

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242977
Site Address:	22a and 22b Barkham Ride, Barkham, Wokingham, RG40 4EU
Expiry Date:	14 February 2025
Site Visit Date:	18 December 2024
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 2 no. dwellings with car ports following demolition of the existing 2 no. dwellings and removal of storage yard, plus relocation of the site access and associated landscaping.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Water Utility Consultation Zones
Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Countryside
Farnborough Aerodrome Consultation Zone
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
Nuclear Consultation Zone
Tree Preservation Orders
Landscape Character Assessment Area
Land Terrier
Land Terrier Leasing
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones- 5km zone
Local Plan Update Submitted Sites

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development 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 CP15 – Employment Development CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping

(MDD)	CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB11 – Core Employment Areas TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB25 – Archaeology
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	Not relevant to this proposal as the site is not located in a defined mineral or search area.
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Barkham Village Design Statement Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
223579	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the use of the building as 2 no. residential dwellings, 22a and 22b Barkham Ride, for more than four years.	Approve 26/01/2023

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Property Services – No comments received
WBC Environmental Health – No comments received
WBC Drainage – No objection subject to condition
WBC Highways – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to condition
WBC CIL – Development would be CIL liable
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received
WBC Ecology Newts – No objection
WBC Ecology – No comments received

External

Natural England – No comments received
Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received
South East Water – No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	<i>Barkham Parish Council</i> wished to make no comments on this application. <i>Finchampstead Parish Council</i> raised no objection to this application
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site relates to a parcel of land measuring approx 0.12ha. It is irregular in shape, coming to a point in the north-western corner. The site contains a single storey timber framed building that is currently used as a pair of semi-detached dwellings. To the east is 24 Barkham Ride; a large triangular site which contains a dwelling and some employment buildings. To the south-west are open fields. The site is generally in a poor state with materials and waste dominating the site and buildings. The site is located within the designated Wokingham countryside.

Proposal:

Planning permission is sought for the erection of two chalet bungalow dwellings, following the demolition of two existing dwellings on site that are in a poor state. Associated parking and landscaping are proposed.

A site visit photograph of the two dwellings is below:



Principle of Development:

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.

a) Principle under adopted local plan

A priority of the Development Plan is to steer new housing to the most sustainable locations within settlement boundaries and limit development within the countryside. This is, among other things, in order to promote sustainability, maintain the quality of the environment, protect the separate identity of settlements and provide certainty regarding how the borough will be developed.

Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy outlines the defined settlement limits within the Borough. These are broken down into 'Major', 'Modest' and 'Limited' development locations. The application site is located outside of these defined settlements in the Wokingham countryside, however it would be in close proximity to the settlement boundary of modest development location, Finchampstead North and so the site should allow future residents to reasonably utilise the services and infrastructure present in Finchampstead North and higher order settlements via public transport.

Development proposals in 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.*

In this case, exception 5) of CP11 is relevant. As discussed earlier, and as can be seen in the photograph earlier in the report, the site is generally in a poor state, including the existing dwellings which were regularised through a certificate of lawfulness (see planning history). However, it should be noted that the certificate only established the two buildings in a residential use and not the remainder of the site. Below is the site plan as part of the certificate application; the red line indicates the residential development with the blue hatched was not granted a lawful residential use. That certificate application did not establish the use of the remainder of the site, but appears to be used as a storage yard, and this is also what the applicant has stated in their planning statement.



This proposal would see the entirety of the site in a residential use. Whilst the remainder of the site would be introduced into a residential use, given its connection to the two proposed dwellings (it would be their amenity space), it is acceptable,

subject to the proposed dwellings being acceptable when assessed against policy CP11, and specifically criterion 5.

Through this assessment and in the conclusion, it will discuss as to whether the proposal complies with exception 5 of CP11 to establish as to whether the proposal is acceptable in principle.

b) Principle of development under the made Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

The application site is located within the parish of Barkham and therefore the Arborfield & Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (which was made in April 2020) forms part of the development plan for the area. The neighbourhood plan is in broad conformity with the strategic policies in the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) local plans and has appropriate regard to the NPPF. The Independent Examiner's findings on the Neighbourhood Plan can be found in the Examination Report.

The neighbourhood plan does not contain allocations for new housing. However, policy AD1 supports housing development within development limits (subject to meeting other policy requirements). It does not refer housing outside of settlement limits, such as in this case.

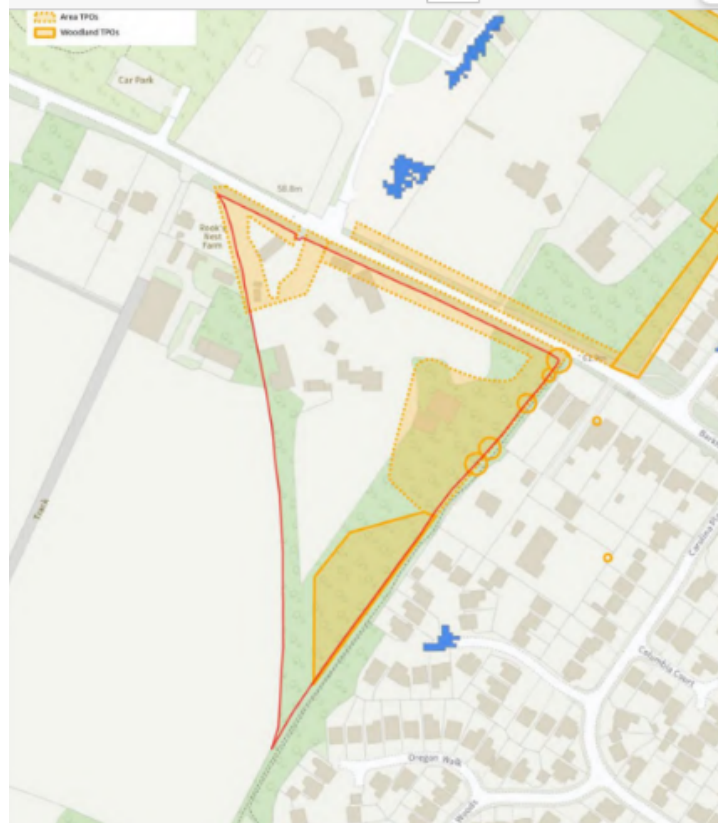
Relevant policies relating to the proposals include Policy 'IRS1: Preservation of separation of settlements', which relates to development within countryside areas and seeks to preserve the character and appearance of the countryside. This policy is consistent with CP11 and introduces a new emphasis on character and visual separation and perceived coalescence of existing settlements.

Other relevant policies are IRS2 (Recognise, respect and preserve identity and rural setting of settlements) and IRS3 (Protection and enhancement of the natural environment and green spaces).

c) Principle of development under emerging/ consultative policy

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). The LPU sets out the development strategy and proposed site allocations to meet housing needs to 2040.

Policy SS14 of the Local Plan Update allocates sites for residential development. This site falls under site allocation SS14.5 for 30 dwellings. As well as this site, it encompasses the wider site of adjacent 24 Barkham Ride, which was recently refused outline planning permission for 60 residential dwellings (WBC ref. 241667)



The LPU is yet to be submitted for examination by Secretary of State and as such, it is considered to have limited weight in determination of planning applications (both in terms of site allocation and draft policies) however it is an indication that the site can continue to support residential development.

d) Housing Land Supply

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 are currently considered to be out of date. This does not mean they have no weight, but an assessment of consistency will take place throughout this application.

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:

- i) 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

- ii) 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

As discussed above, paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged due to the Council being unable to deliver a 5 year housing land supply. Within paragraph 14 of the NPPF it acknowledges the relationship between paragraph 11(d) and those areas that have an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, which is the case is Arborfield and Barkham. It states:

In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply:

- a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and*
- b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement*

Whilst the neighbourhood plan meets the first criteria (a) (as it was made in 2020), it does not meet criteria (b). As such, para 14 of the NPPF is not engaged and therefore any harm identified with the proposal will not be weighted to 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the benefits' as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, a full assessment taking paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF into account will be made.

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.

e) Conclusion of principle of development

Overall, the proposal would see the replacement of two dwellings with two dwellings, resulting in no net increase in the amount of residential accommodation. As such, the proposal would not result in additional dwellings to contribute to the Borough's housing land supply. However, it will inevitably see houses of higher quality than the existing and ones that could be suitably used by families. For the proposal to be permissible, the development must comply with exception 5 of policy CP11, however to make that judgement, an assessment of other material considerations is required and will be concluded later in the report.

Character of the Area:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers. Section 12 of the NPPF (2024)

focuses on good design being a key aspect of sustainable development.

The proposal would see the construction of 2 chalet bungalows. These would be larger in scale than the dwellings which already exist on site. Exception 5 of policy CP11 states that replacement dwellings in the countryside where:

- i) *Bring about environmental improvements; or*
- ii) *Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.*

In terms of criterion 2, the proposal will bring about a larger scale and footprint of development than the original building. However, it is only 'inappropriate' increases that are resisted under policy CP11.

In this case, the volume of the existing dwellings equates to approx. 413 m³ and the proposed is approx. 824 m³. This would see an uplift of approx. 99%. In terms of footprint, there would be an uplift of 124% for internal floor area. Figure 8.19 of Policy RD11 of the BDG gives guidance on replacement dwellings in the countryside and that the increase in volume of 50% for a 1 storey development is acceptable when compared with the original building.

As can be seen here, the proposed volumetric increase is almost twice that recommended in the BDG. It is also acknowledged that the replacement dwellings would go beyond the footprint of the original dwellings.

Whilst the site is located in the countryside, Officers are mindful that the site and adjacent to the site (24 Barkham Ride) is allocated for residential development. Furthermore, opposite the site are 31 and 33 Barkham Ride which collectively have outline planning permission for 82 residential dwellings, despite the countryside location (WBC ref. 230791 and 223528). As such, this part of Barkham Ride is at a transitional point from sparse development into denser residential development in the countryside. The sensitiveness of the surrounding area has consequently reduced. Furthermore, the character and appearance of Barkham Ride in general is varied with no definitive or uniform appearance and composition of dwellings.

The proposed dwellings themselves are considered to be a of a suitable design; being chalet bungalows as opposed to two storey dwellings to represent a transitional scale towards Finchampstead North settlement. Materials are proposed to be multi stock brickwork with additional detailing like plinths and string courses. There would be additional hardstanding on the site compared to the existing, informal arrangements. However, hardstanding is limited to the parking and turning area and is of a proportionate scale to the site and it is indicated that concrete block paving will be used which is a more sympathetic material than tarmacking, as supported by RD8 of the BDG. A hard and soft landscaping scheme, along with boundary treatment details, will be secured via condition.

The proposed dwellings also contain car ports. Whilst these are not familiar features in the vicinity, they are considered to be a less intrusive form of development than garages in this instance.

As such, due to the evolving character of the area in light of extant planning permissions nearby the site for higher density residential schemes, these dwellings will not appear incongruous or out of keeping to harmful extent. Furthermore, their design displays a somewhat sympathetic approach to the surrounding countryside despite the increase above and beyond that specified in the BDG. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to policies CP3 and CP11 and the BDG.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Future Occupiers

Policy R17 of the Borough Design Guide outlines the internal space standards for different sized residential dwellings. The proposal would see 2 x 3 bedroom dwellings. The minimum standard for a 3 bedroom house is 87 sqm. The proposed dwellings would well exceed these minimum standards and so future occupiers should enjoy a good standard of living accommodation. All habitable rooms would be served by windows and would receive a suitable level of natural light and outlook. As such, the dwellings as shown would result in a good standard of accommodation for future occupiers.

The proposed dwellings would be symmetrical and as such there would be no concerns relating to loss of privacy, overbearing or loss of light between the occupiers of the two dwellings.

Existing occupiers

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development should not have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties.

Policy R16 of the Borough Design Guide outlines the separation distances required to maintain privacy and limit sense of enclosure.

R18 of the Borough Design Guide SPD aims to protect sunlight and daylight to existing properties, with no material impact on levels of daylight in the habitable rooms of adjoining properties.

The closest neighbouring properties are the dwellinghouse at Rooks Nest Farm to the north-west and 24 Barkham Ride to the south-east. However, both would be located substantial distances from the proposed development; in excess of 30m. As such, this would alleviate any concerns regarding loss of light and overbearing. Whilst there would be some higher level windows introduced (compared to the existing dwellings) these would not result in a detrimental level of overlooking to neighbouring properties owing again to the separation distances and given the properties would be chalet bungalows where outlook would generally be at a lower level than that of a two storey dwelling.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off street parking standards, including provision for charging facilities. Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy states that development should not adversely impact the wider highway network and should promote sustainable transport.

The proposal has been reviewed by WBC Highway Officers and concluded that it is not anticipated that the proposal would result in additional traffic impact.

Site Sustainability

In view of the site is already in use for the existing dwellings, WBC Highways has no objection on site sustainability for the replaced dwellings. It should be noted that larger residential schemes opposite the site (at 31 and 33 Barkham Ride) were also deemed to be sufficiently sustainable locations for residential development due to their proximity to Finchampstead North settlement.

Access

The site is accessed via Barkham Ride. The applicant proposes to relocate the site access to the west by circa 15m and the access would be 5m wide. It will be conditioned that surfacing of the access is provided and that the stopping up of the existing access occurs prior to the new access being brought into use/ first occupation of the development. It will also be conditioned that no gates are installed fronting Barkham Ride (without separate planning permission) to ensure no adverse impact from stationary cars on the highway network.

Barkham Ride is subject to 40mph speed limit, which requires visibility splays of 2.4m x 120m to be provided. The sightlines shall be across land within the applicant's control or highway land and shall be clear of obstructions to visibility exceeding 0.6m in height. This will be conditioned.

Swept path analysis was also provided showing a saloon car using the proposed turning head, to demonstrate that vehicles can enter and leave the public highway in forward gear by utilising the proposed dropped crossing.

Parking

According to the WBC Car Parking Standards, the development of such scale in Urban location will require two parking within the red line boundary. An additional visitor parking space shall be provided. Each parking space shall have minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m.

The proposed dimensions of the carports are 7.1m x 2.9m, which are acceptable. Two allocated parking spaces, including a carport, are proposed for each dwelling and visitor parking has been provided for. It will be conditioned that the parking is carried out in accordance with the proposed plans.

EV Charging Points

Each new dwelling will be expected to provide a minimum of one EV Charging Point under the latest Building Regulations (Approved Document S). One EV charging point is proposed per dwelling, which is acceptable. EV Charging is also separately required by Building Control.

Cycle Provision

Direct access to the rear garden and secure cycle store for 3 cycles are proposed at the rear garden which is acceptable and it will be conditioned that the development

is carried out in accordance with the proposed details.

Refuse Collection Strategy

Kerbside refuse collection arrangement will remain suitable for this site, which is acceptable.

Amenity Space:

Policy R16 of the Borough Design Guide SPD advises a minimum depth of 11m for rear gardens and a 1m setback from the site boundary to allow access thereto. It should receive direct sunlight and be capable of accommodating play, clothes drying and storage.

The submitted site plan indicates that each dwelling would have a rear amenity space in excess of 11m in depth (and its deepest point) and would have sufficient amenity space wrapped around the dwelling to compensate for where the depth falls below 11m at some points.

Environmental Health:

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that development should minimise the emission of pollutants into the wider environment. Pollutants could be in the form of, but not limited to, air pollution, noise pollution and ground contamination. Policy CC06 of the MDD specifically concerns noise impacts of a development.

The site is within a contaminated land consultation zone. A phase 1 contaminated land assessment has been submitted as part of the application. It concluded that the risk is low to moderate-low therefore the potential for some localised ground contamination to be present. It will be conditioned that an investigation and assessment to identify the extent of contamination and the measures to be taken to avoid risk when the site is developed.

Waste Provision:

Policy CC04 states that all development, including conversions, alterations and extensions shall incorporate suitable waste management facilities, including on-site recycling.

There is sufficient room within the proposed layout to accommodate private residential bin storage. Within the site layout, a refuse collection point is also indicated to ensure that bins can be presented for collection by the Council.

Flooding and Drainage:

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy, amongst other matters, seeks to ensure proposals have provision of adequate drainage and avoid increasing risks of or from all forms of flooding (including from groundwater).

Policy CC10 of the MDD Local Plan discusses sustainable drainage and surface water. It states that all development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development including taking into account climate change is managed in a sustainable manner. This must be demonstrated through a Flood Risk Assessment, or through a Surface Water Drainage Strategy.

The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and therefore there is a low risk of flooding.

The application has been reviewed by the WBC Drainage Officer. A drainage strategy has been provided and there is no objection in principle to the development. Furthermore, no critique of the drainage plan was explicitly provided. However, the drainage layout plan has not been updated to reflect the slight modifications made to the parking layout as part of the application. As such, it will be conditioned that a drainage strategy is provided, taking into account the up-to-date layout.

Landscape and Trees:

Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the proposal's impact and relationship with landscape character.

R14 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires well-designed hard and soft landscaping that complements housing.

The site is within landscape character area M1 'Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands', a high quality landscape characterised The site is adjacent to Barkham Ride, and in Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Area M1 'Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands' but is on the boundary of LCA J2 'Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay'. The site is on the edge of the 'Forest and Rides' Valued Landscape. (Valued Landscapes Topic Paper, 2020).

The key issues affecting the M1 character area relate to increasing suburbanisation including frontage development and the use of close board fencing along the rides, which is incongruous to the character of the area and also leads to tree losses which themselves harm the character of the area and the Green Rides.

The Landscape Strategy for LCA M1 is to conserve and enhance the existing character. In terms of development, the aim is to conserve and enhance the rural setting and gaps between settlements and maintain the low density domestic character of development.

This development will not see an intensification of number of residential units at the site and therefore will maintain the low-density domestic character and the WBC Landscaping Officer raised no objection to the proposal's visual impact on the surrounding landscape or to redeveloping the site.

Trees

Arboricultural information was submitted as part of the application and reviewed by the WBC Tree & Landscaping Officer. However, in order to comply with Policy CC03 (d) to protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features, it is required that the tree information is updated with the inclusion of an additional Oak tree on Barkham Ride. Updated arboricultural information will be secured via condition.

The development would see the removal of 6 trees. However, these are all of low

categorisation (C or U category). As part of a landscaping scheme the Tree Officer was content that these could be suitably replaced. As well as soft landscaping, hard landscaping and boundary treatment details will also be secured to ensure these are sympathetic to the countryside location.

Ecology:

Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network. Bats and Newts are protected species in the planning process.

The site is in a zone for potential posting bats and a red zone for Great Crested Newts.

Protected species

The submitted ecological appraisal concludes that there are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly affected by the proposals. The site is of overall low ecological value, with the species recorded described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded. No comments have been received by the WBC Ecologist. However, biodiversity enhancements have been recommended such as bird and bee boxes, and these will be secured via condition.

However, with regards to newts, the WBC Ecology (Newt) Officer, they advised that terrestrial habitats within the site do appear suitable for great crested newts. As such, great crested newts could be a constraint to the development if they are breeding in nearby ponds and using the site in their terrestrial phase.

Using OS mapping, three ponds and a wet ditch are within 500m of the application site. The closest two ponds are located approximately 130m north-east and 230m north of the application site, and likely absence of great crested newts from these ponds was confirmed in 2023 through eDNA surveys undertaken for a nearby planning application (ref: 241667). The final pond and wet ditch are both over 300m away (approximately 330m and 350m, respectively) and given the scale and likely impacts of the proposed development and considering the distribution of habitats and limitations to newt dispersal in the landscape, a survey of these waterbodies is not considered necessary in this case.

As such, whilst the site is in a red zone for great crested newts, no further information or conditions are required. However, an informative will be attached reminding the applicant that it is an offence to harm great crested newts and should these be found on site, work should cease and an experienced ecologist contacted for advice.

Biodiversity Net Gain

From April 2024, a mandatory biodiversity net gain of 10% is applicable on all minor development, unless exempt.

In this case, the applicant claims that the development is exempt via a self-build exemption. In order to qualify for this exemption, the following 3 criteria are

applicable. The development should:

- *consists of no more than 9 dwellings;*
- *is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares; and*
- *consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015. This definition covers development where local planning authorities are satisfied that individuals have had the primary input into the final design and layout of a house to be occupied as homes for themselves.*

The development consists of 2 dwellings and is on a site measuring 0.12ha. The applicants claim that the dwellings are self-build and the LPA have no evidence to the contrary to ascertain that this would not be the case.

As such, and in the absence of any contrary information from the WBC Ecologist, the development is excepted from mandatory BNG. However, despite this, as previously mentioned, officers will attach a condition requiring biodiversity enhancements across the site to support biodiversity. These include bat and bird boxes, insect and bee bricks along with planting wildflower.

Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area

Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy states that development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effects on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.

The site is located within the 5km zone from the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA). The Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area is an internationally important habitat that is home to 3 rare species of ground nesting birds - the Dartford Warbler, Nightjar, and Woodlark. To protect these, the government has designated the Thames Basin Heaths as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the European Commission Birds Directive and placed mitigation zones around the heaths to lessen the impact of human activity on them. The Appropriate Assessment needs to be passed to ensure that development would not have adverse impact on the TBH SPA.

Mitigation proposed is for residential development (located within the 5km and 7km buffer zones) to contribute towards Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace which aims to direct residents away from the SPA and rather into the SANG, thereby reducing footfall and pressure on the SPA.

SANGs are new or existing open spaces designed to attract visitors away from the SPA by providing an enjoyable natural environment for recreation. The expectation is that by providing these alternative areas for outdoor recreation, there will not be an increase in recreation pressure on the SPA as new households can use the SANG instead of the protected heathland. SANGs are high quality open space that will remain in perpetuity.

Within the subtext of Policy CP8 (para 4.49 i) a)) it states that dwellinghouses and

other residential development will need to provide avoidance and mitigation measures where the proposal involves the provision of one or more **net** additional residential units and is within 5km of the SPA.

In this case, whilst the site is within 5km of the SPA, it will not result in a net increase of residential dwellings and so is not liable to contribute towards mitigation for the SPA in the form of SANG/ SAMM contributions under policy CP8 of the Core Strategy.

Archaeology

Policy TB25 of the MDD states that *“where development is likely to affect an area of high archaeological potential or an area which is likely to contain archaeological remains, the presumption is that appropriate measures shall be taken to protect remains by preservation in situ. Where this is not practical, applicants shall provide for excavation, recording and archiving of the remains.”*

Upon consultation with Berkshire Archaeology, Officers have been advised that the site has archaeological potential for remains from all periods, particularly the Iron Age, the Early Medieval, and Medieval periods. The key indicator of archaeological potential comes from the results of a watching brief on the creation of the car park for the country park just northwest of the site, where remains of possible Iron Age - Roman settlement and a possible Early Medieval earthwork were discovered. The excavators of those features suggested these may have been of some significance, and so it will need testing whether these features, or related remains, extend into the proposal site.

Given the potential significance of these remains, it is recommended that a condition is attached until a programme of archaeological works, including a Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Building Sustainability

Policy CC04 outlines that in respect of new homes, the follow should be achieved:

- a) *Seeking to achieve the requirements of the full Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4;*
- b) *Meet internal potable water consumption targets of 105 litres or less per person per day (as part of the requirement to meet full Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4).*

It should be noted that the above policy is out of date and were written before the Council's declared Climate Emergency. For this reason, the Council produced a Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement (CCIPPS) (2022) which outlines what is expected of development proposals in light of the climate emergency.

In relation to policy requirements outlined in CC04, it should be noted that the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 has now been withdrawn, and now applicants must meet the interim Future Homes Standard (as required by Building Regulations) of a minimum 31% reduction in emissions, in line with the CCIPPS. This will be secured via condition.

With regards to water consumption, measures for internal water use for each dwelling at a standard of less than 110 litres per person per day is required. This water

consumption standard to comply with the CCIPPS, which is a higher standard than that outlined in CC04 because Wokingham Borough is situated within part of the country classified as an area of serious water stress. This will be conditioned.

Conclusion

The proposal would see the replacement of two low quality dwellings with two that would be of an overall higher quality design and would represent a more sustainable built form. The site at present is unsightly with materials, vehicles and other miscellaneous objects which is undesirable in the countryside. In light of the site being previously developed land, with no net residential increase in the number of residential units, the benefits of the scheme are considered to outweigh any harm as a result of increase in scale of dwellings. The recommendation is therefore to grant planning permission.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

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 persons with protected characteristics as 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 as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	All conditions agreed
Recommendation:	Approve subject to the following conditions: 1. Time Limit 2. Approved Plans 3. Materials as specified 4. Parking and turning (as approved) 5. Visibility Splays (as approved) 6. Cycle parking (as approved) 7. Surfacing of access 8. Access before occupation 9. Stopping up access 10. No gates 11. Archaeological WSI (to be submitted) 12. Hard and soft landscaping details (to be submitted) 13. Arboricultural method statement and tree information

	(to be submitted) 14. Drainage details (to be submitted) 15. Carbon reduction 16. Water consumption 17. Biodiversity enhancements (to be submitted) 18. External lighting 19. Decontamination
Date:	6 February 2025
Earliest date for decision:	27 December 2024

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	06/02/25