

PLANNING REF : 251540
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 356 Barkham Road
: Wokingham, Berkshire
: RG41 4DL
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Richard Abrahams
DATE SUBMITTED : 05/08/2025

COMMENTS:

I object to planning application 251540 and formally request that my points raised below are addressed and evidenced to a satisfactory conclusion.

Site Access

The Planning Statement and Highways report mention that '356 Barkham Road, the host dwelling, has an access directly onto Barkham Road, but enjoys a long rear garden which benefits from access rights onto a private road that runs along the western boundary of the site' and other similar statements. It is made very clear that this 'road' will be used for access to the two properties.

For note, the term 'road' is quite misleading: In fact this is actually a very narrow unmade lane, with no passing or turning places, used and maintained by residents at its far end, together with pedestrian use as a Public Footpath.

I believe this to be a privately owned road (owner unknown?) and that 354 Barkham Road has never had, either formally expressed or presumed, access rights to the rear garden from it. Therefore, unless those access rights can be legally and explicitly established with the owner, then access should not be permitted from this lane. It cannot be sufficient to simply 'presume' access as this application appears to. Surely this would set poor and uncontrollable precedence for development elsewhere in the district wanting similar presumed access for their convenience from privately owned land. It also raises major concerns on responsibility for damage/maintenance both during the building phase (note: the lane is totally unsuitable for access by heavy construction traffic) and subsequently by the new residents. None of this is addressed in any form in the application documents.

These matters to be considered in conjunction with the section marked 'Parking' below.

Parking

The Planning Statement and associated Highway Report state that adequate provision for parking is provided; that is, 2 spaces in a car port, 1 garage and 1 forecourt space in front of the garage for each dwelling. Also, the Highway report goes into great detail on how vehicles, including visiting commercial vehicles, can enter and turn within the site to exit forwards. Whilst it is stated that this all meets adopted requirements, I am sure this level of detail is in recognition that the access lane is very narrow and so totally unsuitable for turning/passing. I would therefore strongly request that all of this is considered from a 'true reality' perspective as well as simply 'meeting requirements'.

Houses of this size are very likely to have a minimum of 2 cars per household, probably 3 in reality. Looking carefully at the associated diagrams, all cars will need to be parked correctly at all times to allow unrestricted access for others, in particular those needing access to the property furthest away from the lane. There is provision for a turning area at the end of the driveway but, in practice, will almost certainly be adopted as a parking space for the adjacent dwelling due to its location. As such, any turning will be restricted as a result. I also note that the turning of commercial vehicles requires access to both the turning area and also the parking area in front of at least one of the houses, which in itself demonstrates that the overall space is minimal. If blocked in any way then they will have no alternative but to try a dangerous manoeuvre in backing out into the narrow lane. Therefore, as can be seen, the true practicalities of this limited layout is very unlikely to work and could prove unsafe to users of the lane as a consequence.

Another factor to be considered from a reality perspective is visitor parking. As soon as all spaces are taken, noting the obvious consequential restriction to turning highlighted above, there is no closeby alternative. The adjacent narrow lane is single track so the only option is on street parking along Barkham Road. The lane entrance is very close to the brow of a hill and so cars will either be parked in a potentially dangerous position (possibly also restricting the exit view from the lane) or further along Barkham Road in either direction, neither of which is particularly safe/practical on such a busy main road.

Whilst I appreciate that the authority will have no say/jurisdiction over how the parking area will be used in practice, I request that common sense is applied in this case, over and above the meeting of minimum requirements, when considering whether this application is suitable.

Trees

Some time in 2023/4 a mature oak tree, subject to TPO 1169/2007, namely T8, was felled under application number 232063. That consent was granted subject to conditions which clearly state:

'...the owner has a duty to replant another tree of an appropriate size and species in the same place as soon as they reasonably can'.

'Following the removal .3 no. replacement trees of the same species ..shall be planted as close as reasonably practical to the tree removed during the planting season'

'The new trees should be a minimum of 2.5m tall ..'

I would like to bring to your attention that none of the above have been implemented. Also to note that this is not addressed in the Arboricultural Report (or the Planning Statement), other than by deflection; something that should be expected to be raised as a key concern by a professional body acting in this advisory capacity.

There is a brief mention in the Planning Statement that 'new planting can be accommodated within the curtilage of the site'. However, this is not specifically linked to the above concerns in

that document but if so, it is difficult to see how those conditions can be met in this way. That is, the planting up to 4 in total trees of appropriate size and species anywhere within the curtilage and allowing for their future size through growth is simply not viable, particularly as that same document itself states that the rear gardens only just meet the minimum depth requirements of R16 of the SPD.

Furthermore, the Planning Statement and Arboricultural Report suggest the removal of 3 established trees to accommodate the development. It should be noted that the trees to be removed are clearly shown as still in place on the Block Plan and the Highway Report plans contradicting those documents and therefore could be considered conveniently misleading to those wishing to see how the final development layout will look.

The Documents state that '...no mature trees, no category A or B trees and no trees of high landscape or biodiversity are to be removed ..The proposed removal of three individuals will represent a minor alteration to the main arboricultural features of the property and will not have a significant adverse impact on the arboricultural character of the local landscape '

This statement is misleading at best. Firstly, the Arboricultural Report does classify Oak Tree T9 as mature, albeit with some caveats, and it should also be noted that this tree is subject to TPO 1169/2007. Secondly, there is a clear impact on the local landscape. Removal of any mature/established trees in this area will erode one of its main environmental characteristics; that is many well established mature trees close to and within the eyeline of all local dwellings and public spaces. In fact Oak Tree T9 is the main foreground tree that you see from Barkham Road looking down the lane. Both this and Oak Tree 10 are also the main trees seen from dwellings to the SW of the site so to suggest that removal will have no adverse impact on the local landscape is simply not correct. Their retention will be of environmental benefit and for privacy shielding for both the nearby residents and the new dwellings themselves.

As such, it is formally requested that the proposal for further tree felling is not approved and that the conditions of the Approved Works for OAK Tree T8 be wholly enforced as a matter of urgency regardless of any application for development.

Other

The Planning Statement paras 5.13 thru 5.16 recognise the relevance of Policy CP11 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy, particularly as it notes that the rear garden space of the proposed site falls outside of the existing development limits and within 'the countryside'.

However, it attempts to bring the relevance of CP11 into question by suggesting that there is, quote, 'a lack of recognised building line on land to the South of Barkham Road'. There are indeed a number of dwellings in a small development behind 352 Barkham Road but the principal building line of houses to the NE and particularly the SW for the remainder of Barkham Road in that direction is very clearly in place and unbroken. Relaxation of CP11 as suggested completely

undermines the principles of having it in place in the first instance and would potentially open up a dangerous precedent for further backfill applications behind the existing properties along Barkham Road; a principle which CP11 sets out to protect. Therefore any plans should be amended to fall within the guidance of CP11 rather than be allowed to deliberately fly in the face of it for convenience.

In conclusion, the Planning Statement goes to lengths to demonstrate the general demand for additional housing in the area and how this proposal will contribute to that need. However, the net gain of 2 dwellings on the site is really of no significance in that context and to suggest that certain matters such as relaxation of CP11, felling of existing mature/established trees, non-conformance of previous conditions of tree felling approval, claims of no environmental impact, minimal realistic parking provision and assumed access via a privately owned lane are seemingly unimportant reads to me as a very conveniently massaged submission to obtain approval. Please refuse this application with this in mind.