

Appeal 6005646

Interested party comments

Appeal type	Planning
Appeal procedure	Hearing
Appeal site	Land West of Edney's Hill, Barkham Road, Barkham, RG41 4TG
Agent contact details	Tim Northey tim.n@amh.co.uk 07792330576
Local planning authority	Wokingham Borough Council
Application number	251486

Interested party 1

Comments

Barkham Parish Council submits this supplementary representation in relation to the appeal for Land West of Edneys Hill. Since our original objection, the Planning Inspectorate has issued a significant and highly relevant decision at Land West of Limmerhill Road, Wokingham (APP/X0360/W/25/3361360), dated 9 March 2026. This site is geographically close and shares multiple policy, landscape, and spatial characteristics with the Edneys Hill site. We therefore request that the Inspector considers the following material points arising from that decision.

1. Recognition of Countryside Character (not “urban fringe”)

In the Limmer Hill decision, the Inspector found the appellant’s description of the land as “urban fringe” to be incorrect, concluding instead that:

- The characteristics — including valley topography, hedgerows, grazing land, and only incidental built form — meant that the site was firmly countryside, not transitional suburban edge.

The Edneys Hill site exhibits all of these qualities to an even greater degree, lying within open countryside and the designated Green Wedge. This reinforces our position that the land is inappropriate for residential development in principle and that character harm arises from the location itself, not just the scale or design of development.

2. Settlement Separation and the Barkham–Wokingham Gap

The Limmer Hill Inspector identified the local gap as an important spatial tool, noting that:

- The site, Fox Hill Wood, and nearby landform all reinforce the separate identities of Wokingham and Barkham.
- Development extending beyond recognised edges can harm the perception of settlement separation, even where direct inter visibility is limited.

This conclusion is directly relevant to Edneys Hill, which lies within one of the most sensitive and long established parts of the Green Wedge. Several previous Inspectors have already affirmed the

importance of protecting this gap. The recent Limmer Hill reasoning confirms that perceived erosion of the gap constitutes material harm, regardless of the visibility of individual dwellings.

3. Design Quality and Failure to Respond to Context (Very Significant Weight)

A substantial part of the Limmer Hill dismissal centred on the appellant's failure to produce a "well-designed place," with the Inspector concluding that:

- The appellant misunderstood the fundamental characteristics and context of the site,
- density comparisons were misapplied, and
- the scheme failed to integrate or respond appropriately to its landscape and settlement setting.

The Inspector attributed "very significant weight" to this design harm. For Edneys Hill, the contextual failings are even more pronounced.

As outlined in our original objection, the proposal:

- Conflicts with the Barkham Village Design Statement,
- Introduces rooflines, materials, and proportions inconsistent with local vernacular,
- Creates substantial bulk and massing alien to the rural lane character.

In light of the Limmer Hill decision, we respectfully submit that similar, if not greater, weight should be applied to design harm here.

4. Landscape Harm Exists Even Where Views Are Localised

The Limmer Hill Inspector made clear that even limited public viewpoints do not negate landscape harm, stating that:

- Development would still cause a "clear deterioration" of rural character,
- And the replacement of undeveloped countryside with built form constitutes moderate landscape harm, regardless of screening.

This is directly relevant to Edneys Hill, where:

- Some viewpoints are open and prominent, and
- Past Inspectors have unanimously found that the site plays a vital landscape role within the Green Wedge.

5. Planning Balance: Harm Can Outweigh Benefits Even in a Housing Crisis

Despite recognising a very significant housing shortfall, the Limmer Hill Inspector held that:

- Housing delivery benefits (even with 40% affordable provision) did not outweigh the identified harms,
- And the presumption in favour of sustainable development was "significantly and demonstrably outweighed" by adverse impacts under NPPF 11(d)(ii).

This is highly relevant to Edneys Hill, where:

- Only 16 units are proposed (with limited strategic benefit),
- The site performs an important spatial and landscape function, and
- The harmful effects are substantial and irreversible.

The Limmer Hill decision confirms that housing pressure alone does not justify development in inappropriate countryside locations, particularly when design, character, and settlement pattern harms are present.

Conclusion

The Limmer Hill appeal decision provides clear, up-to-date

precedent that strongly supports the Parish Council's position.
It reinforces that:

- The countryside character of Barkham's edge must be safeguarded;
- Settlement separation between Barkham and Wokingham remains a critical spatial consideration;
- Design quality cannot be judged by density alone and must be rooted in local context;
- Even moderate landscape harm carries weight; and
- Housing shortfall does not override fundamental harms under NPPF 11(d)(ii).

For these reasons, in addition to those set out in our original objection, Barkham Parish Council respectfully maintains that planning permission should be refused and the appeal dismissed.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Preparing Additional Comments

In preparing these additional comments, the Parish Council made use of artificial intelligence (AI) as a supporting analytical tool.

AI was used to compare the Parish Council's previously submitted comments relating to the application for land West of Edney's Hill with the decision issued by the Planning Inspectorate for a recent dismissed appeal at Limmer Hill, in order to identify any relevant points, themes or considerations within the Inspector's decision that may also be applicable to the current appeal.

Based on those identified points, AI was then used to assist in drafting additional comments for consideration as part of this appeal. The purpose of this approach was to ensure consistency with recent Inspectorate reasoning and to help focus the submission on matters of relevance to the appeal under consideration.

All content generated with the assistance of AI has been reviewed, checked, and approved by councillors for accuracy and appropriateness prior to submission. Responsibility for the content of this representation rests entirely with the Parish Council. [Read more](#)

Supporting documents

No documents
