Councillor

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 14 May 2025
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place and Growth
RECOMMENDATION	APPROVAL

SUMMARY

The permission in principle (PiP) consent route separates the consideration of matters of principle for the proposed development from the technical details of the development. The scope of a permission in principle application is limited to location, land use and amount of development (stage 1). Other matters are considered at the technical details consent stage (stage 2).

In this case, the PiP application is seeking permission for residential development, of 9no. dwellings, on an application site comprising a series of paddocks and small fields to the rear of the dwelling known as Oak Tree, along Waingels Road, Charvil.

The site is within the designated Countryside, however, is located in close proximity to the Major Development Location of Woodley to the west and adjoins other dwellings. Notwithstanding, the proposal is in conflict with the qualifying criteria of Policy CP11, and is therefore unacceptable in principle. However, it would not undermine the primary purpose of this policy in leading to a coalescence and merging of settlements due to its location.

Spatially, the proposal represents a logical expansion to the existing development on Waingels Road. It is recognised that the loss of an undeveloped parcel of land will have a limited degree of harm to the character of the area. However, when considering the sites existing strong sense of visual containment and spatial relationship to the built form around it, this harm is considered localised.

There would be no technical ground to withhold permission in principle when considering the highways, flood risk, or environmental health considerations of 9 dwellings, with matters concerning layout, scale and appearance considered at the technical details stage.

In recognising Paragraph 11d of the NPPF and the titled balance is engaged due to the council's failure to meet its required housing land supply, the proposal would perform a positive social, economic and environmental role.

In weighing up the conflict with the development plan in principle and the limited landscape harm, it has been concluded that those adverse impacts would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the identified benefits of the scheme when assessed against the policies in the Framework when taken as a whole. This Permission in Principle application is therefore recommended for approval.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

A search of the Council's planning history records demonstrates that there is only a single application pertaining to the application site, however, this relates to the use of an outbuilding as a garden store to serve the host dwelling (Oak Tree) and is therefore not considered relevant to this application.

DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION	
Proposed units	9
Proposed density - dwellings/hectare	9
Number of affordable units proposed	Not specified at this stage
Previous land use	Mixed
Existing parking spaces	0
Proposed parking spaces	There are a number of parking spaces shown on the Site Layout, however, this is an indicative plan, and it should be noted that parking provision is not a matter for consideration at this stage
CONSTRAINTS	• Countryside • Potentially Contaminated Land Consultation Zone • Landscape Character Assessment Area - Woodley-Earley Settled and Farmed Clay • Berkshire Biodiversity Opportunity Area • Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone – Red Zone • Affordable Housing Thresholds • Local Plan Submitted Site • Mineral Safeguarding Area

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Drainage	Request further information
WBC Highways	No objection in principle
WBC Landscape & Trees	Objection
WBC Environmental Health	No objection subject to conditions

REPRESENTATIONS

Charvil Parish Council: Object to the application on the following grounds:

- The site was considered unacceptable for residential development previously.
- The position of the site and its relation to the adjacent bird sanctuary and the potential for environmental damage from the development.
- The failure to comply with policy CP6, with emphasis on lack of highway safety measures and the unsustainable location of the site.
- The lack of adequate sewage services.
- The proposal is out of character with the surrounding area, with emphasis on its density and potential urbanising effect.

Local Members: Councillor Katrin Harding has raised the following concerns:

- The application is contrary to CP11, introducing development into an important buffer between the settlements of Charvil and Woodley.
- The application is contrary to CP3, as the density of the development is far greater than the surrounding area.
- The development would rely on private car use and there could be highway safety implications.
- The position of the site and its relation to the adjacent bird sanctuary.
- The potential for environmental damage from the development.
- The site was considered unacceptable for residential development previously.

Neighbours: 9 Letters received, objecting to the application on the following grounds:

- The location is unsustainable.
- The inadequate pavement along Waingels Road.
- The proposal is out of character.
- The lack of adequate sewage and gas services.
- The size of the driveway.
- The planning statement is said to be misleading, with numerous inaccuracies being identified.

- Claim of logical infill is refuted.
- Highway safety.
- The development does not comply with local policy, mainly CP3.
- Technical issues (access, visibility) are being delayed rather than properly assessed.
- There are better alternatives nearby.
- Out of keeping with the countryside.
- Impact on wildlife and biodiversity.
- Lack of information regarding lake management.
- Impact on neighbouring amenities.
- Increased pollution.
- Lack of affordable housing.
- Limited street lighting.
- Impact on trees.
- Overdevelopment.

PLANNING POLICY

- **National Planning Policy Framework**
- **National Design Guide**
- **National Planning Practice Guidance**

Core Strategy (CS)

CP1 – Sustainable Development
 CP3 – General Principles for Development
 CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements
 CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability
 CP6 – Managing Travel Demand
 CP7 – Biodiversity
 CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
 CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
 CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
 CP17 – Housing Delivery

MDD Local Plan (MDD)

CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC02 – Development Limits
CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction
CC06 – Noise
CC07 – Parking
CC09 – Development and Flood Risk
CC10 – Sustainable Drainage
TB04 – Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield
TB05 – Housing Mix
TB06 – Development of Private Residential Gardens
TB07 – Internal Space Standards
TB21 – Landscape Character
TB23 – Biodiversity and Development

Other

Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
CIL Guidance + 123 List
Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING ISSUES

The PPG advises that the scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. Whether permission in principle should be granted should bear in mind the effects of the proposal's location, land use and amount of development on material considerations that are required to be considered.

1 Principle of Development

- 1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development plan

- 1.2 Despite the sites location in close proximity to the Major Development Location, it is entirely within the designated countryside. Development proposals within the designated countryside should be assessed against Core Strategy Policy CP11 (Proposals outside Development Limits). Policy CP11 states that development proposals will not normally be permitted in the countryside except where one or more of the specified exceptions apply:

- 1) *It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and*

2) *It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and*

3) *It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or*

4) *In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;*

5) *In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:*

i. *Bring about environmental improvements; or*

ii. *Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.*

6) *Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;*

7) *Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.*

1.3 The application proposal does not meet any of these specified exceptions (which is agreed by the applicant in their supporting statement) and is therefore contrary to the spatial strategy as a starting point.

1.4 Turning to the overall aim of Policy CP11, this is to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. Given the site's relatively close proximity to the defined settlement limits and the wider context, whereby the site is largely contained by and surrounded by established residential development, the Council are not of the view that the development would result in coalescence of settlements.

1.5 In terms of maintaining the quality of the environment, however, this is a matter for which further assessment is required to make a full judgement and will be returned to later on in this report.

Locational Sustainability:

1.6 Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy states that development should provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice and are located where there are or will be at the time of development choices in the mode of transport available and which minimise the distance people need to travel.

1.7 When viewing the sustainability of the application site as a location for residential development, the applicant has emphasised relatively recent planning history at two nearby sites, both adjoining Waingels Road. The first being a 2016 application (ref: 160902) for a new dwelling, which the LPA initially refused but was subsequently allowed at appeal. In relation to sustainability, the Planning Inspector noted the following at paragraphs 6 & 7 of their decision:

“Although the appeal site and the existing development along Waingels Road are physically separated from the main body of the residential area to the south-west, they are nonetheless geographically close to it. There is a footpath running past the site that provides good pedestrian access to both nearby settlements of Woodley and Charvil, which contain a range of shops and services. In addition, there are bus stops within walking distance of the site that provide access to these settlements. Moreover, the site is within reasonable cycling distance to the rail network, thereby offering opportunities to travel further afield through the use of sustainable transport modes.”

Because of this, the occupants of the proposed dwelling would not be wholly reliant on the use of private motorised transport for most of their day-to-day needs. Moreover, the development would make a small contribution to supporting the vitality of the nearby shops and services. The site does not, therefore, occupy an isolated location and accords with the overall objectives of CS Policy CP11 and paragraph 55 of the Framework. The proposal would also be in broad accordance with the overall travel objectives of CS Policy CP1 and those of CS Policy CP6.”

- 1.8 The second decision referred to by the applicant in their statement relates to application 230113. This was also for a new dwelling adjacent to Waingels Road and the LPA took the same view as that adopted by the previous Inspector. The LPA concluded the following:

“Opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions vary between urban and rural areas and there is a reasonable prospect that the occupiers would make some journeys by sustainable modes of travel, particularly in the summer months. Furthermore, the levels of accessibility for the residents of existing nearby properties and the future occupiers of the development would be similar. It is also to be noted that in the appeal decision APP/X0360/W/16/3154876 for the proposed erection of a detached dwelling at Land off Waingels Road, RG10 0UA (within 200m of the application site) the inspector considered the site to be reasonably sustainable and the occupants of the proposed dwelling would not be wholly reliant on the use of private motorised transport for most of their day-to-day needs. This is material consideration for the current application. Consequently, no objection is raised in this instance on locational sustainability grounds”

- 1.9 A plan has been provided by the applicant (Figure 1 below) that shows the geographical relationship between the application site (shaded red), the appeal site (shaded blue) and the site pertaining to the approved application, reference 230113, (shaded yellow).



Figure 1 - Relationship between application site, (shaded red), the appeal site (shaded blue) and the site pertaining to the approved application, reference 230113, (shaded yellow)

- 1.10 Given the almost identical locational context between the three sites, no new evidence exists to arrive at a different conclusion with regard to the sustainability of the site in this circumstance. There is no sufficient justification to depart from the conclusions made by the Inspector for application 160902, and the LPA for application 230113. Subsequently, there are no concerns raised as to the sustainability of the site's location. As the previous Inspector concluded in their decision, there is good pedestrian access to both nearby settlements of Woodley and Charvil, which contain a range of shops and services, plus adequate proximity to nearby public transport infrastructure, thus as far as possible promoting sustainable modes of travel.
- 1.11 WBC Highways concur with the above, however, have recommended that a sustainability assessment is submitted with Stage 2 application should Stage 1 be approved, and this shall include measures to improve or promote accessibility by modes other than the private car.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.12 The NPPF is a material consideration in the decision-making process. The NPPF outlines the Government's planning policy on a national level and highlights sustainable development as the centre of the decision-making process incorporating economic, social and environmental objectives. These three objectives seek to balance growth and local community needs against the protection of the natural, built and historic environment. It does not however change the status of the development plan as the starting point in the decision-making.

Housing Land Supply

- 1.13 The NPPF (Dec 2024) at paragraph 78 requires LPAs to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than 5 years old. The latest published Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement (at 31st March 2024) shows the Council is currently only able to demonstrate 1.7 years' worth of deliverable sites. Subsequently, those policies relating specifically to housing delivery in the borough's Core Strategy and MDD LP (and any made Neighbourhood Plans) are currently considered to be out of date. This does not mean they have no weight but is dependant on their consistency with the NPPF.
- 1.14 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means that where policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless:
- the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - 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.
- 1.15 Firstly, in considering i), the site is not located within a protected area or relate to an asset of particular importance which provides a strong reason for refusing the development. In considering ii), officers must assess as part of an application whether there are any adverse impacts generated by the development that 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. This is referred to as the 'tilted balance,' as harm and benefits are not weighed equally, but tilted according to paragraph 11(d)(ii).

- 1.16 In acknowledging the requirements of paragraph 11(d)(ii) and the tilted balance being engaged, it is necessary to consider whether there are any circumstances which affect the weight that can be afforded to the supply of additional housing.
- 1.17 An underlying reason in the context of Wokingham Borough is the historic oversupply of housing against both the requirement set in the Core Strategy local plan and the scale of local housing need as calculated by the previous standard method which remains a key contributing factor to the current lack of the required deliverable housing land supply. Recent appeal decision have afforded this factor limited weight, nonetheless this will be considered in the planning balance section at the end of the report.
- 1.18 Having established the tilted balance is engaged, Paragraph 11d(ii) requires the proposal to be considered against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole.

Emerging Local Plan Update

- 1.19 The Local Plan Update (LPU), the plan which will supersede the Core Strategy and MDD Local Plan, was published in October 2024 (Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Plan). It was subsequently submitted for examination on 28 February 2025. The LPU sets out the development strategy and proposed site allocations to meet housing needs to 2040.
- 1.20 Weight to be attributed to the emerging policy is informed by paragraph 49 of the NPPF 2024. This advises that weight can be applied according to the plan's stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections, and the degree of consistency with the NPPF. However, due to outstanding representations as a whole, those policies relevant to the location of housing within the LPU are afforded limited weight.
- 1.21 It should be noted that the application site initially came forward as a Submitted Site for housing (C3), as seen from the plan below.

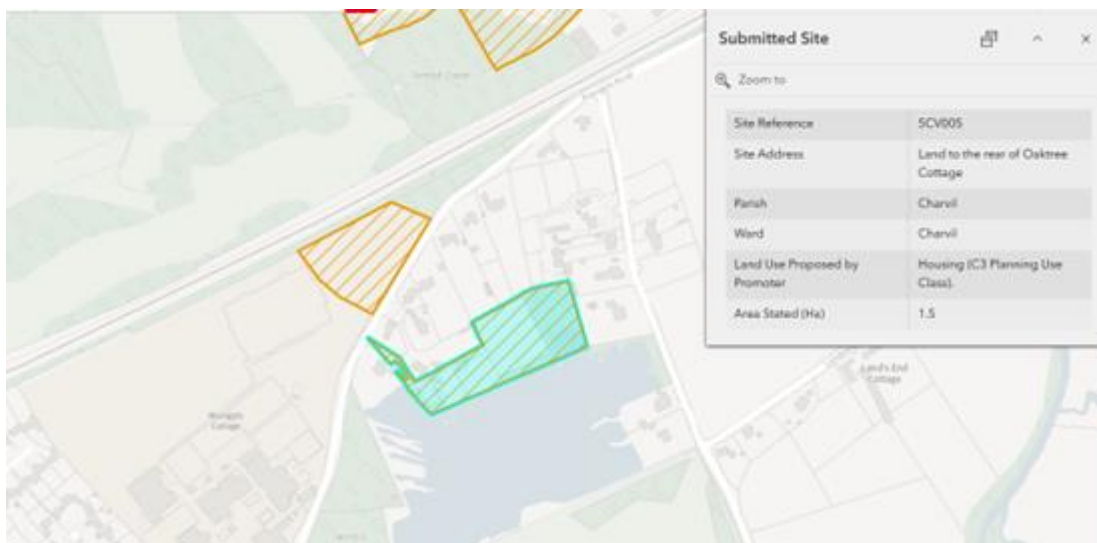


Figure 2 - Submitted Site for housing location

- 1.22 The proposed allocation drew upon the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) (2021) which considered the broad suitability, availability and achievability of land promoted across the borough. The assessment of the site 5CV005 was taken to stage 2b & 2c, which is a fairly advanced stage of that particular assessment. It was subsequently concluded that the land to be unsuitable because it was thought not to be well related to the existing settlement pattern and due to impact on landscape character.
- 1.23 Notwithstanding the above, due to the position that the LPU currently holds as limited weight, any top level assessment of the site made as part of the plan making process needs to be considered alongside the enhanced level of detail that accompanies this application and the policy context set by the current identified shortfall in housing delivery, and any identified benefits of the scheme as required by the NPPF.

Summary on principle of development

- 1.24 The site is located outside of settlement limits in the countryside. It fails to meet any of the specified exceptions for development outside of settlement. When turning to the overall aim of the policy, it would not result in settlement coalescence. When assessing as to whether it would maintain the quality of the environment, this will be considered in light of other material considerations (particularly landscape/character of the area considerations) with a final assessment being made at the end of this report.
- 1.25 In terms of locational sustainability, Officers do not deem this site an unsustainable location for up to an additional 9 dwellings. These factors moderate any in-principle conflict with the local plan for development in this location.
- 1.26 Officers acknowledge the tilted balance is engaged, as per paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the NPPF. The tilted balance will be returned to at the end of this report alongside an assessment of the proposal against the three pillars of sustainable development.

2 Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the impact on character and appearance of the area:

- 2.1 Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy sets out general principles for development and states that development should be of an appropriate scale, activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design.
- 2.2 Policy TB21 of the MDD states that proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.
- 2.3 RD1 of the Borough Design Guide states that new development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character.
- 2.4 The site is located within the Council's 'Landscape Character Assessment' Area J4 'Woodley-Earley Settled and Farmed Clay', a moderate quality landscape with low sensitivity and a considerable capacity for change.

- 2.5 The site currently comprises a large overgrown field and two small paddocks, with several small outbuildings scattered around. Accordingly, the proposal would result in a clear intensification of built form compared to the existing, with the introduction of 9 new dwellings.
- 2.6 The application site is located amongst a small settlement of houses that are bounded by Waingles Road to the north/west, Beggars Hill Road to the east and Ashenbury Lake (a designated bird sanctuary) to the south. In this area, whilst there is no set pattern of development, housing is generally sparse, with large dwellings set within spacious plots.
- 2.7 The LPA acknowledge that the density proposed through this development is greater than the density of the established residential development, however, not to the extent that the proposal would cause any substantial harm on the surrounding area. The size of the plot is appropriate to accommodate 9 dwellings, while respecting its countryside designation i.e. through large rear gardens and areas along boundaries for landscaping enhancements, both of which being demonstrated through the indicative site layout.
- 2.8 Furthermore, in taking a view of the wider context, it is considered that despite the quantum of development proposed in context to adjoining plots, the proposal would constitute a logical expansion of residential development, with the plot being bounded by other residential uses, as opposed to being an isolated countryside development. Consequently, in referring back to policy CP11, it is considered that compliance with the underlying aim of the policy has been largely demonstrated as the proposal would protect the separate identity of settlements of Charvil and Woodley, thus maintaining the quality of the environment.
- 2.9 In addition to the above, the site effectively results in the infilling and ‘rounding off’ of the adjoining existing residential plots. This provides opportunities for screening by trees and hedgerows along the boundaries, minimising any perceived impact on undeveloped countryside beyond. It is also set away from Waingels Road, thus reducing views from this public setting. Whilst it is acknowledged that a developments impact on the countryside is not limited to what would be visible from the public realm, its relatively secluded nature would further reduce any potential for a merging of settlements.

Landscape Character

- 2.10 The site is located within the Council’s ‘Landscape Character Assessment’ Area J4 ‘Woodley-Earley Settled and Farmed Clay’, a moderate quality landscape with low sensitivity and a considerable capacity for change. This is a densely settled area with a strong urban and suburban character.
- 2.11 The Landscape Strategy for LCA J4:

To conserve and enhance the open areas within the urban conurbation; the character of the landscape between settlements; the rural interface and buffer to the more rural area of the Thames floodplain to the north, and the River Loddon to the east.

The key aspects to be enhanced and restored are the wildlife habitats and areas of remnant historic parkland. In particular there are opportunities for creation of woodland habitats to link and connect existing woodlands.

2.12 Landscape Guidelines for LCA J4 include;

Protect the remaining areas of open land separating Sonning, Woodley and Charvil in order to provide a physical and visual separation or gap between settlements. Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through wooded boundaries and large-species trees to provide visual screening and a positive interface between the built up and rural areas that provides an appropriate setting for Woodley, Earley and Charvil.

Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland, linking to current areas of BAP priority habitat, predominantly using locally occurring native species in order to provide screening of roads, development and the urban fringe. Reinststate or repair hedgerows with native species where there are opportunities to do so, as important wildlife habitats and landscape features.

Increase recreational value of the area through creation of new public open space and public rights of way.

Enhance sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape; sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night; and ground modelling and other landscape works to help minimise disruption) to minimise the impacts of development on valuable attributes.

2.13 The site is in the 'River Loddon' Valued Landscape. Valued Landscape Attributes relating to the site include:

Small wooded copses that contain valuable habitats including BAP priority habitat and wet woodland. Recreational value including nature reserves, views of surrounding lowlands provide a sense of place and visual variety.

2.14 The site is also in close proximity to the edge of another character area, B1 - Loddon River Valley with Open Water. The WBC Landscape & Trees Officer states that the site is more akin to the B1 LCA, however, does not build on this. Whilst the application site may not be urban in character, its characteristics still strongly relate to LCA J4.

2.15 In any case, whilst the WBC Landscape & Trees Officer has raised an objection to the proposal, their response primarily requests further clarification on numerous matters, owing to the limited information available at this stage. There has been no overriding justification put forward as to why the development would be harmful to the landscape character of the area.

- 2.16 As described, the site is visually well contained in views surrounding the site, the visual effect of the development would be localised and would not have significant impact on the wider landscape. Close distance views are likely to be seen in the context of Waingels Road, however, this would form part of the backdrop from the existing residential development. Alternatively, views from the south will be hindered, due to the distances from public vantagepoints, and the presence of existing natural screening, which simultaneously would provide a clear definition between what would be an extended settlement edge and countryside to the south. The proposed development is low profile in this respect and would retain its wider verdant character.
- 2.17 Accordingly, at this stage, Officers consider the site capable of accommodating the level of development proposed without compromising what is significant about the landscape character of the site. Nonetheless, further consideration on these matters would be provided at the technical details stage, whereby a Landscape and Visual Impact is likely to be a requirement.

Summary

- 2.18 In conclusion, the principle of 9 dwellings on this site is not considered to harm the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape or conflict with the low-density domestic character of the surrounding development. Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to the Borough Design Guide, policies CP1, CP3 & CP11 of the Core Strategy and policy TB21 of the MDD Local Plan.

3 Location, land use and amount of development in relation to impact on neighbouring amenity:

- 3.1 Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development shall be without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users.
- 3.2 The closest neighbour to the site is Nikunj immediately to the north, however, the site would also abut the rear boundaries of several properties adjacent to Waingels Road.
- 3.3 In first assessing the impact to the occupants of Nikunj, it should be acknowledged that the scheme has seemingly been designed to reduce any adverse impact to the neighbouring amenities, with the built form being set away from the shared boundaries of the neighbouring site. In terms of distances, the front facing elevations of plots 1-4 would be in excess of 20 metres from the adjacent boundary of Nikunj. While plot 9 would be situated closer to the boundary, its orientation and significant distance to the dwelling itself would restrict any adverse impact upon the amenities of the occupants at Nikunj.
- 3.4 As stated above, the site would also abut the rear boundaries of several properties adjacent to Waingels Road. However, the rear-to-rear relationships between the existing and the proposed dwellings would be in excess of the separation distances outlined in the Borough Design Guide.

- 3.5 As the surrounding area is almost entirely in residential use, the principle of this land use changing to residential is acceptable in relation to neighbouring amenity. Given the proposal is for a maximum of 9 dwellings, the amount of development and intensity of the land use is not considered to result in substantial harm to neighbours in terms of increased noise from domestic life. However, concern over noise arising from vehicles / the access track are noted (as raised in objections) and this could be reviewed further at technical details stage.
- 3.6 The final layout would be subject to technical detail consent where further assessment in relation to neighbouring amenity would be carried out (in terms of the positioning of the dwellings in relation to neighbouring outlook, light etc).
- 3.7 To reiterate the above, with the exception of Nikunj, other neighbours are located substantial distances away from the site, thus limiting concerns on neighbouring amenity grounds. Any impact could be further mitigated through the submission of an acceptable landscaping plan at technical details stage.
- 3.8 It is considered that the principle of the development as proposed in relation to neighbours is acceptable for permission in principle stage.

4 Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the highway network:

- 4.1 Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy states that development should not lead to highway problems, along with providing for sustainable forms of transport.
- 4.2 Policy CC07 states that sufficient parking shall be provided as part of development proposals.
- 4.3 WBC Highways did not raise any concerns regarding the location and amount of development on the highway network, in principle, nor was an objection raised on the sustainability of the location.
- 4.4 Highway considerations would also be reviewed at technical details stage once the layout finalised. Recommendations include a sustainability assessment, swept path analysis, and a demonstration that acceptable visibility splats from the proposed access onto Waingels Road can be achieved.

5 Location, land use and amount of development in relation to flood risk:

- 5.1 Policy CC09 of the MDD states that all sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.

- 5.2 The application site is located in Flood Zone 1 which is the lowest risk of flooding. There is no incompatibility between the proposed location, use and amount of development and flood risk. The Drainage Officer has requested further information including a detailed drainage strategy, however, this is not applicable at this stage. Full drainage details and a flood risk assessment would be required at technical consent stage.

6 Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the impact on the natural environment (trees and ecology):

- 6.1 Policy CC03 of the MDD states that development shall protect existing trees and hedges and incorporate high quality landscaping.
- 6.2 The objection received from the WBC Tree Officer was primarily concerned with the impact on landscape character, however, concern was also raised over the potential impact of the development on surrounding trees. However, as the final layout of the development is unknown at this stage (and is a matter for technical details stage), this could have the potential to be mitigated / not cause substantial adverse impact. It is not clear at this stage as to whether trees would need to be felled as the layout is not finalised. Officers do not see there to be sufficient grounds to conclude that a scheme is categorically unacceptable in principle, notwithstanding the relationship of the development to the surrounding trees.
- 6.3 A detailed arboricultural report would be needed at technical details stage.
- 6.4 Likewise, given the location of the site to the adjacent Ashenbury Lake, further information on Great Crested Newts would be required at technical details stage.
- 6.5 There is a risk that the proposal could affect protected species and priority habitats and an ecological appraisal (comprising an extended Phase 1 Habitat and Species Scoping Survey, and any phase 2 surveys) would need to be submitted with any application.
- 6.6 Surveys should be carried out by suitably experienced ecologists who are a member of a professional organisation such as the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and / or are licensed or accredited by Natural England to survey protected species. Some ecological surveys are seasonal and this should be factored into the project timeframe.
- 6.7 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey is a standardised technique for environmental audit and involves classifying and if required mapping habitats on and adjacent to the application site. The survey is then 'extended' and any features or habitats that are likely to be of importance for notable or protected species, and or prove to be a constraint to development are investigated further and described.
- 6.8 If the surveys show that the site contains habitats suitable for protected species further surveys for species such as reptiles and bats may need to be carried out.

- 6.9 Paragraph 99 of the government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System (this document has not been revoked by the National Planning Policy Framework) states that:

“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted.”

7 Environmental Health:

- 7.1 Following a review of the proposed development, the Environmental Health Officer considers there to be no reason to oppose the application in principle. They have recommended several conditions relating to land contamination and noise impacts. This is a matter for the technical details stage.

8 Planning Balance and Summary:

- 8.1 The statutory starting point for determination is the development plan. The site is outside of the defined settlement limits and within the countryside and conflicts with the spatial strategy of the plan. However, the site is not considered to be an unsustainable location and the site would not undermine the purpose of Policy CP11. In addition, the Council is currently unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing and therefore the tilted balance and presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged.
- 8.2 The three overarching objectives to achieving sustainable development are defined within the NPPF as: economic, social and environmental.
- The economic role of the NPPF requires proposals to contribute to building a strong, responsive, and competitive economy.
 - The social role requires planning to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities and states that it should create a high quality-built environment.
 - The environmental role states that the natural built and historic environment should be protected and enhanced and should mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Economic

- 8.3 In assessing three objectives of sustainable development, the site would perform a limited short term economic role as a result of the construction period, and a modest longer-term economic role via consumer spend and CIL liable payments. As the number of homes proposed is limited in this respect, the weight afforded to their provision, from an economic perspective, is also limited.

Social

- 8.4 Socially, the development would make a valuable and positive contribution to the boroughs housing stock in the creation of new homes at a time where the Council have a significant shortfall in a housing land supply. In contrast to the economic performance above and with due regard to appeal decisions for smaller sites, the proposed number of homes is held to perform a significant social role despite previous overprovision. This directly meets the government's key objective of significantly boosting the supply of new houses. Also, while not specified at this stage, there would be a contribution to the councils affordable housing stock which is also a weighty social aspect of the scheme given there remains an acute affordable housing need across the borough.
- 8.5 As explained previously, development on site would form a logical expansion of residential use on land that, along with the established residential properties to the south side of Waingels Road, would create homes that are reasonably well connected to the nearby settlement. This is opposed to an isolated countryside development, which is not the case in this instance.
- 8.6 The social benefits are therefore considered to hold substantial weight in the planning balance, particularly when referenced to Charvil's own locationally specific current and future needs.

Environmental

- 8.7 Environmentally, when assessing the impact on the character of the area, the layout and density is considered acceptable. Whilst it is recognised that the density of dwellings is greater than the existing residential pattern of development, the proposal would still be synonymous of the wider character, being detached dwellings located in generous plots. In any case, the layout is not fixed at this permission in principle stage and further consideration will arise at the technical details stage.
- 8.8 Further to the above, it is accepted that there would inevitably be a limited localised degree of visual harm to the immediate character and appearance of the land, as the proposal would see the loss of a largely undeveloped site. Nonetheless, while designated countryside, the site is not publicly accessible and only limited views are possible from Waingels Road. With opportunities to secure extensive landscape proposals at the technical details stage, the development is unlikely to mark a significant magnitude of change on the wider character of Waingels Road.
- 8.9 The application site has been assessed and is not considered an unsustainable location for residential development. There is good pedestrian access to both nearby settlements of Woodley and Charvil, which contain a range of shops and services, plus there is an array of proximate transport infrastructure that would support sustainable modes of travel for the occupants of the proposed development. This is afforded significant weight in the overall balance.

8.10 The impact on the natural environment, particularly on wildlife and trees, has been raised as a concern throughout the representations received. Whilst further assessment on these grounds is due to be undertaken at the technical details stage, the notable mitigation measures that are likely to be in place via planning obligations and/or conditions at the technical details stage is such that there is unlikely to be any adverse impact on protected species and trees. Incidentally, the development would be expected to achieve a 10% net gain in biodiversity, thus performing a moderately positive environmental role.

Conclusion

8.11 The most important policies for determination this application are out of date by virtue of the absence of a 5-year housing land supply. Paragraph 11 of the Framework therefore states that permission should be granted unless any adverse impact of doing so would significant and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, or there are specific policies in the Framework which indicate that development should be restricted.

8.12 As outlined above, the proposal would provide a range of material benefits that weigh either significantly or moderately in favour of the application. Those less desirable impacts of the development can be dealt with via conditions, however, these are not necessarily a consideration of this PiP application.

8.13 In light of all the above, those identified adverse impacts would not significant and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework when taken as a whole. This Permission in Principle application is therefore recommended for approval.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)
<i>In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts upon protected groups as a result of the development.</i>