

## Unrestricted Report

### ITEM NO: 7

Application No.  
**14/01201/FUL**  
Site Address:

Ward:  
Crowthorne

Date Registered:  
17 November 2014

Target Decision Date:  
16 February 2015

### Land West Of Old Wokingham Road Old Wokingham Road Wokingham Berkshire

Proposal:

Proposed erection of 116 dwellings with associated access, highways works, drainage works (SUDS), open space and landscaping, including provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG). (Duplicate application submitted to neighbouring authority).

Applicant:

Bewley Homes PLC \_ Wokingham United Charities

Agent:

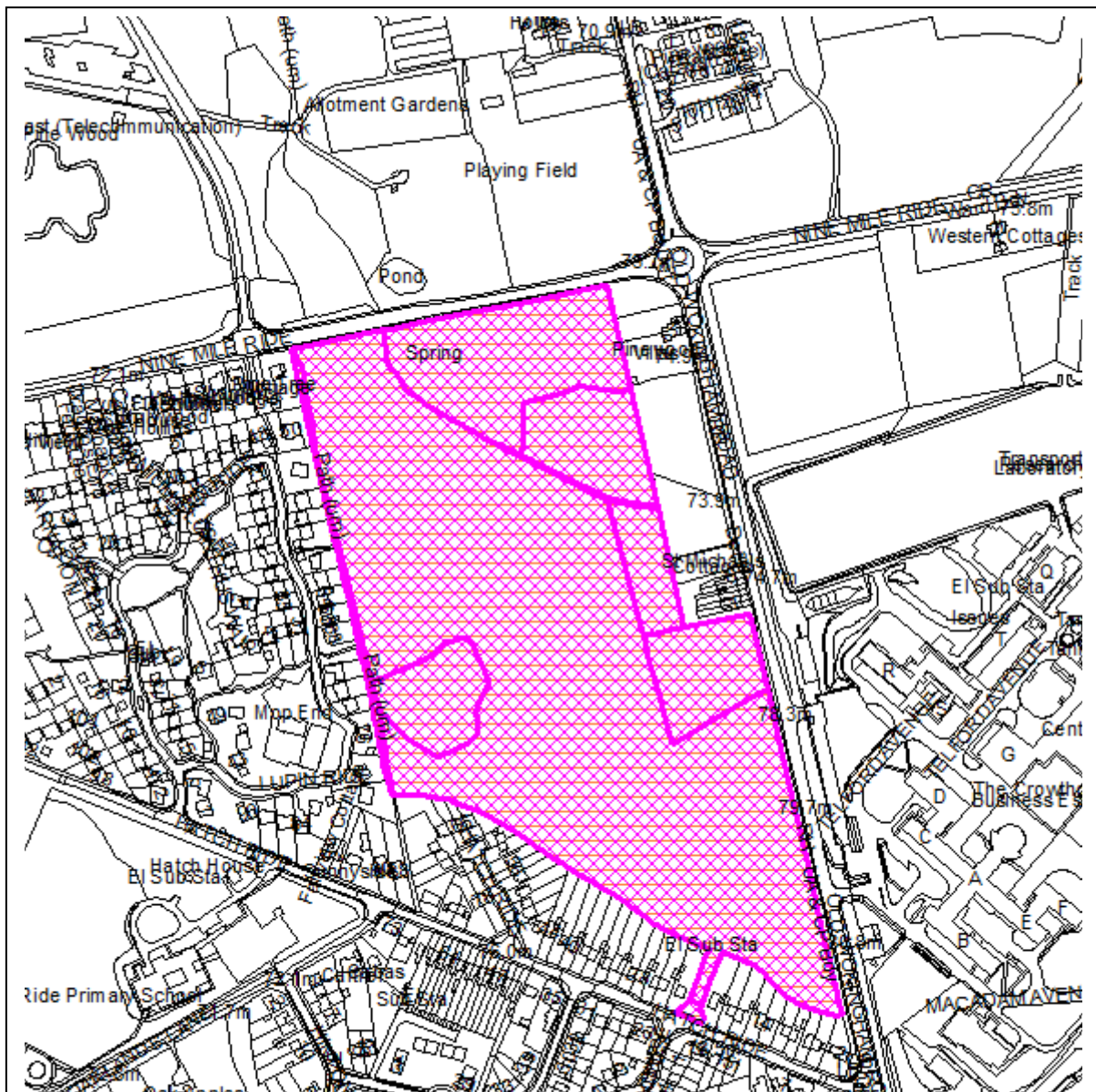
Mrs Gemma Care

Case Officer:

Trevor Yerworth, 01344 352000

[Development.control@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Development.control@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

### Site Location Plan (for identification purposes only, not to scale)



## **OFFICER REPORT**

### **1. SUMMARY**

1.1 The site straddles the administrative boundary with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC). The vast majority of the site lies within WBC, including all the proposed buildings; however the Old Wokingham Road access and a narrow strip of land within the site, including a ditch adjacent to Old Wokingham Road is within Bracknell Forest.

1.2 A duplicate application has been submitted to WBC which is due to be considered at a meeting of its planning committee on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

1.3 The proposal is for the erection of 116 dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping, Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) and ancillary features.

1.4 Although this site is allocated for housing in WBC's Development Plan, and therefore the principle of the development is considered acceptable, the proposed access onto Old Wokingham Road would undermine an important landscape buffer allowing views of the housing from Old Wokingham Road and would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and in particular to the character of Old Wokingham Road.

1.5 Notwithstanding this it is necessary to consider whether there are any other material considerations that may outweigh this harm in order to make a balanced decision. As this is an allocated site within WBC and BFC did not raise any objection in principle to this allocation it is considered unreasonable to obstruct the delivery of this allocated site unless very significant harm would result. In view of this the possibility of finding a more suitable access to this site that would result in less harm has been carefully considered.

1.6 One alternative access point is the proposed emergency access/ cycleway onto Hatch Ride which would enable the landscape buffer to be retained intact. However the corridor through which the access road and footways would need to go passes in close proximity to existing dwellings. It is therefore considered that an access onto Hatch Ride while acceptable in highway terms, may not be regarded as ideal by local residents, neither will it resolve their concerns about this development.

1.7 On balance it is considered that the harm to the character of Old Wokingham Road is outweighed by other material considerations. This view is strengthened by the willingness of the applicant to make amendments to the scheme to reduce the harm identified. In conclusion therefore subject to the provision of mitigation measures set out in the suggested conditions and obligations below, approval is recommended.

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
Planning permission be granted subject to the completion of satisfactory Section 106 obligations and the conditions set out in Section 11 of this report

### **2. REASON FOR REPORTING APPLICATION TO COMMITTEE**

2.1 The application has been reported to the Planning Committee following the receipt of more than 3 objections.

### 3. PLANNING STATUS AND SITE DESCRIPTION

<b>PLANNING STATUS</b>
Within BFC the northern part of the site lies within land outside a settlement, but the southern part including the proposed access road lies with the settlement boundary of Crowthorne.
Within 5km of Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area

3.1 The site straddles the administrative boundary with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC). The vast majority of the site lies within WBC, including all the proposed buildings; however the Old Wokingham Road access and a narrow strip of land within the site approximately 2-3 wide, including a ditch adjacent to Old Wokingham Road, is within Bracknell Forest.

3.2 A duplicate application has been submitted to WBC which is due to be considered at a meeting of its planning committee on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

3.3 This 10.5ha site lies within a rural location on the west side of Old Wokingham Road approximately 5km south west of Bracknell town centre and just over 1km north of Crowthorne village centre. The site consists mainly of plantation woodland with a small grassed paddock in the north east corner. The site generally slopes gently down from south east to north west towards a small stream that flows in a north westerly direction across the northern part of the site. The site contains no buildings or other development. A public footpath runs along the western boundary of the site linking Hatch Ride to Nine Mile Ride. The site is well screened on all sides by mature woodland preventing clear views across the site.

3.4 The only vehicular access to the site is via a field gate from Old Wokingham Road into the paddock. There is also informal pedestrian access via a public footpath from Hatch Ride, Lupin Ride and Nine Mile Ride.

3.5 Old Wokingham Road forms the eastern boundary to the site. On the opposite side of Old Wokingham Road is the former TRL site which is an allocated site in Bracknell Forest for a large mixed use development including up to 1000 dwellings, a neighbourhood centre and primary school. Outline planning permission for this was granted in January 2015 (13/00575/OUT) but the development has not yet commenced. Residential development on Hatch Ride and Lupin Ride lies to the south and west respectively. The northern boundary is formed by Nine Mile Ride.

3.6 The surrounding area to the north and east is generally open, gently undulating countryside comprising extensive areas of forest separating the settlement of Crowthorne from the larger towns of Bracknell and Wokingham to the north. Within this forested area are several large institutional uses including the former TRL site, Broadmoor Hospital, the Johnson & Johnson Pinewood campus and Pinewood Leisure Centre. Residential development forming the northern edge of Crowthorne adjoins the site to the south and west. This is mainly low density post-war two-storey detached and semi-detached houses on Hatch Ride and more recent two storey detached housing on Lupin Ride.

#### **4. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY**

4.1 The site has been identified by WBC as a reserve housing site since 2004. It was formally allocated in 2014 under Policy SAL01 of that Council's Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) for around 100 dwellings.

In January 2014 WBC determined an EIA screening request (WBC application SO/2014/0025) to the effect that the proposed development did not constitute EIA development.

There is no other relevant planning history on this site with either Council.

#### **5. THE PROPOSAL**

5.1 This application seeks permission for the erection of 116 dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping, Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) and ancillary features. The proposed dwellings (entirely within WBC) are of a traditional scale and design, comprising 1, 2, 3, and 4 bed houses constructed of brick and tile, incorporating integrated parking and landscaping. The dwellings are generally detached and semi-detached together with small terraces of generally no more than three dwellings. A 3 storey block of flats would front the main public open space in the centre of the site.

5.2 Generally, dwellings are two storey, with some plots incorporating an additional upper floor in the roof space to make 2.5 storeys. Three storey dwellings are less common throughout the development and are strategically placed in areas where they would not have a significant adverse impact upon character. This traditional scale has been adopted in order to fit with the surrounding forms of development in the area.

5.3 The design of the buildings has been broken down in visual terms by the use of gables, variations in building lines and a wide palette of materials. Other design features adding visual interest to the scheme include the curved nature of the main cul-de-sac road, the large open space in the centre of the site, adequate areas for landscaping at the front of the properties, gable designs with mixed brickwork and rendering styles, along with the use of traditional pitched roofs.

5.4 A 40 m landscape buffer is located between the proposed dwellings and Old Wokingham Road. In the centre of the site there is a large area of public open space incorporating an equipped children's' play area. This adjoins a 5 hectare SANG to the north.

5.5 The main vehicular access to the site will be from Old Wokingham Road although there will be several additional cycle and pedestrian access points, including a cycleway/ emergency access onto Hatch Ride.

5.6 The development has been through several changes to the design of its layout during the course of the application. The most significant amendments include a reduction in the number of dwellings from 123 to 116; the removal of a proposed cycleway along Old Wokingham Road north of Hatch Ride and the re-positioning of dwellings away from the southern boundary in order to provide separation from properties on Hatch Ride, a soft edge to the development, and an ecology corridor.

#### **6. REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED**

Crowthorne Parish Council:

6.1 Recommends refusal on the following grounds:

- Overdevelopment of the area
- This development is not sustainable without major financial contributions to Bracknell Forest from Wokingham Borough to cover and enhance public transport and highways
- All links are via Bracknell Forest roads
- Additional traffic on already overcrowded roads
- Already overcapacity at road junctions
- Additional threat to air quality
- Internally to the development the roads are narrow and winding, putting residents relying on utility and safety vehicles (ie fire/police/ambulance) at risk
- There is only one access/egress to the development, once again putting residents at risk
- Residents will have to travel outside the immediate area for employment
- On the TRL development, secondary school aged children are scheduled to go to Easthampstead Park. However, similar aged children, who will reside on this development which is in Wokingham Borough, will be allowed to go to Edgbarrow School in Bracknell Forest. CPC strongly objects that Crowthorne students will be disadvantaged by Wokingham students
- There is already a shortage of health care in Crowthorne, with no additional provision for a doctor's surgery

#### Wokingham Without Parish Council

6.2 Objects to the proposals on the following grounds:

- That the application has been through too many amendments and should be resubmitted. (Officer note: the amendments to the applications have been fairly minor and have seen the number of units reduced).
- The development is unnecessary, WBC has enough housing land supply (Officer note: The site is allocated for housing in WBC development plan and forms an important part of WBC's housing land supply)
- Insufficient existing infrastructure to cope with this development (Officer note: The development is CIL Liable and therefore will contribute to infrastructure (within WBC) in the same way as any other residential development, the development also secures the provision of a SANG)
- Development provides excessive strain on the essential greenspace between Bracknell, Crowthorne and Wokingham (Officer note – The SANG will partially provide this buffer. The site is allocated for housing in WBC development plan).
- Overdevelopment when considered with the cumulative impact of other developments, particularly in terms of infrastructure provision. (Officer note: The development is not dependent on the TRL. The suitability and deliverability of the site was considered as part of WBC's site allocation process)
- Risk to Local Landscape Character
- Loss of Visual Amenity/visual intrusion
- Biodiversity & Ecological Risk (Officer Note: Ecological risk and adequacy of the SANG has been considered by WBC Ecologist and Natural England and is considered acceptable)
- Surface Water Flooding Risk (Officer Note: Drainage solution is considered satisfactory by WBC drainage consultants and the EA)
- Concerns over transport
- No collaboration between WBC and BFC

#### Other representations:

6.3 12 letters of objection received. In addition 82 letters have been received by WBC. The planning issues raised are:

Principle of development & impact to character/locality:

Scheme considered overdevelopment of the site  
 Too many units on the scheme compared to allocation of around 100  
 Crowthorne has already had its fair share of development  
 Crowthorne is already overdeveloped  
 Cumulative impact of this development along with the TRL development, Broadmoor and others is unacceptable  
 The initial allocation of this site does not accord with the duty to co-operate  
 Enough development is planned for the area. This housing isn't required  
 Crowthorne doesn't need flats  
 This site acts a valued buffer to other development/settlements  
 Will erode the village feel of Crowthorne  
 Loss of visual amenity from Hatch Ride/Old Wokingham Road  
 Housing on this site will affect the green character or character of adjacent housing/localities  
 Character of development is unlikely to be satisfactory with regards some unit types and with the design of the affordable housing  
 Density is too high  
 Could set a precedent for out of settlement development of buildings with large plots  
 Permission for an access should not be granted/access is not suitable  
 Potential issues of highway safety for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists  
 Already too much queuing and traffic pressure on Old Wokingham Road/Nine Mile Ride/Wider network and associated junctions  
 There have been a number of accidents in the area already  
 Vehicles regularly speed on Old Wokingham Road  
 Insufficient public transport around the site  
 Development will cause cumulative traffic problems  
 Site is not in a sustainable location  
 Poor public transport in the area  
 Unacceptable traffic capacity risk based on unsound assumptions  
 Insufficient parking  
 Could lead to loss of privacy and overlooking  
 Could lead to loss of light  
 Risk of overbearing  
 Could lead to additional noise and pollution/air quality issues  
 Development should be better screened from other houses  
 Revisions to the plan are to the detriment of Hatch Ride residents as the buffer is reduced. Buffer is still not sufficient  
 Existing charities land provides leisure/walking opportunities  
 Original southern buffer with rear gardens was better  
 Proposals could lead to a negative impact upon ecology, particularly great crested newts, reptiles, owls and nearby SPAs and SSSIs  
 Potentially Japanese knotweed in the area  
 Too much loss of vegetation/mature woodland. More vegetation should be retained  
 Potential impact upon trees and other vegetation  
 Lack of School spaces, Doctors' capacity etc.  
 Shops and garages may not have capacity  
 Potential problems with water infrastructure  
 Development can't piggyback on the back of the TRL development  
 Should be more joined up thinking between Wokingham and Bracknell Council  
 Some of the works are on Bracknell Forest Land and approval of works may not be with in WBCs gift  
 Residents of Hatch Ride used to have direct access on to green space  
 Infrastructure money may be spent away from Crowthorne  
 40% affordable housing is out of line with surrounding area  
 Affordable housing should not be provided here

On site drainage is poor/risk of flooding. Loss of trees which help with drainage is not desirable

May impact on ground water

Limited employment opportunities within Crowthorne, this has sustainability implications

Lack of waste/sewerage capacity in the area

Drainage solutions not acceptable. May increase risk to surrounding properties including those in Hatch Ride

PD rights should be removed

## **7. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

### Highway Officer

7.1 No objection subject to conditions including a Grampian-style condition restricting the occupation of the development until certain highway works have been completed and a financial contribution towards the future provision of a Toucan crossing on Old Wokingham Road.

### Lead Local Flood Authority

7.2 No objection (to amended plans the removal of the proposed cycleway). Any surface water from the new access and link road would drain to the existing watercourse, as does the existing land.

### Landscape Officer

7.3 The main concern with this application is the impact on the existing character of Old Wokingham Road. Old Wokingham Road is a tree lined road with mature oaks overhanging the carriage way in some locations. This wooded character is important to the local landscape character. The proposed site access and the widening of the footway to provide cycle ways is likely to have an adverse impact on a ditch between Old Wokingham Road and the trees that are located in close proximity to the ditch on the western bank. The wooded character of Old Wokingham Road must be retained and therefore the proposals should be revised to minimise the impact on the existing trees and the landscape character.

### Tree Officer

7.4 The plans indicate the access road servicing the development, to exit onto Old Wokingham Road at the point where the tree cover appears to be the densest. Notwithstanding the accuracy of the tree cover depicted on the plans, this appears to require the removal of a considerable number of trees; and may yet not take into account the requirement for underground services or the construction pressure on the remaining retained trees closest to the access road which may well lead to the demise of yet more trees due to indirect construction pressure.

7.5 In addition, the plans also indicate a network of paths throughout the length of the woodland amenity area, which suggest that (again notwithstanding the accuracy of the tree cover depicted on the plans) yet more trees are to be removed as part of the scheme.

7.6 If accurately depicted, the proposal would open up the development to overt public view from Old Wokingham Road instead of using the woodland to mask or hide the scheme and will radically change the landscape in that area.

## Environment Agency

7.7 Applicant has met the requirements of the NPPF. The EA recommends drainage based on Sustainable Urban Drainage Principles.

## Thames Water

7.8 No objection

## Berkshire Archaeology

7.9 No objection subject to condition

## **8. MAIN POLICIES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO THE DECISION**

8.1 The key policies and guidance applying to the site are:

	<b>Development Plan</b>	<b>NPPF</b>
General policies	CP1 of SALP, CS1 & CS2 of CSDPD	consistent
Design	CS7 of CSDPD, Saved policy EN20 of BFBLP	consistent
Environment	CS1 & CS7 of CSDPD; Saved policies EN1, EN3 & EN20 of BFBLP	consistent
Transport	CS23 of CSDPD; Saved policies M4 and M6 of BFBLP	Consistent
<b>Other publications</b>		
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)		

## **9. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

9.1 The key issues for consideration are:

- i Principle of Development
- ii Impact on character and appearance of the area
- iii Impact on residential amenity
- iv Transport issues
- v Flood risk and drainage
- vi Biodiversity, including SPA mitigation
- vii Infrastructure mitigation

### **i. Principle of Development**

9.2 That part of the site where built development (including the access) is proposed is located within a defined settlement in both BFC's and WBC's adopted Policies Maps, and as such is an area where new residential development is acceptable in principle. The site was allocated in the Wokingham District Local Plan (2004) as a Reserve Housing Site. It was subsequently formally allocated in that Council's Managing Development Delivery Development Local Plan (MDD) adopted in February 2014 for 'around 100' dwellings (policy SAL01). BFC did not raise an objection to the principle of this allocation. The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle.

### **ii. Impact on Character and Appearance of Area**



9.2 As the only part of the site within BFC is a narrow strip of land between 2-3m in width bordering Old Wokingham Road, the main issue for this Council to consider is whether the proposed development will cause significant harm to the character of Old Wokingham Road. The question of how the site was to be accessed was not addressed when this site was allocated by WBC. Instead the guidance to Policy SAL01 in that Council's adopted MDD (appendix 12) requires "a Transport Assessment (TA) which details how access to the site has been determined". The application TA takes the access onto Old Wokingham Road as a given with no consideration of any alternatives.

9.3 Appendix 12 of the MDD also sets out the design principle of providing a landscape buffer of at least 40m between any residential development on this site and Old Wokingham Road and requires that information is supplied with the application demonstrating how it addresses any impacts on the environment and landscape of the area. Although a Landscape Design Statement has been submitted with the application this does not address the landscape impacts on Old Wokingham Road arising from the proposed access.

9.4 The Sustainability Appraisal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment) supporting the MDD states in respect of this site "Development within suggested Special Landscape Area due to the high quality of the landscape identified within the Landscape Character Assessment... Development could be harmful to the high quality landscape of this part of the borough." It is acknowledged that the site is not a designated Special Landscape Area and that notwithstanding the assessment that the landscape was of a high quality WBC allocated this site for housing. However it sought to mitigate this identified harm through a requirement to provide a 40m landscape buffer to Old Wokingham Road to help reduce the visual impact of development of this site.

9.5 The loss of a significant part of this 40m landscape buffer in order to create the proposed access road is considered to conflict with this objective by opening up views of the development from Old Wokingham Road thereby seriously undermining the ability of this buffer to provide the required mitigation and calling into question the effectiveness of the buffer. It is considered that having the access from Old Wokingham Road would increase rather than reduce the visual impact of the site, contrary to the guidance set out in Appendix 12 of the MDD.

9.6 It is acknowledged that this site lies within the defined settlement boundary and is not therefore "countryside" in planning policy terms (despite this being its current function). If the existing tree belt along Old Wokingham Road was to remain untouched it is likely that the proposed dwellings would go largely unnoticed from this road. However the proposed access would introduce a suburban form onto Old Wokingham Road which at this point has a rural character, and would also provide views through to the rest of the development. The impact on Old Wokingham Road would be exacerbated by the removal of undergrowth and trees necessary to facilitate the proposed visibility splays and cycle ways that were originally proposed. Although the proposed development lies within settlement limits, harm would be caused to the integrity of the 40m landscape buffer recognised in policy guidance as forming an important feature shaping the design of this development.

9.7. Paragraph 5.2 of the Landscape Design Statement submitted with the application acknowledges the importance of this landscape buffer: "A significant landscape buffer along the eastern boundary allows for the retention of the existing trees which will maintain the character and appearance of the landscape along Old Wokingham Road".

However it has not addressed the harm to the character and appearance of the landscape along Old Wokingham Road as a result of the loss of trees and vegetation resulting from the proposed access, visibility splays and cycle ways together with the significant breach in the 40m landscape buffer from the access road itself.

9.8 As such it is considered that the proposal is contrary to the guidance set out in the adopted MDD. However following further discussion with the applicant some amendments have been made to the development in an attempt to reduce this harm to the character and appearance of Old Wokingham Road. This includes the removal (with the agreement of both Highway Authorities) of the proposed cycleway alongside old Wokingham Road north of Hatch Ride which was considered to significantly exacerbate this harm.

9.9 In addition the applicant has tried to address some of the comments of the Tree Officer by providing more detail in respect of the number of trees that would actually be affected by the access. In order to fully assess this impact more detailed plans have been provided showing visibility splays with individual trees to be removed identified. An amended arboricultural report has been submitted that concludes that the visibility splays can be accommodated within the existing verge avoiding the removal of any additional trees and the proposed cycleway would only require the removal of a small number of trees growing between the ditch and the existing footway, together with some minor pruning works of some lower branches. However this Council's drainage and highway engineers were concerned that the proposed cycle way would reduce the drainage capacity of the ditch and expressed concerns over the design of the proposed retaining structure adjacent to the ditch which was considered likely to require substantial redesign resulting in additional adverse impacts on the capacity of the ditch and on trees close to the western bank.

9.10 The applicant has also sought to reduce the impact on the landscape buffer by replacing the proposed 3m cycle paths with 1.2m hoggin footpaths which would reduce their visual impact, especially in respect of the need for lighting and tarmac surfaces required for a formal cycleway.

9.11 The above amendments are welcomed as they are considered to reduce the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area. However the proposal to take the access to the development from Old Wokingham Road and construct the main access road through the landscape buffer remain and it is therefore considered that the development would result in a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area. This is in conflict with CSDPD Policy CS7, BFBLP 'Saved' Policies EN1 and EN20, and the NPPF as well as guidance contained within WBC's adopted Development Plan.

9.12 WBC regrets the loss of vegetation on this site but considers that it is "fairly inevitable that there will be a relatively significant change in the appearance of the area as it has been identified for housing. It considers that the applicant has recognised this verdant existing character of the site and as a result has maintained a significant 40m vegetative buffer between the proposed housing and Old Wokingham Road to help retain some of this green character. WBC consider the 40m buffer to be a significant benefit to the site providing significantly greater landscaping than that on comparable sites and which helps to partially mitigate the loss of vegetation.

9.13 Following concerns raised by your Officers that the access through the buffer could impact upon the character of the area WBC has responded that the access takes up a very small proportion of the overall frontage, is an entirely ordinary feature within settlement limits, and that the substantial 40m deep buffer helps to provide far superior

screening to the development than on most other sites in either Borough and as such a reason for refusal could not be substantiated on this point.

9.14 While your Officer's agree that it is unusual to have a 40m landscape buffer within settlement limits, this is a requirement set out in Wokingham's Development Plan rather than something the applicant has offered voluntarily. The provision of this landscape buffer is welcomed, and certainly reduces the visual impact of the development from Old Wokingham Road compared to the impact if there was no or a narrower buffer. However your officers' concerns are that this beneficial feature is undermined by constructing the access road through the buffer and having a major engineered junction with footpaths (and originally cycle ways) impacting on the street scene of Old Wokingham Road. For these reasons your Officers' remain of the view that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and in particular to the character of Old Wokingham Road. However, as discussed later in this report there are other factors to consider and balance against this harm, leading your Officers' to conclude that on this occasion these other factors outweigh this harm. It is not therefore recommended that the application be refused for this reason.

9.15 WBC has assessed the housing layout and design. It has concluded that the density, housing mix, design, layout and landscaping of the proposed development are acceptable and your Officers have no reason to disagree with this assessment.

### **iii. Impact on Residential Amenity**

9.16 There are no existing residential properties adjacent to the site within Bracknell Forest. Although planning permission has been granted for up to 1000 dwellings on the former TRL site opposite, the proposed 40m landscape buffer would prevent any direct impact on the residential amenities of the future residents of that development.

9.17 WBC has assessed the impact of the proposed development on residents living within Wokingham Borough. With the exception of the flats all properties in close proximity to the boundary are two storey. All the two storey dwellings proposed that have rear to rear, or rear to front relationships would be more than 22m from any residential dwellings adjacent to the site. It is considered that this distance is adequate to avoid any significant loss of light, overbearing or overlooking. Any dwellings within 22m of existing properties have side to side relationships or side to rear relationships that exceed the respective minimum separation distances. The site proposes some elements of three storey flatted development in close proximity to the boundary with Hatch Ride. The rear elevation of the flatted block faces on to the diagonal flank elevation of 64 Hatch Ride with a separation distance of 28m. This is considered to be a satisfactory relationship with that property. Internally within the proposed development there are no areas of concern with regards to amenity and separation distances between individual plots given the orientation of the buildings and distances from elevations with windows in them. It is therefore considered that no unacceptable loss of light, overbearing or overlooking would result from this proposal.

9.18 The proposals are unlikely to have any significant impact on existing residential properties with regards to noise and disturbance. The proposed residential properties are not considered to cause any more significant impact than any other residential scheme and as such would be acceptable. Impacts during construction can be controlled through an hours of construction condition.

9.19 The occupiers of some of the dwellings on Hatch Ride have expressed concerns over the proximity of the southern access road to their dwellings. Similar issues have

been highlighted for the access paths near St. Michaels Cottages. Whilst Officers have sympathy with the occupiers that their property will no longer back on to vegetated green space, this cannot be apportioned any significant weight. Loss of a view is not a planning issue, and whilst some occupiers have suggested there may be unacceptable noise and air quality issues as a result, this claim cannot be substantiated.

9.20 It is therefore considered that the development would not result in an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties, in accordance with BFBLP 'Saved' Policy EN20 and the NPPF.

#### **iv Transport Issues**

##### **Access**

9.21 The site is located between Old Wokingham Road and Hatch Ride with vehicular access proposed via a new junction onto Old Wokingham Road. Old Wokingham Road is a well-used important local distributor road which is located within the administrative area of Bracknell Forest Council and is subject to a 40mph speed limit. Due to the alignment and width of the road, speeds are expected to be at or around the limit. It is noted that the site currently has the ability to link onto Hatch Ride with the land outlined in the application.

9.22 The proposed access arrangements show a 5.5m wide access road with a 3m footway/cycleway on its southern side (subsequently reduced to a 2m footway) and a 2m footway on the north side. The applicant proposes to make alterations to the existing right turn lane into the northern access of the former TRL site to form a right turn lane creating a safe access into this site. The northern access for the TRL site is to be removed when that site is developed and thus the current proposal for two shorter right turn lanes serving each site respectively is only likely to be an interim measure until the northern TRL access is closed at which point the right turn lane into TRL will be redundant. As the current TRL access may be used for construction purposes the interim proposal retaining both right turn lanes is essential. The design of the right turn lanes that would be created broadly comply with current guidance and are acceptable for expected road speeds of around 38mph. Once the northern access to the TRL site is removed the right turn lane can be extended to comply with the speed limit of the road. The Highway Authority considers that the concept of this access proposal is acceptable in principle.

9.23 A 3.7m wide emergency access and cycleway is also proposed from Hatch Ride (entirely within WBC) and the applicant has indicated that this route would be adopted. The visibility from the main access junction is good in both directions complying with the splays already accepted as part of the TRL planning application. The detail of the emergency access with its junction with Hatch Ride is for the consideration of WBC as it falls within its administrative area.

9.24 The applicant originally proposed a pedestrian refuge to the north of the site access connecting the originally proposed cycle route along Old Wokingham Road to the proposed north-south cycleway that will be constructed as part of the TRL development. However this was considered unsuitable for inclusion as part of the current proposal as it did not link to any existing pedestrian or cycleway on the eastern side of Old Wokingham Road and would therefore have encouraged unsafe crossing movements. Furthermore the link to the proposed TRL cycleway would have been on the TRL site and thus not under the control of either the applicant or the Highway Authority. It is therefore considered that a stand alone facility within Wokingham

Borough that does not rely on the TRL route should be provided so that cyclists can safely head northwards to Nine Mile Ride.

9.25 The applicant has also proposed new cycle facilities south from the site towards Crowthorne village centre. This includes a cycleway from the site directly onto Hatch Ride and the upgrading of the footway from Hatch Ride to Rowan Drive to provide cyclists safe access to quieter residential roads leading to Crowthorne. In the longer term cyclists from this site would also be able to take advantage of the proposed north-south cycleway on the east side of Old Wokingham Road to be constructed as part of the TRL development. In order to provide a safe crossing point for pedestrians and cyclists to this cycleway as well as providing access to the future neighbourhood centre, bus stops and other amenities to be provided as part of the TRL development the Highway Authority has requested a financial contribution from this development towards the construction of a Toucan crossing of Old Wokingham Road in the vicinity of the Hatch Ride junction to be provided when the TRL development has reached an appropriate stage. This can be secured through a s106 obligation.

9.26 In order to provide a safe route for cyclists, alterations will also be required to the Hatch Ride/ Old Wokingham Road junction to provide a safe link from the new cycleway on the west side of Old Wokingham Road into Hatch Ride.

#### **Parking Requirements**

9.27 Parking within the site has been assessed by WBC which has concluded that adequate parking will be provided.

#### **Impact on the local highway network**

9.28 The proposal is likely to generate in the region of 65 two way trips in either peak period with a large percentage of the trips heading northwards towards the Old Wokingham Road/Nine Mile Ride junction. This junction suffers from congestion at peak periods and additional traffic could have a detrimental impact on this junction.

9.29 The applicant has undertaken an impact assessment (within the TA) on the local road network but has relied upon the work carried out for the redevelopment of the TRL site. Whilst such an approach would need to be considered, it should be noted that the TRL assessment considered certain committed developments, including the redevelopment of Bracknell Town centre as well as certain alterations to the road network around Bracknell which would have a bearing on traffic flows. In that regard the traffic flows of the Old Wokingham Road/Nine Mile Ride junction will change once future development has occurred.

9.30 However the applicant for the TRL proposals recognised that in the short term the operation of this junction was likely to remain stretched and thus a scheme to help alleviate pressure on the junction was prepared and subsequently agreed with BFC Highway Authority.

9.31 The applicant has, within the addendum TA, undertaken a further set of assessments of the existing junction with and without the TRL and the proposed development. A similar exercise has been undertaken for the mitigation scheme at the junction to establish what impact the improvements have. The work indicates that the improvements help mitigate the impact from both developments so that road conditions with the additional traffic are not severe with the junction generally operating better.

9.32 It is therefore considered reasonable to seek mitigation towards improvements to the Old Wokingham Road/Nine Mile Ride junction. As part of the proposal for the TRL development this junction improvement is required prior to the construction of any

dwelling to help cater for construction traffic and to ensure improvements are in place prior to any occupation. In that regard the provision of the junction improvement will be via a S278 agreement and is secured by condition. With this in mind the Highway Authority consider that it would be reasonable to deliver part of the proposed TRL improvement scheme, namely the improvements to the Old Wokingham Road southern arm as part of the present development. Such an improvement would cater for the additional traffic generated by this proposal but would not prejudice the remainder of the scheme once the former TRL site is developed.

9.33 Members are advised that this view is not currently shared by Officers at WBC. The proposed works to this junction have been reviewed by WBC Highway Authority which considers that whilst they would improve the situation ahead of the arrival of the TRL development, they are not considered necessary for this development to be approved and as such WBC Officers have not recommended a condition requiring this work to be undertaken. WBC Officers are of the opinion that “if BFC consider that there is a need, and can justify a planning condition, this can be secured through the application currently under consideration by Bracknell Forest”.

### **Bus Services**

9.34 In the longer term the TRL development will contribute to support bus services within the area. However in the shorter term BFC Highway Authority expect this development to support the provision of any service enhancements or new services to help enhance the sustainability of the site. Bus services are now covered by CIL. WBC will be collecting CIL payments from this development and discussions will be held with WBC Highway Authority to ensure the delivery of appropriate bus services for the area in both the short and long term. This may include focussing funding on services that could serve both developments.

### **v Flood Risk and Drainage**

9.35 The NPPF advocates a sequential approach to flood risk, establishing that development should be directed away from areas at highest risk and, where development is necessary in areas at risk of flooding, it should be made safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. The site is located in Flood Zone 1 where the risk of flooding is low and as such all forms of development - including ‘more vulnerable’ uses - are acceptable. Therefore, the proposal complies with the sequential test with regards flooding.

9.36. The Environment Agency has been consulted on the proposals and has raised “no objection” to the proposals subject to conditions. WBC Drainage Consultants have reviewed the drainage proposals for the site. The site drainage solution incorporates a series of drainage measures to help deal with surface water on the site. These include attenuation basins and a French drain surrounding the development and feeding into the basins. WBC Drainage has reviewed the proposals and considers that they are acceptable subject to conditions.

9.37 BFC Lead Local Flood Authority has also been consulted and originally raised concerns about the partial culverting of the ditch alongside Old Wokingham Road to accommodate the proposed cycleway and the lack of information in the drainage strategy about highway drainage. The removal of the cycleway has addressed the former concern and the LLFA is satisfied that the drainage issue can be adequately dealt with as part of the s278 highway works.

### **vi Biodiversity and SPA mitigation**

9.38 WBC has assessed the impact of the proposed development on biodiversity and the SPA. The WBC Ecologist considered the implications of this application against EC Habitats Directive 1992 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and has advised that, subject to conditions, this development is unlikely to adversely affect the local reptile population, bats or other species or to otherwise be detrimental to the ecological value of the site.

9.39 The northern half of the application site lies within an area allocated in the MDD as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). The SANG proposal designs are informed by Natural England's Design Guidance and will retain the woodland character as far as reasonably practical. There is to be a circular walking route created through the woodland to promote access to the SANG. The walking route will provide connectivity to the residential development, the Public Right of Way along the western boundary as well as to Old Wokingham Road and Nine Mile Ride. It will utilise existing tracks within the woodland to minimise the impact on the existing trees. A bridge is incorporated within the SANG to help promote access and this is considered acceptable.

9.40 The developer has proposed to provide the SANG on this site as a private SANG. Whilst this is not the traditional approach to SANG provision, Natural England has reviewed the SANG and considers that it has the potential to meet the requirements for a SANG subject to review of the funding and maintenance mechanisms in the S106. Maintenance of the SANG will be funded through the use of an annual service charge. The developer will be required to provide a contingency sum of circa £497,223 (the equivalent of 10 years maintenance costs), agree to step in rights for WBC should the SANG not be suitably maintained and to maintain the SANG to an acceptable standard.

9.41 In addition to the provision of an on-site SANG the applicant will also pay a SPA Access Management Contribution (SAMM) contribution towards the management and monitoring of strategic access to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. This will be collected by WBC.

## **vii Infrastructure and Services**

9.42 As no dwellings would be sited within Bracknell Forest the only issues relating to infrastructure provision to meet the needs of this development that affect BFC are in respect to education and highways. Highway issues have been dealt with above and include s278 works to improve the Old Wokingham Road/ Nine Mile Ride junction; the provision of a cycleway on the west side of Old Wokingham Road and a financial contribution towards the future provision of a Toucan crossing on Old Wokingham Road.

### **Education**

9.43 WBC has advised that the educational provisions required for this scheme will be made within Wokingham Borough, and WBC will collect a CIL payment towards this. This site is however complicated by the fact that it lies within the Designated Area (DA) of Edgbarrow School within Bracknell Forest. The expansion of Edgbarrow appears on the Council's CIL Regulation 123 list and therefore BFC is no longer able to collect s106 contributions towards this. Furthermore BFC cannot collect any CIL payments for this development as there is no floorspace within this Borough. BFC's LEA is seeking a financial contribution from WBC's LEA towards the provision of additional capacity at Edgbarrow School. This is a matter for the two LEAs to reach agreement on, but until the additional capacity at Edgbarrow School has been provided WBC will have to fund

and provide alternative arrangements for the provision of secondary education to accommodate the additional pupils generated by the proposed development.

9.44 Bracknell Forest Council introduced charging for its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on 6th April 2015. CIL applies to any new build and is applied as a charge on each square metre of new development. In this case there is no floorspace proposed within BFC and so far as BFC is concerned therefore the development is not CIL liable.

9.45 However WBC also introduced charging for its CIL on 6th April 2015. This application is CIL Liable within WBC. CIL will provide infrastructure including highway improvements and education improvements in accordance with WBC's Regulation 123 list.

9.46 In addition to its CIL Liability, WBC is seeking commuted sums for the ongoing maintenance of the public spaces on the development. This together with the provision of an appropriate element of affordable housing will be secured by a s106 agreement. WBC has agreed that a maintenance contribution is not required for the SANG as this is to be provided privately. As noted above BFC is also seeking a s106 obligation in respect of a financial contribution towards a Toucan crossing on Old Wokingham Road.

## **viii Other issues**

### **Archaeology**

9.47 Berkshire Archaeology are satisfied with the initial archaeological information provided and have recommended that a post-determination field evaluation be undertaken. An acceptable Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for a field evaluation has been prepared by the applicant's archaeological consultant. This approach is considered appropriate to mitigate the impacts of the development proposal on the buried archaeological heritage in accordance with local and national planning policy subject to an appropriate condition being imposed.

### **Land Affected by Contamination**

9.48 The proposed end use is sensitive in nature being residential with private gardens. There is no record of any known pollution or contamination on this site. In accordance with the NPPF, the possibility of contamination should be considered on a precautionary basis when considering sensitive proposals such as residential in accordance with the NPPF and the precautionary principle. A Ground Appraisal Report has been submitted with the application. This provides an assessment of potential contamination at the subject site which includes a Phase 1 Desk Study with Conceptual Site Model and site walkover survey as well as a preliminary intrusive investigation comprising soil sampling and chemical testing. This meets the minimum requirements of the NPPF with respect to the assessment of land affected by contamination.

9.49. The Phase 1 Desk Study did not identify any sources of potential contamination on or in the immediate vicinity of the site which could give rise to contamination. However, a small number of exploratory holes were undertaken on site and soil samples submitted for chemical analysis as a precaution. No concentrations of contaminants were recorded above their guideline values for a residential end use and the report concluded that no further works are required.

9.50. WBC consider that an insufficient number of exploratory locations and samples were undertaken across the site for even a preliminary investigation to inform a suitable



and reliable human health risk assessment. However, as no potential sources of contamination were identified on or in the vicinity of the site, and no Made Ground was recorded WBC consider that it is unlikely that significant contamination is present at the site which would present an unacceptable risk to end users.

## **10. CONCLUSIONS**

10.1 The proposal is for the erection of 116 dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping, SANG and ancillary features. The site is allocated by WBC in its Development Plan for housing. The application has been subject to various revisions. The amendments to the scheme saw the removal of seven proposed dwellings from the site, the removal of a cycleway along Old Wokingham Road and the re-orientation of a number of the units to better address the streets and open spaces as well as the formation of a vegetative buffer to the south of the site.

10.2 Although this site is allocated for housing in WBC's Development Plan, and therefore the principle of the development is considered acceptable, the MDD did not consider how the site would be accessed. The proposed access onto Old Wokingham Road is considered by your Officers to undermine an important landscape buffer allowing views of the housing from Old Wokingham Road. As such the proposed development is considered to result in harm to the character and appearance of the area and in particular to the character of Old Wokingham Road.

10.3 Notwithstanding the above it is necessary to consider whether there are any other material considerations that may outweigh this harm in order to make a balanced decision. As this is an allocated site within WBC and BFC did not raise any objection in principle to this allocation it is considered unreasonable to obstruct the delivery of this allocated site unless very significant harm would result. In view of this your Officers have carefully considered whether there are any more suitable access points to this site that would result in less harm.

10.4 One alternative access point is the proposed emergency access/ cycleway onto Hatch Ride which would enable the landscape buffer to be retained intact, resulting in significantly less harm to the character and appearance of Old Wokingham Road. Having considered the views of the applicant about this alternative access to Hatch Ride and visited this on site it is acknowledged that the corridor through which the access road and footways would need to go passes in close proximity to existing dwellings. The applicant has also stated that as part of the pre-application community consultation undertaken by the applicant, the view of local residents was that (while clearly strongly objecting in principle to the development) they were likely to find an access onto Old Wokingham Road preferable to one onto Hatch Ride. It is therefore considered that an access onto Hatch Ride, while acceptable in highway terms, may not be regarded as ideal by local residents, neither will it resolve their concerns about this development.

10.5 Your Officers therefore find themselves in the somewhat difficult position of having to balance the harm to the character of Old Wokingham Road and the undermining of the landscape buffer required by the MDD against the need for cooperation with a neighbouring Council to deliver its housing land supply, the need to avoid jeopardising the delivery of an allocated housing site, the need to make provision for the general need for housing in the area and the need to take account of the perceived negative impact on local residents from an access onto Hatch Ride. On balance it is considered that the harm identified is outweighed by these other material considerations. This view is strengthened by the willingness of the applicant to make amendments to the scheme to reduce the harm identified. In conclusion therefore subject to the provision of

mitigation measures set out in the suggested conditions and obligations below, approval is recommended.

## 11. RECOMMENDATION

That the application be **APPROVED** subject to the completion of a satisfactory S106 Obligation to secure a financial contribution towards a Toucan crossing on Old Wokingham Road and the following conditions amended, added to or deleted as the Head of Planning considers necessary:-

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.  
REASON: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out only in accordance with the following approved plans XXX received by the Local Planning Authority on  
REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority.
03. Prior to the commencement of the development (including tree felling), full details of the location and specification of any footpaths, bridges, tree protection measures, management responsibilities (including timescales and maintenance schedules) and details of new planting within that part of the landscape buffer adjacent to Old Wokingham Road that falls within the Borough of Bracknell Forest shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, ground levels adjacent to trees and an implementation timetable. All landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.  
REASON: - In the interests of the visual amenity of the area and to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved.  
[Relevant Policies: BFBLP EN1, EN2 and EN20, CSDPD CS7]
04. No trees, shrubs or hedges shown as being retained on the details approved under condition 03 shall be felled, uprooted, wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the Local Planning Authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.  
REASON: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area.  
[Relevant Policies: BFBLP EN1, EN2 and EN20, CSDPD CS7]
05. No development shall take place, including any works of site clearance, until a

Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:

- i) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors,
- ii) loading and unloading of plant and materials,
- iii) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development,
- iv) The phasing of construction
- v) Lorry routing
- vi) types of piling rig and earth moving machinery to be utilised and measures proposed to mitigate the impact of construction operations
- vii) measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction,
- viii) measures to prevent the deposit of materials on the highway and details of wheel washing facilities

REASON: To safeguard amenity of neighbouring properties

06. No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place other than between the hours of 8.00 am and 6.00pm Monday to Friday and 8.00 am to 13.00pm Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.  
REASON: To safeguard amenity of neighbouring properties.
07. Prior to the occupation of any dwelling on the site, an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) shall be laid out in accordance with the approved SANG Management Plan and made available for use by the public.  
REASON: To mitigate for potential harm caused to the Thames Basin Heath SPA.  
Relevant Policy: South East Plan NRM6.
08. No development (other than tree felling) shall commence until a programme of archaeological evaluation in accordance with the written scheme of investigation prepared by West Sussex Archaeology and dated June 2014 (or an equivalent scheme) which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority. The archaeological evaluation results shall inform archaeological mitigation measures that may subsequently be required, which will be submitted to the Planning Authority for agreement in writing.  
REASON: The site lies in an area of archaeological potential.  
[Relevant Policies: BFBLP EN6, EN7]
09. No development (other than the construction of the access) shall take place until the access onto Old Wokingham Road has been constructed in accordance with the approved plans.  
REASON: In the interests of highway safety.  
[Relevant Policies: Core Strategy DPD CS23]
10. The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) compiled by Odyssey Markides LLP, and the mitigation measures detailed within the FRA. The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and in accordance with the approved timing / phasing arrangements, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.

REASON: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site in accordance with paragraph 103 of the NPPF.

11. No dwelling shall be constructed to practical completion on the site until the following highway works have been completed:
    - a. improvements to the Nine Mile Ride/ Old Wokingham Road junction in general accordance with the works shown on drawings (Plan No's to follow);
    - b. construction of a cycle way on the west side of Old Wokingham Road between Rowan Drive and Hatch Ride in general accordance with the works shown on drawing (Plan No's to follow);
    - c. improvements to the Old Wokingham Road/ Hatch Ride junction, incorporating safe provision for cyclists between the conclusion of the cycle way required under point b. and Hatch Ride in general accordance with the works shown on drawings (Plan No's to follow);
    - d. the clearing and reinstating as required of the existing footway on the west side of Old Wokingham Road to its original width where it is encroached by vegetation, and the clearing of vegetation from the ditch.
- REASON: In the interests of road safety and the amenities of the locality.  
[Relevant Policy: CS CS23; BFBLP M4]

Doc. Ref: Uniform 7/DC/Agenda

The application file to which this report relates can be viewed at the Council's Time Square office during office hours or online at [www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk)