

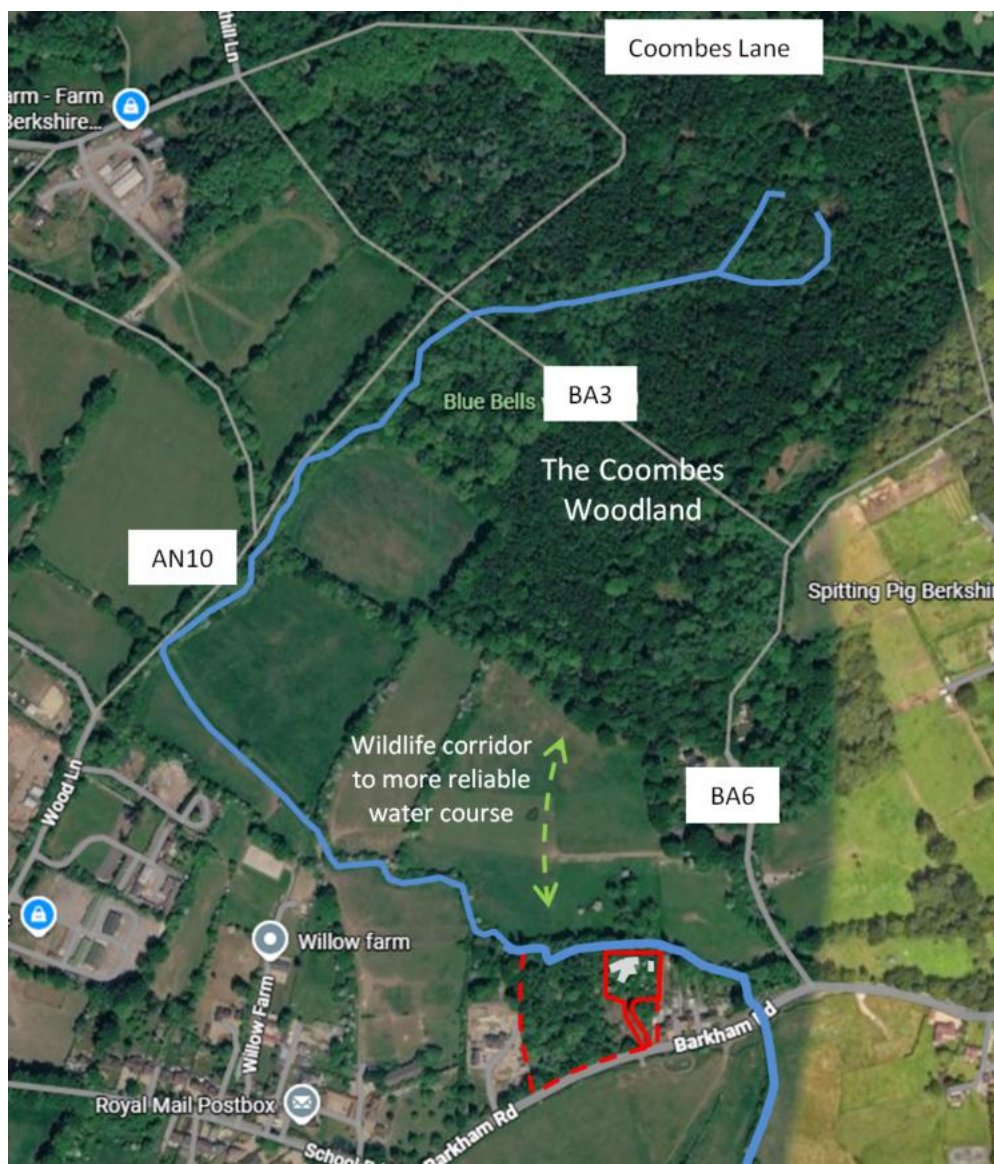
Planning Application 261839 Comments

This is a response to Planning Application 261839 for the proposed erection of a detached self-build dwelling, detached garage and store building, with associated access, parking, drainage, landscaping and woodland management. These comments are being submitted as an email attachment because the comments facility in the WBC Planning Portal appears not to accommodate graphics.

The Landscape Design and Access statement expresses a conclusion that the existing site is of low ecological value, with self-seeded species, including Ash and with minimal biodiversity.

The document opens with a contextual analysis that recognises The Coombes and its Ancient Woodland status to the north and visible from the site. It is also designated as a Local Wildlife site and part of the Barkham and Bearwood Valued Landscape Area, which extends southwards to the site in question.

One vital feature for all wildlife habitats is the availability of water. For animals this needs to be accessible to drink. The Coombes has a water course emerging from the ground that slopes down from Coombes Lane, along its northern edge. This develops into a stream that passes along the northern boundary of the proposed development site, into Barkham Brook, under Barkham Road and beyond.



The lack of significant rain through the summer of 2026 led to the stream drying up under the bridge on Public Footpath BA3. This led more animals to seek drinking water further downstream. There was an increased tendency for them to make their way across the open land between, but comfortably clear of, bridleways AN10 and BA6 to drink from the stretch that bounds the north of the development site.

With ongoing climate change likely to result in drier, hotter summers, the availability of this stretch of water for local wildlife is an important option. The introduction of a house and other buildings so close to its bank, closer than any of the other buildings, would be a disincentive to using it.

The undeveloped site will almost certainly have a significant amount of wildlife inhabiting it. The proposed development is likely to drive some of that away.

I would question the Landscape Design and Access statement's assertion that the existing site is of low ecological value. Taken in isolation, that may or may not be true, depending on the flora or fauna species being considered. Taking the bigger picture, including the nearby Coombes Local Wildlife Site, the site in its existing state has great ecological value. Introducing the proposed built development would devalue that.

I therefore oppose planning application 261839.

Paul Steel

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