

PLANNING REF : 261825
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Appletree Cottage
: Tag Lane Hare Hatch, Reading, Berkshire
: RG10 9ST
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Brendan Losty
DATE SUBMITTED : 01/09/2026

COMMENTS:

Wokingham Borough Council Planning Department
For the attention of WBC planning officer Ms Connie Davis.

Application no 261825

I wish to record in the strongest terms my formal objection to this application for a number of reasons which I will list below.

I would start by confirming that I wrote directly to WBC on 15th and 19th August 2026, specifically to raise the issues of the clandestine actions that took place on this site in March of this year whereby the site was hastily cleared of many of the mature trees and vegetation and to ask whether WBC planning department were cognisant of these actions. I asked what advice, if any, was given to the applicant and what the resulting implications of their actions could be with regards to this application. I also asked for sight of their pre application advice given to establish if these facts were known. I received a rebuttal on the matter rather than the transparency or the clarity I was hoping for from WBC. I have since had to submit a Freedom of Information request to have all this information disclosed and am currently waiting to receive it.

Therefore, it is with this limited and restricted knowledge that I have been given access to that I now submit my response. The lack of any contact from any of the parties concerned and the fact that the application submitted seems to have been timed for the start of the peak holiday season when many of my neighbours would either miss the application completely or be under time pressure to respond, at least in detail, by the deadline explains the haste of my reply.

I have lived in my property since 16th August 2002. I own the freehold property of Appletree Cottage on Tag Lane in Hare Hatch which dates to circa 1650. At the same time I also purchased the freehold of the adjacent paddock which borders the south side of the plot in question.

I would reiterate that I have received no contact from the current owner of the plot, Susan Dorothy Graham, the proposed developers of the plot and potential new neighbours, Nicholas and Emma Herbert, nor any of their agents nor specialists on any of the salient matters contained within the application. They have neither sought information nor requested advice or opinion on any of the significant issues.

Neither have they checked or verified any details with me included our boundary line or any information on my ditches, the drainage, ground conditions etc. for accuracy.

Their reports submitted within this planning application appear to

rely strongly on aerial photographs, maps, desk top studies, potential "flybys" and possibly their very limited knowledge of the site, its history, its ecology, its geology or even its defined boundaries and subsequently the size of their plot.

On 17th July 2002 the application 021752 for the proposed erection of one dwelling on this site was refused and a subsequent appeal dismissed. On 21st April 2015 an application 150511 for certificate of lawful existing use of the land for office and storage associated with a nursery business was withdrawn before any decision was made. On 23rd June 2015 the application 152003 for the certificate of lawfulness

for existing use of the land for storage (ONLY) associated with a nursery was approved. I would draw your attention to the fact that only a small area of the site was associated with the nursery business and this is clearly marked in red on the approved plan, which is now being referred to as the Grey Belt. The remaining and sizeable part of the site sits outside of this red area, and I believe this stays as Green Belt land.

This Grey Belt zone on the approved plan in 2015 only covers the areas occupied by the greenhouse with its adjacent shed, the temporary polytunnel and the area of narrow semi-stoned hard surface leading from Blakes Lane up to these structures. This represents approximately 20-25% of the total area of the plot. Therefore only a small proportion of the plot is covered by the certificate of lawfulness.

The remainder of the plot, representing approximately 75-80% is not covered by this certificate. This remaining 75-80% once consisted of mature trees including many Victorian fruit trees, mature bushes including fruit bushes and shrubs. This can be verified in the aerial photographs that I previously submitted to WBC in my emails mentioned above and which can still be found online.

This sizeable area of mature, canopied trees and vegetation is what I would call true Green Belt land in that it was once teeming with an abundance of wildlife including birds, bats, large and small mammals and amphibians. This is the only canopied area of covered vegetation along the whole of the south side of Blakes Lane. This functioned as an important ecological corridor for larger animals such as foxes, badgers and a wide variety of deer to move from Bowsey Woods and the trees and hedges on the north side of Blakes Lane, through and under the safe cover of this site on the south side of Blakes Lane and on to the wooded copse on Tag Lane, adjacent to Shingleberry and to the trees, hedge rows and verges on either side of Tag Lane, Blakes Lane and the wooded areas of The Holt beyond.

On the 5th March 2026 all that changed. Contractors covertly moved onto the plot with mechanical excavators and heavy machinery and decimated the vast majority of the mature trees on the site including all of the old Victorian fruit trees and most of the surrounding mature vegetation. I would argue that this work was not for the purposes of carrying out any site surveys or to dig trial pits for any feasibility studies for construction purposes. I would like to know who instructed, directed and employed the contractors? Was it the site owner, the developers or their agents? Why did they specifically target this work in the remaining Green Belt area of

the site that sits outside of Grey Belt that is marked in red on the approved existing use plan? Why did they not choose to just clear the old greenhouse, shed and polytunnel, considering this is the area where the proposed dwelling is to be sited? Were any of the contractors qualified Arborists that could work safely around the trees with TPOs? Are they allowed to do this before preparing a case for a planning application? Where is their "Schedule of Dilapidations" report that is the industry best practice before any construction work is commenced?

Prior to the clearance of the site in March 2026 there appears to be no ecology or arboreal survey done, no bat survey done, no regard for nesting birds, hibernating mammals or amphibians and no consultation with the neighbours, as far as can be established. It is possible also there was no prior contact with the parties within WBC, its planning department or their colleagues in other departments responsible for enforcements or injunctions. Neighbours raised the issue that first morning with WBC immediately the clearance of the site came to their attention.

I now suspect this activity may have been in order to circumvent any WBC planning conditions, restrictions or processes and maybe to enhance the possibility of obtaining planning permission for their "Tesco" size building. Judging from their photos and comments, all of their reports, surveys, observations and desk top studies submitted within this application are all dated some four months after this March 2026. What is the worth of a preliminary ecological appraisal being submitted four months after the destruction of the mature vegetation and wildlife? Can this action of pre-sanitising a plot in advance of any planning application being submitted be acceptable? If so, could it act as a precedent for any future infill Green Belt sites in the area without any consequences or penalties?

UKGWG-A-EX-100 Rev A Existing Site Plan (NOTED REV A AMENDMENTS TO SUIT PLANNERS COMMENTS).

I reject this document as an accurate plan of the boundary on the south side. The boundary line shown in this application plan is clearly based upon the line of my post and rail equestrian fence which I erected to replace a wavy old angle iron stock fence and barbed wire which was used many decades ago when cattle were once kept on the land and which deteriorated some time ago. My timber equestrian post and rail fence was erected on a line to give the straightest and strongest construction whilst avoiding the adjacent trees and roots. It therefore does not follow the true boundary of my paddock on its north side.

My official land registry deeds state I am responsible for maintenance of any hedges, fences and ditches to the south, west and north of my paddock. There is no such information to the contrary on any of the official land registry deeds of the proposed site. This may result in my need to now instigate a boundary dispute with the owner/developer. Note that both ground and low-level drone photographs have now been taken and my own detailed schedule of dilapidations of the boundary and ditch is being prepared to avoid any another covert operations.

UKGWG-A-DM-101 Rev A Exiting Site Demolition Plan (NOTED REV A AMENDMENTS TO SUIT PLANNERS COMMENTS), UKGWG-EX-001 Existing Location Plan, Green Belt Volumes Totals UKGWG-A-CD-211 Proposed Side Elevations, UKGWG-A-CD-110 - Rev A Proposed Ground Floor Plan (NOTED REV A AMENDMENTS TO SUIT PLANNERS COMENTS), UKGWG-A-CD-210 Proposed Front and Rear Elevations, UKGWG-A-CD-113 Proposed Roof Plan, UKGWG-A-CD-112 Proposed Second Floor Plan, UKGWG-A-CD-111 Proposed First Floor Plan

These drawings show the extent of the existing structures, one of which is a temporary polytunnel of similar size to the greenhouse / shed building along with plans and details of the proposed new structure. Can the temporary structure of the polytunnel be used within the calculation for the volume of the existing structures? If not, it's use artificially enhances the figures used in their calculations of the uplift stated from 353m³ to 2346m³. Furthermore. From their own totals this show a proposed increase of over 6.6 times the volume of all existing temporary and established structures on the site. This would result in a new building considerably larger than any of its neighbours and would be totally disproportionate in ratio to the size of the site compared to any of the adjacent properties. The adjacent property to the west, Merchiston, is clearly smaller in size to the one proposed on this site with a small and discreet attic and Merchiston sits on the larger plot. No amount of proposed shielding by trees, bushes or fences will avoid the visually dominant impact of such an excessively large building on its neighbours.

The siting of this new three storey monstrosity is also very questionable. The plans do not show it positioned close to the centre of the plot, providing a clear and proportional rural distance from its neighbours. Instead it is currently positioned remarkably close to its neighbour Merchiston, which will not only invade their privacy, but it also starts to give the area a more urban street view appearance. This siting also facilitates the possibility of the plot being sub-divided so allowing for the possibility of a further building (maybe of similar proportions) being proposed close to its other adjacent neighbour, Glebe House, which would further reinforce an urban street view. This has the potential of setting a precedent if this proposed application were to be approved by WBC.

PLANNING STATEMENT

I would re-iterate that the Fig 1.1 "Aerial of the Existing Site" shown in the report is wholly disingenuous and insults all the neighbours intelligence. This photograph submitted in the application is obviously taken after the March 2026 destruction and shows most of the site cleared of all its mature vegetation including trees, bushes and shrubs except around the perimeter boundary of the plot. This should now be used as evidence of the ecological vandalism that has taken place. I would therefore dispute strongly their statement "the scheme . minimises the effect on the site's environmental characteristics and the amenity of nearby residential receptors" but

I'm sure my neighbours will vocalise this in their own objections.

Section 5.1 (a) refers to the whole site now qualifying as "Grey Belt" land. The application 152003 for certificate of lawfulness, referred to as Grey Belt, only applies to a small proportion of the plot (marked in red on the approved plan at the time). How is it acceptable for the whole site to now lose its Green Belt status other than through the ecological vandalism that was perpetrated in March 2026? There are many other anomalies and inconsistencies within this Planning Statement report which again I understand have been dissected by neighbours in their own objections.

It makes the statement in the document that the village of Wargrave sits outside the Green Belt. Whilst true, this is misleading as the plot in question clearly sits outside the boundary of the village of Wargrave and is well within the defined Green Belt area.

I would also still strongly argue that the wider area of the site DID NOT form any part of any horticultural operation and that only a small percentage of the plot was used for storage. There is no historic documented evidence nor any site evidence even suggesting that the horticultural storage or any business operation extended beyond the area marked in red on the approved plan. To state that the wider plot did form part of the operation is untrue and contradicts the earlier application. This statement is merely in the imagination of the author along with statement 6.36 "substantial environmental enhancements arising from the development". Destroying the environment then claiming you can improve it with this development is the arsonist wanting praise for turning up with a bucket.

Section 6.57 "the development would not have a detrimental effect on the amenity of adjoining neighbours" certainly does not reflect the flooding which their artificially created surface water drainage plan will cause to my paddock. This is through their failure to perform an accurate study on the lack of efficiency of my shallow, impermeable, incomplete drainage system of my paddock. This shallow ditch only runs for the length of the north side of my paddock and terminates at both ends. There is no continuity of the ditch to the west across my garden or to the east beyond my paddock to neighbouring lands or fields. Any attempt to artificially increase the surface water input with the intent to dissipate into a distant agricultural drainage system would require considerable groundworks and permissions from myself and all adjacent landowners if this is to be made in any way effective. I hereby invite WBC planning and their drainage officer to visit my paddock and view my records that would verify my statements as fact.

In addition, the statement in this section that claims that the proposed development "would not appear overbearing" would suggest that the author has not looked at or realised the disproportionate size of this three-storey structure as being the only property of this magnitude in this area.

Comments made in their summary 7.2 are also incorrect as the site clearly acted as a wide, shaded ecological corridor before being vandalised in March 2026 and up until then it strongly contributed to the function of the Green Belt.

Therefore, and contrary to their claim, the site clearly does not have a sustainable surface water drainage plan in place and as such their final comment is factually wrong. This presumably is based upon assumptions and desk top studies rather than factual evidence, examinations, testing and legal rights and entitlements.

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL AND PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

This study was carried out on 7th July 2026, some four months after the destruction of the mature vegetation and habitation of the ecological corridor. I refuse to accept its validity for use in this planning application submission. WBC should insist upon an independent assessment of the condition of the site before the start of its clearing in March 2026, prior to considering this or any future planning applications on this plot. Not doing so could now set a precedent that it is acceptable for any future sites to be ecologically cleansed and all birds, bats, mammals and amphibians evicted prior to the preparation and submission of ecological impact reports in future planning applications. How this is not regarded as a false submission or possibly a criminal act leaves me in dismay.

Comment 1.3 Ecology Constraints again states "No trees are proposed to be felled or pruned". Comparing the before and after aerial photographs of the destruction of the dense mature tree canopy alone insults anyone with intelligence and integrity. Surely the professional person carrying out the Field Survey would have seen the futility of their work attempting to make a Species Record in July 2026 after the March 2026 acts of vandalism.

DRAINAGE STRATEGY

I would again start by emphasising that there is no continuous water course on the south side of the site so fundamentally their drainage strategy is seriously flawed. This report clearly verifies that the clay subsoil in this whole area as having low permeability. The contours of the land on this plot fall from the higher area in the south of the plot, bordering my paddock, to the lower area in the north with an old shallow ditch on its northern boundary beside Blakes Lane, being the lower side of the plot. Suggesting the solution is to discharge their artificially created surface water up hill (in the opposite direction to the fall of the land) from all their roofs, balconies, patios, car parking, driveways and paths from and around the proposed property will not work.

If this water were to be pumped up and out into my ditch on the south side of this plot, which terminates at both ends it will NOT discharge into any (non-existing) neighbouring land drainage systems or dissipate into the sub soil. Instead it will cause considerable flooding to a large area of my paddock. There are no easements or rights in existence from their plot onto my land for any

neighbouring, artificially created increases in surface water evacuation. This is not an acceptable nor a workable solution and any resulting flooding to my paddock will be regarded by me as a legal nuisance and as such, action will be taken against ALL parties involved.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

This document merely functions as an attractive "sales brochure". It does state though that the amended plans submitted in the application were revised to reflect the planners' comments which hopefully will come to light following my FOI request. This would suggest to me that the planning department must already be in knowledge of and fully accepting of the size, scale and positioning shown on the architectural plans which are included in this application and its consequential implications. I receive this information and I am dismayed with WBC planning department and hope this detriment will be recognised by the WBC planning committee.

Note again my comments previously made that there is no potential for SUDS drainage (being my existing ditch) as stated in their sales brochure. The ditch photo they show in this document claiming to be the existing ditch is itself faked and is wholly inaccurate. This photograph has not been taken from any part of the plot in question and is therefore not representative of the fact.

ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This report was also prepared in July 2026 some four months after much of the site was cleared in preparation of its writing. I would again question the validity of this report as it is not based upon the site before it was cleared of the mature trees, bushes, shrubs and other vegetation. It does not deal with any possible damage to the remaining trees [several having TPO protection] and their roots, caused by this clearance. Surely the professional person who prepared this report would have seen clear evidence of this site stripping, including the remains of branches, tree trunks and tree stumps along with recent shredding and chippings left on site. Again, the use of terms in 3.1.2 "does not require the removal of any trees" and 3.4.1 "pressure to remove trees or undertake improper works is considered low" is misleading. What then was the destruction of trees on the site in March 2026 if not improper works? The reuse of this phrasing repeated in 4.1.1 "the proposal does not require the removal of any trees" and "the arboricultural impact is assessed as low and presents no material concern" is inflammatory to all the neighbours following the March 2026 clearance works.

SUMMARY

In summary I believe this application must be refused. Given the circumstances stated above I further believe it should be put forward to the full WBC planning committee to carry out their due diligence.

I intend to respond directly and in detail including supplementary information with current and historic records including photographs from 2002 to 2026 to the WBC senior planning officer once I am satisfied I have received a full and accurate response to my Freedom of Information request.

Furthermore I believe WBC should also have a responsibility and a duty of care to investigate the false claims, actions and behaviours demonstrated by the despicable performance in March 2026 in order to prevent setting a precedent for the use of similar tactics by others in future applications.

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READING RG10 9ST