

PLANNING REF : 250735
PROPERTY ADDRESS : West Lodge
: Park Lane, Finchampstead, Berkshire
: RG40 4QH
SUBMITTED BY : Cllr Joseph Barley
DATE SUBMITTED : 22/04/2025

COMMENTS:

This submitted application contains a great number of concerns that have been raised on many previous occasions. I would like to list this application if recommended for approval and I object to its approval on the following grounds:

Planning history in relation to the site, sustainability, and its impact on the character and landscape:

It is important to note that previously officers have stated on application 180596 which was an application for 120 houses on the same site that "The proposed development, as described above (in relation to WBC planning policy) would be in a location that cannot accommodate such development without an unacceptable impact on the character and setting of the countryside and this area as a whole". This was reiterated in the council's refusal of application 242421 which was an application for 95 houses on the same site. It is therefore the opinion of officers that any application for a development on this site, no matter its design, layout or scale, should always be refused permission.

The site is outside of settlement limits, within the countryside and would result in an urbanising encroachment into said countryside. Its location being right between Arborfield Cross, Arborfield Green, Langley Common, and the proposed Barkham Square site, will greatly erode the separate identity of these individual settlements. The recent approval of 50 houses north of Langley Common Road (application 232490) gives further justification for this site's unsuitability as we are now in a position where developments on the school road site would result in a greater level of settlement erosion than what previous applications were subject to. This example of 'urban creep' into the countryside proves that the location cannot accommodate a development, especially of this scale, without an unacceptable impact on the character and setting of the countryside.

WBC's LPU is now at an advanced stage and in a position where it is close to adoption, this site was not included in the regulation 19 LPU due to its unsuitability and its absence from the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Development Plan further outlines the unsuitable nature of the site.

The application has attempted to address the many reasons for the numerous historical refusals for applications on this site, though these are limited and vague in comparison to the scale and detail of Wokingham Borough Council's prior reasons for refusal. The applications similarity to previous applications, especially its total dwelling count which is not much less than the figures proposed for prior applications on the same site, prove the site's grave unsuitability for any development, no matter the scale.

Failure to promote active travel and public transport:

The application has overexaggerated its mitigation of the limited active and public transport options within the local area. Currently

it takes over 40 minutes to travel to Wokingham via bus, with buses stopping only every hour, twice what WBC define as 'good service'. The site is still well over a half an hour walk away from the planned

Arborfield Green District centre, which is much further than what is normally considered acceptable. With limited services in Arborfield Cross this would force residents into using private vehicles which would congest the local road network even further than its current state. If we average each household with a conservative estimate of 1 vehicle each, in addition to the expected congestion brought by tradesmen, delivery vehicles, refuse vehicles and other vehicles into the site, we are likely to see well over 100 traffic movements to and from the site during rush hour. This would be in direct contrast to the provided justifications to approve the permanent TRO to close School Road as provided by WBC earlier this month. The increased level of traffic from the development would bring significant harm and an unprecedented level of risk to children that the TRO's approval is intended to mitigate.

Impact on climate, wildlife and biodiversity:

Wokingham Borough Council consider the site to form part of the Barkham and Bearwood Valued Landscape, an area of land which represents landscape of high value with a high sensitivity to residential development. This development would result in a significant loss of agricultural fields which make up a significant proportion of the valued landscape, leading to a degradation of the quality of the valued landscape. In addition to this its effects on the surrounding landscape through a drastic rise in both light and air pollution would undoubtedly have a negative impact on surrounding sites such as the Coombes Woodlands and their resident animals. This application has therefore underestimated the significance of its effects on both the site and its surroundings. The lack of suitable public and active travel/transport would undoubtedly result in a negative effect on our climate, being in direct contrast to Wokingham Borough Council's commitment to combatting the climate emergency that the council declared in 2018.

Violation of Historic and Emerging Strategic Policies:

The above evidence and the applications documentation when viewed in line with Wokingham Borough Council's current planning policies show that this application at the very least would violate CP1, CP2, CP3, CP4 CP6, CP9, CP11 and CP17 of the Core Strategy Development Plan and its numerous related strategic policies of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan. Additionally when viewed from the perspective of the emerging local plan this application would at the very least

violate strategic policies SS1, SS2, SS4, SS5, SS15, C1, C2 and C3.