**IMPORTANT POINTS TO NOTE**

* You should personalise and amend this content as you wish, including the parts which make most sense / are most important to you, plus any other points you want to add.
* Do not just send it in as is, as WBC may ignore responses which are exactly the same and treat them all as one response
* You must include your name and postal address
* You can attach your response to an email to lpu@wokingham.gov.uk as a document; put it straight into an email; or complete and send in the Representation Form we are sending to you with this document. If you use this Form, you just need to complete the first page, then page 6 headed ‘**PROPOSED SITE ALLOCATIONS FOR RESIDENTIAL / MIXED DEVELOPMENT’** with the site name ‘Rooks Nest Farm and 24 Barkham Ride’.
* Whatever way you choose to respond, you can of course comment on other aspects of the LPU Revised Growth Strategy

**Suggested points on which to base your response**

**Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan Update
Proposed site allocation 5BA032,33 – Rooks Nest Farm and 24 Barkham Ride**

I wish to register my objection to the proposed site allocation 5BA032,33 Land at Rooks Nest Farm and land at 24 Barkham Ride. My objection is on the following grounds:

1. **This site is unsustainable.**

The Borough Design Guide SPD notes that if places are to be sustainable, then the aim should be to create walkable neighbourhoods, with a range of facilities within ten minutes’ walking distance of residential areas to encourage people to travel on foot or by bicycle. This is echoed in the Government’s Manual for Streets which advises that walking offers the greatest potential to replace short car journeys, particularly those under 2km. This also sets out that walkable neighbourhoods are typically characterised by having a range of facilities within ten minutes (equating to roughly 800m distance). The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation’s (CIHT) recommended maximum walking distance to shops and facilities is between 800m and 1,200m, the former being viewed as ‘acceptable’ and reflecting the advice in the Manual for Streets, with 1200m being a preferred maximum.

WBC relied upon this definition in defending against an appeal for a proposed development at Johnson Drive, Finchampstead
(Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/18/3205487)

The only local facility in this case is a convenience store on Barkham Ride. Although the entrance to the proposed development site is around 800 metres from this store, the rear of the site would be nearly 1,400 m from the same store.

The decision of the inspector at the appeal relating to Johnson Drive noted that *“I am not therefore convinced that, for many, the locational characteristics of the appeal site relative to the range of nearest facilities would represent a realistic everyday walking choice”,* this with reference to Nine Mile Ride, a local ‘B’ road near to and very similar in usage to Barkham Ride.

* There is no footpath along this section of Barkham Ride.
* There is no cycle way along Barkham Ride.
* There is only a limited bus service.
* Therefore, the only viable way for people to access this proposed site will be
 by car.
1. **Increased traffic congestion**

I understand that there is expected to be an average of 1.8 cars per household. With 270 houses at Rooks Nest Farm and the proposed site allocation of 70 houses at 31-33 Barkham Ride, this would mean over 600 additional cars using Barkham Ride.

Barkham Ride is narrow in places with several bends. It is already severely congested at peak times both at the junction with B3016 Finchampstead Road at one end and with B3349 Barkham Road at the other. There have been 60 sets of temporary roadworks since 2019 on this road, mostly due to the need for repair work. It is essentially a small rural road and cannot cope with this current level of traffic.

1. **Joining up of settlements**

WBC set out the objectives of the LPU in their document ‘Right Homes, Right Places’. In section 3 - ‘Vision & Objectives’, point 4 sets out the objective to:
*‘Maintain and strengthen the sense of place by securing quality designed development through protecting and enhancing the distinctive historic environment, landscape character, townscape character and biodiversity value, assisting vibrancy, and by keeping settlements separate’.*

This proposed site allocation, together with the creation of the Solar Farm at Rooks Nest Farm will completely close the existing extensive ‘green gap’ between Finchampstead and Barkham, leading to an area of continuous development extending from Crowthorne to Arborfield. This is not consistent with the objective in the LPU to ‘keep settlements separate’.

The separation of settlements was the key factor in WBC’s successful defence against the appeal by Gladman for their proposal to build around 100 houses in front of Sand Martins Golf Course (Appeal A: APP/X0360/W/18/3213163 Land west of Finchampstead Road). For WBC to allow development at Rooks Nest Farm would be inconsistent with its own policies.

1. **Impact on and loss of countryside and views**

A housing development of this scale at the proposed location would adversely affect the rural aspect of Finchampstead Bridlepath 46, which runs immediately adjacent to the proposed site, and to the California Greenway, which also runs adjacent to the site and to the planned Solar Farm site. The character of and views from both of these well used local paths will be adversely affected.

The addition of 340 houses and all the associated residents on the two sites along Barkham Ride would place additional pressure on the already well used Rooks Nest Woods Country Park and the California Country Park.

1. **Community consultation and Neighbourhood Development Plans**

A combined Local Neighbourhood Development Plan for Arborfield and Barkham Parishes was supported by the Borough Council and approved by a referendum in 2020. This made no provision for or mention of a proposed site allocation at Rooks Nest Farm. This proposal therefore contravenes the Barkham & Arborfield NDP and the wishes of that community.

The team producing the emerging Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP) were not aware that 270 houses were being proposed for Rooks Nest Farm. A community consultation took place in October to November 2021 and included proposed housing site allocations in the Parish. If the FNDP team had been aware of the Rooks Nest Farm proposals this would have been taken into account when considering the potential sites to be put forward.