

PLANNING REF : 252407
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Flat 3 North Court
: The Ridges, The Ridges, Finchampstead
: RG403SJ
SUBMITTED BY : Miss Georgina and Mr. Frederick Hammond
DATE SUBMITTED : 24/06/2026

COMMENTS:

We wish to register our strong objection to Planning Application 252407 for the erection of a dwelling and associated access on land adjacent to The Coach House, North Court, The Ridges, Finchampstead.

Having reviewed the revised application, Design and Access Statement, Arboricultural Statement and the relevant planning policies, we consider that the proposal remains contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP11 and the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP), particularly Policies ADH1, ADH2, D3.1b, D3.2 and IRS3.

1. Harm to the Character of the Countryside and Conflict with Policies ADH1 and ADH2

The application site lies outside the defined development limits and within the countryside. The Design and Access Statement acknowledges this fact. The proposal therefore requires careful consideration against policies designed to protect the character, appearance and intrinsic beauty of the countryside.

The Ridges is one of Finchampstead's most distinctive and historically significant rural lanes, characterised by spacious plots, mature woodland, extensive landscaping and a low-density pattern of development. The proposal would introduce an additional dwelling, access arrangements, hardstanding, parking, domestic lighting and associated residential activity into a sensitive countryside location.

Whilst the development may occupy a relatively small area of land, its cumulative effect would be to urbanise a site that presently contributes to the semi-rural and sylvan character of the area. This would be contrary to the objectives of FNDP Policies ADH1 and ADH2, which seek to protect the landscape character and rural qualities of Finchampstead.

2. Backland Development Contrary to FNDP Policy D3.2

The proposal represents a form of backland development that is inconsistent with the established pattern of development along The Ridges.

The distinctive character of this area derives from its spacious plots, generous separation between dwellings and strong relationship with the surrounding landscape. The proposed dwelling would occupy land behind the established frontage and would introduce a new residential plot into an area that has historically remained undeveloped.

Such development would erode the prevailing settlement pattern and create an undesirable precedent for further incremental development within large garden and woodland plots.

The proposal therefore conflicts with FNDP Policy D3.2, which seeks to resist inappropriate backland development that would adversely

affect local character and the established pattern of development.

3. Harm to the Historic Setting of North Court

North Court and its associated buildings contribute significantly to the historic character of this part of Finchampstead. The significance of the site extends beyond individual buildings and includes the spacious setting, mature landscape framework and historic relationship between built form and surrounding land. The introduction of an additional dwelling within this setting would diminish the historic character of the site and would erode the qualities that make this location distinctive.

The proposal fails to demonstrate how the historic setting of North Court would be preserved or enhanced and therefore conflicts with the heritage and design objectives of Core Strategy Policy CP11 and the wider objectives of the NPPF relating to conservation of the historic environment.

4. Conflict with Core Strategy Policy CP11

Core Strategy Policy CP11 requires development to:

- Respect and enhance local character and distinctiveness;
- Protect and enhance environmental assets;
- Create a strong sense of place;
- Respond positively to the existing landscape and built environment.

The proposal fails to satisfy these requirements.

The applicant's own Arboricultural Statement acknowledges that the site's defining characteristic is its mature tree cover and woodland setting. The attractiveness of the site is derived from its sylvan character and the contribution that mature vegetation makes to the landscape.

Whilst the Arboricultural Statement concludes that most trees can be retained, the development would nevertheless introduce a suburban form of development into a woodland setting. The associated access, parking areas, domestic activity, lighting and residential infrastructure would fundamentally alter the character of the site and diminish the qualities that Policy CP11 seeks to protect.

5. Long-Term Impact on Trees and Landscape Character

Although no significant tree removal is currently proposed, the Arboricultural Statement confirms that construction activities will occur close to Root Protection Areas and will require specialist engineering solutions to avoid damage.

This demonstrates the highly constrained nature of the site and confirms that the proposal is being accommodated within a sensitive landscape setting.

Furthermore, residential occupation in close proximity to mature trees frequently generates pressure for future pruning, crown reduction and tree removal arising from shading, leaf fall, perceived safety concerns and property maintenance issues. Consequently, there is a significant risk that the woodland character of the site will be gradually eroded over time despite the current intention to retain existing trees.

6. Biodiversity and Ecological Concerns

The site forms part of a wider ecological network comprising mature trees, woodland habitat and interconnected garden environments which support biodiversity throughout The Ridges area.

While the application seeks to retain much of the existing vegetation, insufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that

ecological connectivity, wildlife corridors and biodiversity value will be protected in the long term.

The cumulative impact of residential development, increased human activity, lighting, vehicle movements and pressure on retained vegetation has the potential to reduce habitat quality and adversely affect local wildlife.

The proposal therefore conflicts with national planning objectives requiring the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment.

7. Unsustainable Location Contrary to FNDP Policy IRS3

The site occupies a location that is heavily dependent on private vehicle use.

Future occupiers would rely on private cars for access to employment, education, healthcare facilities, retail services and many day-to-day activities. Opportunities for genuinely sustainable travel are limited.

The proposal therefore represents an unsustainable form of development and conflicts with Policy IRS3 of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood

Development Plan as well as the sustainability objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. Overbearing and Urbanising Impact

Although the proposal is for a single dwelling, the impact extends beyond the footprint of the building itself.

The introduction of a new dwelling, access road, parking provision, hard surfacing, lighting, boundary treatments and domestic paraphernalia would result in the gradual urbanisation of a sensitive and historically important site.

The cumulative impact would be harmful to the character, appearance and environmental quality of The Ridges and would undermine the distinctive rural qualities that local and national planning policy seek to protect.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, the proposal conflicts with:

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP11;

Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan Policies ADH1, ADH2, D3.1b, D3.2 and IRS3;

The environmental, heritage and sustainability objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The development would result in harm to the countryside, landscape character, historic setting of North Court, biodiversity value and the distinctive sylvan character of The Ridges. It would constitute inappropriate backland development in an unsustainable location and

would lead to the gradual urbanisation of a sensitive rural site.

We therefore respectfully request that Wokingham Borough Council refuses Planning Application 252407.