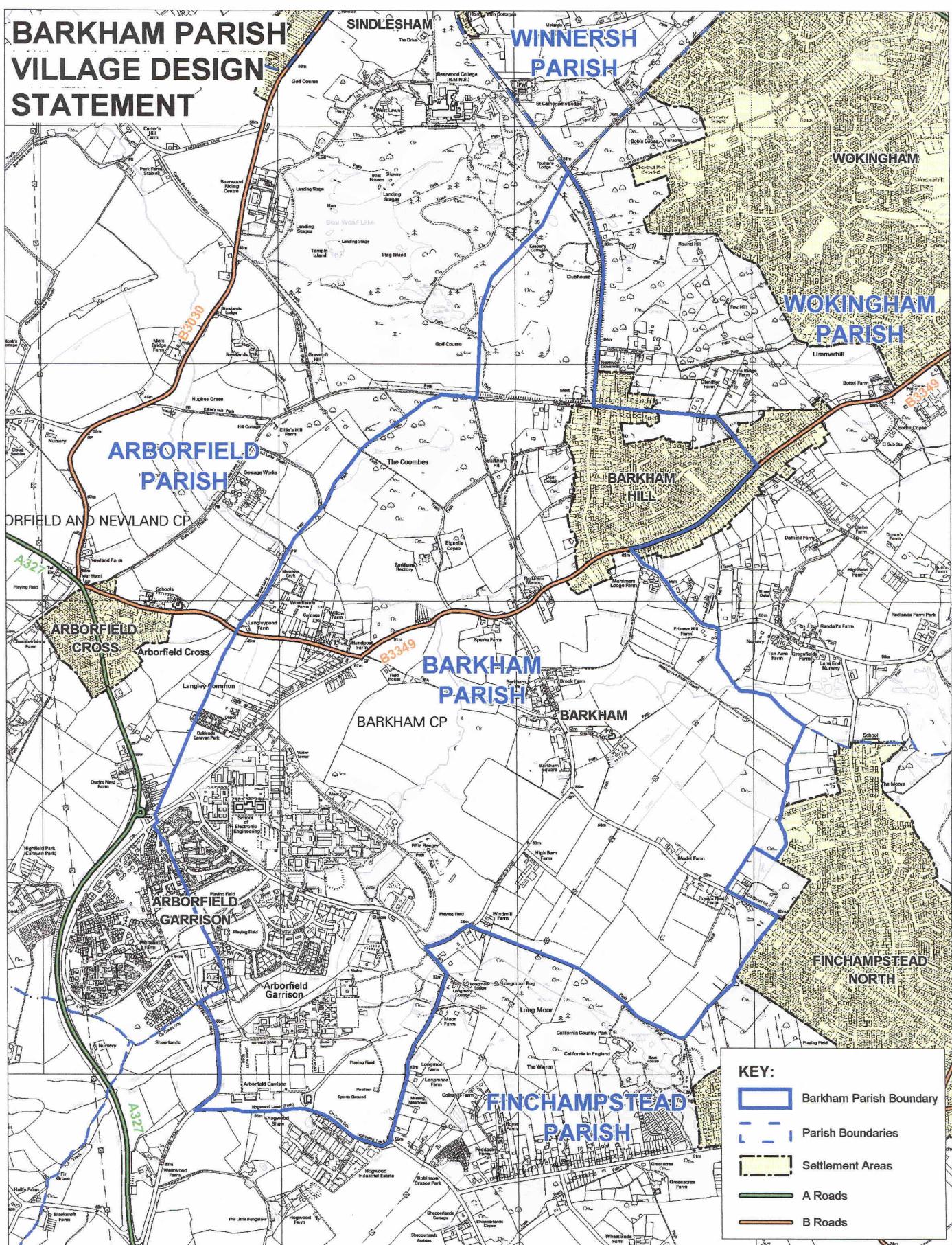


# Barkham Village Design Statement



Making local character count in local development

# BARKHAM PARISH VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT



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Wokingham District Council. September 2006



WOKINGHAM  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



## INTRODUCTION

### The Character of Barkham

The real character of Barkham lies in its diversity, together with the attractive landscape comprising farmland and woodland that still cover the majority of the parish. The absence of any predominant style of vernacular architecture and the great variety of building designs contribute to this diversity. Barkham's character also reflects its scattered settlement pattern and the lack of the usual nucleated structure expected in an English village.

Houses in Barkham generally sit in the landscape, rather than on the landscape. This is a consequence of:

- Relatively low density
- Variety of building designs
- Green canopy of trees
- Setting of properties back from the road
- One or two storeys only
- Predominance of dormer style upper windows.

These features contribute towards the rural qualities of Barkham and the sense of individuality that comes from the majority of houses being different from their neighbours.

Consequently respect for these features, in accordance with the Design Guidelines below, should be encouraged with a view to preserving Barkham's special character.

It should also be noted that there are two compact areas within the parish that have their own distinct character. These are Elizabeth Park, a 1980s housing development, and that part of Arborfield Garrison that is within Barkham. In both these neighbourhoods there is higher housing density and less variety in design. The residential part of Arborfield Garrison is notable for its own distinctive architectural style. The Barkham VDS Design Guidelines also take account of the differing identities of these two areas.

### How the VDS was Developed

The Barkham Village Design Statement has been produced by the people of the parish following an assessment of local character. It is intended for use in the development control process, so as to encourage sympathetic design criteria for any development in the village. The Barkham VDS is a means for local people to contribute to the planning process and to help manage change in their community.

Whilst some change in the parish is inevitable, the people of Barkham value their environment and landscape and wish to ensure that its special character will be retained or enhanced by any new buildings or extensions.

Outside the Barkham Hill/Elizabeth Park and the Arborfield Garrison settlement areas, the parish is designated as Green Gap and Wedge. Any further development in Barkham Hill and Elizabeth Park will be limited, while there may be extensive development at Arborfield Garrison if the Ministry of Defence vacates the site.

Consultation within the village itself has been wide, including an open day at which residents were able to complete a questionnaire. Other interested parties have been consulted, including landowners, developers and utilities. The process of consultation is summarised on page 20.

### What Matters to Village People

The questionnaire gave residents the chance to express their views about living in Barkham. They were invited to say what they liked. The unprompted responses build a striking picture of a place appreciated for its countryside and with a genuine sense of community. However there are worries about the pace of development in the area and the threat of encroaching urbanisation.

- Overwhelmingly villagers cited "green" issues, including Barkham's semi-rural character, the countryside, trees and walks, which it was felt should be protected.
- Villagers feel that Barkham is a friendly place. Despite its fragmented settlement structure there is a strong sense of a village community.
- Access by private car is also considered important, be it to the M3 or M4, Wokingham or Reading or their respective railway stations.

The concerns of villagers are primarily the way that the pressure of development is affecting their quality of life. Foremost amongst these concerns are the threat to Barkham's semi-rural character, the impact of over-intensive infill development, the ability of the limited local infrastructure to cope and the ever increasing flow of through traffic that has turned once quiet rural lanes into busy thoroughfares, close to gridlock at peak times.

### What is a Village Design Statement ?

- It is a document prepared by local people to provide design criteria for the appearance of buildings, including extensions and replacements of existing buildings.
- It is NOT the purpose of a VDS to provide guidance on whether or not new development should take place, which is a planning issue.
- For further information see [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk) and search for "village design statement."

## SOME BUILDINGS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE



**Church of St James the Apostle**

The church was rebuilt by the Victorians. The new church was built in early medieval style, the western end faced with flint with stone dressings and the chancel being of grey Portland stone with Bath-stone facings.



**Barkham Manor**

Very much a Barkham style of building, the Manor sits comfortably in the landscape and its features disguise its size. It is one of two listed mansion houses in the parish, the other being Barkham Square. The house and outbuildings have been converted into residential units.



**The Bull**

This Grade II listed inn was rebuilt twice in the 18th century. Its varied roof lines are both charming and a visual reminder of its history. A recent kitchen extension has enhanced, not marred, its appearance.



**Church Cottages**

Church Cottages is a late 15th century timber-framed open hall house on a moated site. Several hundred years ago the walls were faced with Flemish Bond brickwork, including several band courses and dogtooth dentilations under the eaves.



**The Old Rectory**

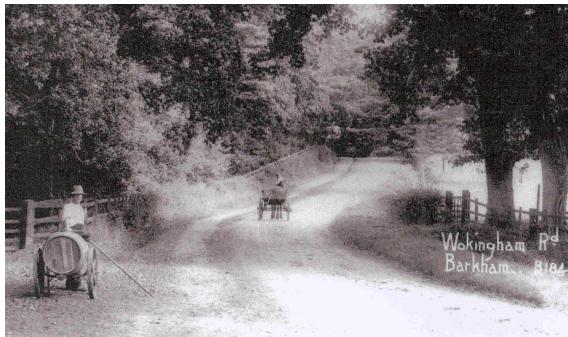
Built in the Victorian era, the Old Rectory is typical of 19th century domestic ecclesiastical architecture. The eye-catching gables are distinguished by highly decorated bargeboards. Yellow glazed brick has been used very effectively with black mortar around the sash windows.



**Coppid Hill Cottages**

These attractive red brick cottages are a distinctive feature of Barkham, easily recognisable with their three gables. The date of construction, 1852, is recorded in the brick decoration. Other unusual features include the tall chimneys and mouldings above the windows.

## HOW BARKHAM HAS EVOLVED



Coppid Hill a hundred years ago



...and today, early morning

### Landscape History

Barkham lies in the Loddon valley, which flows into the River Thames. Low gravel hills in the north of the parish descend to level clay land in the south drained by the Barkham Brook. The ancient woodland that originally covered Barkham was partially cleared in prehistory and remained predominantly wooded until medieval times.

Landholdings were consolidated and land was increasingly enclosed in fields, often irregular in shape. The 1821 enclosure award resulted in common land and heathland covering 29% of the parish being enclosed to produce the more geometric field pattern that exists today. The mixed farming of the past has now been replaced by beef cattle and sheep, with paddocks for equestrian recreation near settlement areas.

The parish was intersected by a network of ancient paths and droveways linking small, scattered farmsteads, fields and the parish church. Today some of these routes are busy through roads.

A number of veteran oak trees several hundred years old remain, both within field boundaries and beside the roads. Some old relic hedgerows also survive. The remaining extensive woodlands in the north of the parish, known as The Coombes, are an Area of Landscape Importance.

### Changes During the Twentieth Century

In 1904 the Army established a cavalry remount depot on farmland in the southwest of the parish. After World War I, Berkshire County Council purchased 374 acres in southeast Barkham for letting to returning servicemen as statutory smallholdings. This is the reason why the southeast of the parish remains an unspoilt area of farmland and open countryside.

The remount depot became the largest employer in the locality, covering over 400 acres, before its closure in 1937. In World War II the facilities were taken over by the newly formed Army Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. The REME establishment at Arborfield Garrison today is characterised by distinctive institutional military buildings within security fencing, two barracks and housing estates for army personnel.

### Social History

Barkham's earliest recorded name, in a Saxon charter of AD 952, of Beorchamme (birch tree meadow) suggests that it began as a clearing in the woods. The manor is also mentioned in Domesday (1086) when it was part of the Royal Forest of Windsor. Up to modern times Barkham remained predominantly an agricultural parish with a settlement pattern of dispersed farms.

There has been a church since medieval times, adjacent to the moated medieval manor house on the site of the present Church Cottages. There are only two mansion houses, Barkham Manor (rebuilt in the late 18th century) and Barkham Square (built in the 1740s).

Barkham's small population and relative isolation is reflected in there being only one alehouse, The Bull, whose landlord was often also the village blacksmith. The old smithy was converted into a restaurant in 1982.

A small school was established by Henry Clive MP of Barkham Manor about 1814. His widow, Charlotte, was the primary benefactress of the cost of rebuilding the parish church in 1861 which remained the focal point for many parish activities up to modern times.

In the 1860s and 1870s the majority of the land in Barkham was bought by John Walter III MP, of Bear Wood, chief proprietor of *The Times*, and managed as part of his 7,000 acre estate. Several estate houses in the parish date from this period.

Housing began to grow, mainly as ribbon development, particularly along Barkham Road, Bearwood Road, Langley Common Road and School Road. This process began in the 1920s and continued, usually as individual houses and bungalows. This accounts for the wide variety of housing styles.

Elizabeth Park, in the northeast of the parish, is a major housing development built in 1984-1989 so as to meet the Wokingham District housing target.

The population of Barkham, consequently, has grown rapidly during the 20th century. In 1921 the population was only 211. During the next fifty years there was steady growth so that the 1971 census showed a count of 1,858. By the time of the 2001 census, the population had almost doubled again to 3,511.

## THE PARISH TODAY



The Coombes in spring



Haymaking in summer

### Boundaries

The official boundaries of Barkham lack clarity, especially as the parish and ward boundaries are different and neither truly coincides with the settlement pattern. This means that there are areas which think of themselves as being part of Barkham but which are outside one or both of the official boundaries. Such areas include the north side of

Sandy Lane, Limmer Close, Highland Avenue, The Shires, Doles Lane, and parts of Barkham Road including the whole of the south side east of Edney's Hill. On the other hand, the parish includes a large part, but not all, of Arborfield Garrison, an area that is a distinct community.

### Village Structure

Barkham evolved as a thinly populated agricultural community characterised by a landscape of scattered farmsteads. A village centre never developed. The Parish Church to the southeast of Barkham Street is relatively isolated, whilst the sole public house, The Bull, is half-a-mile distant at the northern end of Barkham Street.

The larger part of the parish is farmland, particularly south of Langley Common Road/Barkham Road, whilst in the north of the parish there is extensive woodland, known as The Coombes, which is an Area of Landscape Importance. Most of Barkham is in the outer 5 km zone of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area: this has some development implications, in particular the requirement for appropriate impact assessment.

The parish can be divided into the following five settlement areas. Two of these areas are contiguous, namely Barkham Hill and Elizabeth Park, but otherwise they are all separated by open countryside.

- Old Barkham comprises the extensive farmland south of Langley Common Road/Barkham Road together with Barkham Manor and Rectory Lane north of Barkham Road. Many of the properties

in Old Barkham were built in the 18th and 19th centuries or earlier. The area from the parish church along Barkham Street to Barkham Manor is designated an Area of Special Character. There are fewer than 50 dwellings in Old Barkham.

- Barkham Hill lies to the north. It includes Bearwood Road, Sandy Lane and the north side of Barkham Road, together with Coppid Hill. The area grew piecemeal through the last century. There are now roughly 200 houses in this area.
- Elizabeth Park was built in phases during the late 1980s, on land behind the Barkham Hill settlement. In total 365 houses were built.
- Langley Common includes Langley Common Road and School Road. Like Barkham Hill, this is an area that has also developed piecemeal through the last century. There are approximately 100 dwellings in this area.
- Arborfield Garrison – the eastern part, including the military facilities and most of the army housing, is actually in Barkham. The number of houses in Arborfield Garrison that are within Barkham is approximately 290.

### Employment

Barkham is essentially a "dormitory" village with the majority of the adult residents commuting from the parish to their place of work in Wokingham, or elsewhere in the Thames Valley or in the London

area. The proportion of "home workers" and retired inhabitants is increasing. Local employment within the parish, apart from the military establishment at Arborfield Garrison, is very limited.



Congestion in Barkham Street



Barkham lanes are well used for recreation

### Transport

Two main transport routes traverse Barkham:

- The main east-west route is Barkham Road and Langley Common Road. This is the main artery between the west of Wokingham and the A327 corridor. It carries dense traffic to and from the town, including heavy goods traffic accessing the industrial area around Molly Millars Lane.
- The main north-south route is Bearwood Road, a short part of Barkham Road and Barkham Street leading into Barkham Ride. This corridor is used by traffic seeking to avoid Wokingham, providing a route connecting Finchampstead, an area that has seen a large housing increase in recent years, to Reading and the M4.

Both routes experience very high traffic volumes, especially in the morning and evening peak periods. As they have become through routes, traffic speeds tend to be high. Barkham Road is classified as a B road but Bearwood Road and Barkham Street are unclassified. Width restrictions apply to both Barkham Street and Barkham Ride.

The roads around Barkham were, until relatively recent times, lanes used by local traffic. Today many houses in the parish have effectively become isolated islands because of the almost constant

stream of through traffic. Pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists are particularly at risk; movement at peak times can only safely be carried out by car, hedges are damaged continuously by accidents and large lorries are constantly eroding soft verges.

Car ownership per household is high. 62% of households in Barkham own two or more cars; only 5% have no car.

Public transport is limited. There is an hourly daytime bus service (Sundays excepted) between Wokingham and Reading, which goes along Barkham Road, Barkham Street and Barkham Ride and then (via Finchampstead) through Arborfield Garrison. There are extra evening buses between Arborfield Garrison and Reading. Usage by Barkham residents is low due to the high fare for the short leg into Wokingham, the circuitous route to and from Reading and the early time of the last bus from Reading. The service is more heavily used on the Arborfield Garrison to Reading leg.

Being short of a full range of community facilities, and some distance from either Wokingham or Winnersh, Barkham is not a very sustainable location. As such the private car inevitably forms the dominant travel mode here.

### Recreational Routes

Many of Barkham's country lanes are well used for leisure purposes. In particular Sandy Lane, Coombes Lane and Hayes Lane, along with the many bridleways, are well used by horse traffic originating from the various livery stables in the area,

as well as by cyclists and runners. These routes and the extensive network of footpaths are popular with ramblers and dog-walkers. Commonfield Lane and Barkham Ride are both part of the Round Berkshire Cycle Route.

### Amenities

Outside the Garrison, local amenities include a sub post office, one pub-cum-restaurant, several stables and a village hall adjacent to the Parish Church. The infant and junior schools for Barkham children are located just outside the parish at Arborfield Cross, and the four surgeries serving Barkham residents are all outside the parish.

The Village Hall is well used by local residents and organisations for a wide range of recreational, educational and social activities. These include local clubs and groups such as pilates and dog training, a

play group and pre-school, Brownies and a youth group as well as private functions. The grassed area is popular for fêtes, barbecues and other outdoor activities.

The main amenity spaces are the extensive woodlands known as The Coombes and the open spaces adjoining The Junipers in Elizabeth Park. The latter also includes a children's play area and a grassed field suited for ball games. Bearwood Lakes Golf Course is partly within the parish including the clubhouse itself.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND WILDLIFE



Ancient oaks and farmland seen from Coppid Hill

### Landscape

The parish of Barkham lies principally on open farmland rising gently towards the ridge known as Barkham Hill in the north of the parish. It is crossed by Barkham Brook. The northern ridge is largely covered by extensive woodland known as The Coombes, now a Wildlife Heritage Site and, with the adjacent fields, an Area of Landscape Importance.

Barkham boasts a number of significant landscape features and views.

- From the bridleway skirting the southern edge of The Coombes there is a classic pastoral view across the fields above Barkham Manor towards the wooded Finchampstead Ridges on the horizon.
- From the footpath crossing Edney's Hill there

is a splendid panoramic view from the brow of the hill towards Finchampstead Ridges across the partially wooded farmland of Old Barkham. The brow of Coppid Hill from Barkham Road affords similar fine views.

- The northern entry to Barkham along Bearwood Road is part of a magnificent Rhododendron drive planted by John Walter III of Bear Wood in the 19th century. It bursts into a profusion of beautiful purple flowers in late spring.
- Crossing the farmland southeast of Edney's Hill is a fine avenue of lime trees known as Nash Grove Ride which was planted by John Walter III in the 1880s as part of a drive towards Crowthorne.

### Trees and Hedges

Native broadleaf trees have always been prominent in the Barkham landscape. Large oak trees are a typical feature along roadsides and field boundaries as well as in gardens. The oaks lining School Road where it approaches Langley Pond Farm are so close that in summer the tree canopy becomes a lofty leafy archway. Beech, ash, holly and birch trees are also common, especially in The Coombes. Willows are to be found close to water.

Hedges of blackthorn, hawthorn, field maple, hazel, elder, holly, briar, hop and bramble form boundaries to fields and lanes. The white blossom of the blackthorn, which gives way to the creamy

hawthorn blossom, are a particularly attractive sight in springtime, whilst in autumn the blackthorn bushes are laden with sloes.

In early spring beautiful clusters of primroses can be found along the ditches marking field boundaries. Bluebells are common in shady areas throughout the parish, particularly in The Coombes where they create a shimmering carpet of blue as sunlight pierces the tree canopy. The Coombes is also home to several species of wild orchids, including the Common Spotted Orchid.

### Wildlife

The extensive areas of farmland and woodland provide a home for a variety of wildlife. Roe deer, foxes, grey squirrels and rabbits are commonly to be seen. Other wildlife includes muntjac, badgers, stoats and weasels. The local habitats support four species of bats, including the whiskered and Daubenton's.

The bird population is very varied. The heron is a common visitor as is the cuckoo in spring, and in high summer red kites may be seen from time to time wheeling high overhead. Green woodpeckers are regular garden visitors, drilling holes in lawns

in search of insects, and great spotted woodpeckers and jays are also common. In mature gardens nuthatches may be observed descending trees head downward. Blackbirds, thrushes, robins, wrens, finches and tits are also habitually found in hedgerows and gardens. The Barkham farmland attracts skylarks (with their distinctive warbling song) in summer and fieldfares in winter.

Residents regard the preservation of these habitats as vitally important to the rural character of Barkham and its quality of life.



Veteran oak in The Coombes

### Landscape Character Assessment

In the Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment, the majority of the parish is included in the Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay area (J2). This landscape is classified as having "modest capacity to accommodate change without detriment to character within an overall objective to enhance existing character. The key characteristics to be retained/respected in any change are the historic field system, habitats, moats, rural lanes and wooded valleys. Enhancements should include attempting better integration of the garrison in its landscape setting, and more general improvements to woodland, farmland and habitat management."

The following is a summary of the management guidelines most relevant to Barkham in the Landscape Assessment:

- Conserve (and where appropriate reinstate) hedgerows
- Conserve all ancient woodland sites and promote appropriate management including natural regeneration
- Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland
- Conserve remaining important wetland habitats (e.g. Barkham Brook)
- Consider a tree planting programme to plan for the next generation of hedgerow and roadside trees
- Pony paddocks to be sensitive to existing landscape character (e.g. retaining hedgerows)
- Protect the individual identity of settlements by conserving the rural character of the landscape between adjacent towns and village centres and avoiding amalgamation or ribbon development
- Conserve historic buildings
- Encourage use of local styles and vernacular materials in new buildings

- Consider possibilities for woodland creation in urban fringe areas
- Maintain the historic leafy lanes with their ancient oaks and soft verges
- Consider the use of traffic calming and access restrictions to maintain the tranquillity of the most rural areas
- Particular care should be taken in the siting of communication masts, pylons and poles.

The northern part of the parish, including The Coombes and Sandy Lane, is included in the Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills area (L1). This landscape is classified as having "limited capacity to accommodate change without detriment to character within an overall objective to conserve and strengthen existing character. The key characteristic to be conserved through ongoing management is the woodland. The character and condition of the Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills could be strengthened through, for example, enhancements to lake and woodland habitats."

The following additional management guidelines in the Landscape Assessment are relevant to northern Barkham:

- Conserve and protect the pasture in The Coombes and encourage appropriate management of grassland for grazing
- Conserve and maintain the rural and undeveloped character of the area in relation to Wokingham
- Preserve the woodland that is currently acting as a buffer to the outer edge of Wokingham
- Consider the impact of any development on skylines where it would have the potential to be highly visible from adjacent character areas
- Avoid the creation of any new roads through the area.

## SOME BUILDINGS OF CURRENT INTEREST



**Bearwood Lodge**

One of the newest buildings in Barkham, it was built on the footprint of a 19th century lodge. The new house has a variety of interesting features including an old style chimney and a modern full height atrium at the rear.



**Barn Conversion**

The illustration shows a sympathetic conversion of a barn in Langley Common to residential use. It retains the original brickwork and is adjacent to a fine 19th century farmhouse.



**Bridge Cottages**

Built as unassuming 1920s council houses, the attraction of Bridge Cottages is the way they sit in the landscape with The Coombes as a backdrop. At Christmas they are illuminated en masse with a stunning display of lights.



**The Woodlands, Elizabeth Park**

Houses in The Woodlands show how developers can achieve a landscaped environment in a modern estate. Also notable is the way the low ridgelines disguise the scale of these sizeable homes.



**Pre-War Bungalow in Barkham Hill**

The attractive bungalow illustrated is similar to many built along Barkham's roads during the 1920s and 1930s. The rich colour of the paintwork makes an unusual but stylish facade.



**Hamilton House**

Situated in Hayes Lane, this modern house exhibits many features recommended in the VDS, including a low roof with gables. It is set back from the lane with plenty of parking and is well landscaped to blend with its rural location. Next door is one of the village's oldest cottages.

## DESIGNS IN THE SETTLEMENT AREAS

### Old Barkham



The Bailiff's Cottage



The old granary in Barkham Street

Old Barkham is the heart of rural Barkham. Barkham Road is on the northern edge and the area is intersected by Barkham Street. The older buildings in the parish are mainly to be found in the envelope around Barkham Manor, Barkham Street and Church Lane, which has been designated as an Area of Special Character. St James Church and the more recently constructed Village Hall form the village nucleus, along with the Bull Public House further north.

The area is largely open farmland and benefits from the impressive woodland backdrop of The Coombes to the north. There are also splendid views from Edney's Hill/Coppid Hill and the southern edge of The Coombes across Old Barkham towards the wooded southern horizon.

Reflecting the early settlement pattern, the buildings in Old Barkham are scattered. This remains the attraction of the area, and it is fortunate that infilling has not occurred to break up this pattern. The main buildings all sit comfortably in the landscape: the church is tucked away down its lane, the Village Hall is a low roofed building and Barkham Manor nestles behind a magnificent high red brick wall, 23 bays long.

One of the attractions of Barkham is the great variety of architectural styles. In Old Barkham this is a consequence of buildings having been built at different times over the last 500 years and also the variety of materials and finishes used.

Apart from some houses along Barkham Street, buildings are generally well set back from the road. As noted, even the major buildings are concealed down lanes or behind mature hedges or walls. This contributes to the rural ambiance of Barkham.

Roof lines of most of the buildings are low, reflecting the cottage styles of many houses. There are also many examples of attractive gables: the Old Rectory being one of the finest.

Red brick is the most commonly used building material and roofs are mainly red clay tiles. There are also examples of rendered houses such as The Bailiff's Cottage and slate roofs such as the Well House while Barkham Square is an elegant white painted brick mansion with several imposing chimney stacks.

The brickwork is frequently patterned. Church Cottages are a notable example. Several hundred years ago the walls were faced with Flemish Bond brickwork, including several band courses of flared bricks and dogtooth dentilations under the eaves.

Windows are generally small; in some cases the tops of the window frames are slightly arched, reflecting a window design common in older properties in the district. Church Cottages are again an example.

Though the area itself is predominantly open agricultural land, hedges, boundary trees and soft verges have been retained.

There are several commercial premises in Old Barkham that occupy redundant agricultural buildings. The Grange Centre in Barkham Ride is an example of commercial premises fairly well screened from the road by native broadleaf trees.

Given the very high volumes of traffic that pass along the narrow roads, it is fortunate that all the properties are able to provide off-road parking. Generally this is possible because properties are set well back into their plots.

### Main Design Features

- Rural character with scattered settlement pattern
- Buildings set back from roads and well screened
- Individually styled older houses, farmsteads and cottages
- Houses generally have low roof lines
- Red bricks and old red clay roof tiles; also some rendered houses
- Examples of patterned brickwork
- Parking is off-road
- Abundance of trees and mature hedge boundaries

## Barkham Hill and Langley Common



Tree canopy in Barkham Road

Barkham Hill and Langley Common are two distinct settlement areas that share many similarities. There are a number of older properties including Handpost Farm, Langley Pond Farm, Coppid Hill Cottages and some old cottages in Hayes Lane and Sandy Lane. Housing expanded as ribbon development from the 1920s up to the 1960s, and there has been some more recent infilling on larger plots. A significant proportion of the dwellings built in the 1920s and 1930s were bungalows.

### Conserving Barkham's Greenery

There are several important landscape features and views in or around Barkham Hill. The northern entry to Barkham along Bearwood Road becomes a colourful Rhododendron drive in late spring. This feature was planted more than a hundred years ago. There are significant views of undulating countryside approaching Coppid Hill in both directions along Barkham Road. The area also includes several quiet lanes such as Sandy Lane and Wood Lane which are important amenities well used by walkers and horse riders.

School Road is located in partly wooded terrain and has the backdrop of The Coombes rising to the northeast. Near the junction of School Road and Barkham Road there are fine views across the open countryside to the south.

### Impact on Surroundings

The houses are generally set within reasonably spacious curtilages and the overall character of the area has a spacious feel. Even the main roads retain



...and in School Road

a rural ambience: this is because of the many trees and hedges screening the houses, themselves generally set well back. Low ridgelines also help houses to blend with the landscape.

Where there has been infilling, houses have generally been built with individual designs and have well landscaped boundaries that preserve the area's greenness. There are some good examples in Bearwood Road adjacent to the Post Office.

### Variety of Housing Styles

There is a great variety of housing styles, though there are common features such as low roof lines. The main reason for this variety is that most houses have been built individually plot by plot at different times from the 19th century until the present day.

There are many examples of houses with the upper floor in the roof space; indeed all the houses higher up Barkham Hill are of this type. However even within this basic type of design, there is a wide variety of styles, including gables, dormer windows and hipped roofs, each type having different decorative finishes.

### Position and Scale of Buildings

Houses are set well back: an unusual characteristic in Langley Common Road is that many houses are set at an angle of roughly 45 degrees to the front boundary.

The variety of gables, porches and facings and fairly low elevations help to give even the largest houses an appropriate sense of scale.



A mixture of houses set back from the road blend into the street scene



An unusual extension with patterned brickwork



Gabled house set at an angle to the road

### Architectural Features

Low ridgelines are common and, as noted earlier, many houses have their upper storey contained within the roof space. There is a great variety of designs, which results in a mixture of interesting aspects and angles. In Sandy Lane alone, there are examples of dormers with gables, dormers with hipped roofs, gables with timber and with tiled finishes and a house with a hipped roof end on to the road.

Red brick is the most commonly used building material and roofs are mainly old red tiles. However there are examples of rendered buildings and some interesting tiled facings. Other finishes include decorative timbering. Some new houses have slight arches over small windows reflecting an older style. Many houses have either closed or open porches. Chimneys add interest to roof lines.

Some of the more recent buildings feature patterned brickwork. A house in Coombes Lane and another in Sandy Lane utilise herringbone patterns while some new houses in Langley Common Road have been constructed with coloured brick banding.

### Extensions

Many of the older bungalows in both Barkham Hill and Langley Common have been extended or even rebuilt to create larger dwellings. The use of low

roofs and dormer windows has avoided such houses becoming out of scale with their surroundings.

Field House, near Langley Common Road, has a large extension that has been carefully designed to preserve the character of the original building: similar red brick has been used and the original decoration has been carefully copied.

### Parking and Driveways

Parking is ample due to the set back building lines. Many driveways are able to accommodate four or more cars: this is essential given the high car ownership in Barkham and any on-road parking in busy roads such as Langley Common Road and Bearwood Road soon creates significant traffic congestion.

### Trees and Boundaries

There are many fine deciduous trees lining the roads, and the boundaries are characterised by mature hedges with a variety of native species. Generally the houses lie behind hedges though there are also examples of open fencing and low walls. This all contributes to a leafy environment.

Where there are gates, they are often wooden "farm style" gates with open bars, which give the area a rural feel.

### Main Design Features

- Rural character with low housing density
- Houses set back from road, with ample off-road parking
- Housing styles vary widely creating sense of individuality
- Roof lines generally low
- Dormer style houses, with various types of gables or hip roofs
- 1960s and 1970s houses have flat roofed dormers
- Older houses feature red bricks and red clay roof tiles
- Abundance of trees
- Boundaries usually hedges or shrubs, often with open wooden fences
- Lanes are an important local amenity for walking and horse riding

## Elizabeth Park



Effective integration of housing with green spaces



Maturing trees and hedges soften a compact development

Elizabeth Park is a development of 365 houses built in the late 1980s to meet the government housing target for the district. Though it is an estate, it was constructed in phases by a number of different developers, resulting in a greater variety of designs than would normally be found in a development of similar size.

Its location is on low lying land behind Bearwood Road and Barkham Road and it is screened by woods to the north. Consequently it is hidden from the rest of the village.

The Junipers, which forms the northeast sector of Elizabeth Park, successfully manages the transition between built-up area and countryside. A rigid boundary line has been avoided and the layout of the development cleverly uses existing landscape features, for example where an open space with many mature trees was retained within the housing area.

The eastern entry to Elizabeth Park is through The Woodlands, which also has particularly effective landscaping. This area has the advantage of a lower housing density than most of Elizabeth Park, but the opportunity was taken to set houses well back from the road and to plant plenty of trees and shrubs.

In some areas of Elizabeth Park the developers made a genuine effort to introduce a variety of designs. In Hornbeam Close, for example, every house is actually unique in appearance. A number of basic designs were used, each of which has been given a distinct decorative treatment. The Junipers and The Vines are also notable for a wide variety of designs

The higher housing density means that dwellings are

not set as far back from the road as in other parts of Barkham. However most of the houses do retain an appropriate scale so there are few examples of houses that look too big for their site – a common failing in many estates.

Ridgelines are higher than elsewhere in Barkham, but no house has more than two storeys. There is a small area of bungalows in The Vines, adjacent to Agisters Lane.

Sadly there was little attempt by the developers to reflect the vernacular details found at Oakwood, an old house situated within Elizabeth Park, or in other parts of Barkham. Some of the designs are nevertheless attractive, with cottage styles including weatherboarding being a particularly pleasing feature in The Junipers. Many of the houses have decorative gables.

Extensions and alterations have been made to many houses during the last twenty years. This has had the effect of introducing greater individuality to standard designs. As a general principle, this trend is encouraging.

Limited space inevitably means that parking is a problem in many of the cul-de-sacs. Although all houses have at least some off-road parking, this is in many cases inadequate: many families who moved into the area in the 1980s still have children at home who now have their own cars. Consequently many homes have 3 or even 4 cars.

Generally the layout is open plan. However the planting of native hedges as boundaries in some areas, e.g. The Lilacs, is attractive and echoes the boundary style used in other parts of Barkham.

### Main Design Features

- Higher housing density than other parts of Barkham
- Houses mainly detached
- Variety of designs throughout
- Country style brickwork or a mix of materials; tiled porches
- Relatively high roof lines; discrete gable features
- Limited off-road parking
- Open plan front gardens with small trees and shrubs, maturing well
- Effective integration of housing with open spaces

## Arborfield Garrison



Terrace houses facing the playing field



Off-road parking and open plan front gardens

Arborfield Garrison straddles Barkham and Arborfield parishes. The larger part lies in Barkham, including an attractively landscaped residential area accommodating army housing. The military areas, also in Barkham, include the REME college and base which have a more industrial appearance and are enclosed by wire security fences. There has been considerable expansion of private housing in recent years on former Garrison land on the Arborfield side of the parish boundary.

The residential areas are surrounded by generous landscaping, including wide grass verges planted with trees and daffodils, as well as two large open spaces that also serve as sports fields.

Thanks to the landscaping, the residential areas blend well with their surroundings, though the same cannot be said of the area behind the "wire". The following comments focus on the residential areas.

There is a uniform architectural style in Arborfield Garrison, unlike the rest of Barkham. This is in spite of there being a wide variety of housing types; including the other-ranks married quarters which are terraced houses and the more extensive officers' quarters around Buttenshaw Avenue to the south. Consequently Arborfield Garrison has a distinct style within the parish.

Housing is set back from the road. Indeed some of the terraces in the other-ranks married quarters do not face the road at all, but have access via service yards at the rear. Various amenities, including play areas and a NAAFI store are adjacent to these service areas.

The houses, even the larger officers' quarters, do not dominate their environs. This is in part because

building heights are low: though the houses have two storeys, the roof pitch is low.

The architectural style of the residential areas has the following characteristics:

- Red brickwork with red clay roof tiles
- Plain frontages with regularly spaced windows
- Low pitched roofs.

A few terraces have recently been given rendered frontages.

There has been a lot of infilling, particularly in the other-ranks married quarters. The original houses were built before World War II; others such as the long row facing the playing field and those behind them of similar type were added in the 1950s. Later more housing was built between the rows by shortening gardens. It is a measure of the success with which this was done that this amount of infilling has occurred without affecting the character of the area. It demonstrates what can be achieved with good planning and sensitive design and it would be highly desirable if the same principles could be applied if any further development takes place in this area.

The parking arrangements for the other-ranks married quarters are unusual, with parking in the rear service bays mentioned earlier. Elsewhere there is enough space to keep parking off the main through routes.

Front gardens are open plan, unlike most other parts of Barkham. There are plenty of trees, many of them ornamental varieties of cherry, and larger species such as willow which provide a high quality of landscaping which is maturing well.

### Main Design Features

- Uniform style of architecture
- Most houses in terraces
- Red brick and red clay roof tiles
- Sympathetic infilling
- Extensive parking and garage areas, separate from houses
- Terrace houses have small gardens; access to communal spaces
- Extensive mature landscaping
- Good integration of housing with open spaces

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

*The Barkham VDS Design Guidelines below should be followed with a view to preserving the rural qualities of the parish. The relevant policies in the adopted Wokingham District Local Plan (WDLP) are shown after each guideline. Also shown are the relevant Draft Core Strategy Policies.*

### Impact on Surroundings

1. Development should have regard to, and have no detrimental effect on, the surrounding landscape. Care needs to be taken to set buildings in their space to allow them to blend into the landscape rather than to dominate or interrupt the landscape.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles](#)

[WBE4 Landscape and Planting](#)

The Council's adopted Landscape Character Assessment may also be relevant.

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



A leafy lane with houses hidden by foliage

2. Developments (including extensions) should be in sympathy with the surrounding properties and setting. Specifically, new developments should blend with the character, size and main architectural styles of nearby properties.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles](#)

[WH2 Housing Development - Unidentified Sites](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



A rebuilt house sits comfortably with its neighbours

3. Any infilling should be appropriate in scale and mass relative to surrounding properties, and discouraged if a more cramped environment may result. Unsympathetic infilling can have a detrimental visual and spatial effect on adjacent properties, especially as residential gardens are an intrinsic feature of a rural community like Barkham. Nor should density be such that there is insufficient space for residential and visitor parking.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles](#)

[WH2 Housing Development - Unidentified Sites](#)

[WT6 Parking Provision](#)

[WT7 Road Safety](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



Infill sharing wide drive with the original house (centre left)

## Variety of Housing Styles

4. The parish is blessed with a great variety of housing styles, and has escaped the regimented developments that have harmed the character of so many other settlements. Continuing diversity adding interest to the street scene is to be encouraged.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles](#)

[WH2 Housing Development - Unidentified Sites](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



Selection of designs in a single development

## Position and Scale of Buildings

5. Building lines should continue to be set back from the road. This adds considerably to the rural character of the parish. Set back building lines also have significant environmental benefits by reducing exposure to noise, vibration and pollution along busy roads, and facilitating off-road parking.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles Policy](#)

[WT7 Road Safety](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



Plenty of parking behind an attractive boundary

6. The scale, in terms of square footage, of any proposed development or extension should not of itself be a barrier to its construction: how the building sits within the landscape is much more critical. There are many examples of houses in Barkham that look small but are actually big. This may be achieved through low ridgelines, setting the property back from the road and providing adequate landscaping in front of the house.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles Policy](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



Scale reduced by multiplicity of surfaces and shapes

7. Developments and extensions should avoid large unbroken roof or wall surfaces and the over-dominance of any one feature, in order to blend with the rural environment. Roof and wall surfaces accordingly should be small in scale, which can be achieved in a number of ways:

- The softer roof lines that can be achieved by gables, hip roofs and dormer windows
- 'L' shaped buildings or step-back features
- Frontages with a mix of materials, e.g. a mix of brickwork and rendered surface, timber or tile facings for the upper floor.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles Policy](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



'L' shape creates smaller roof and wall sizes

## **Architectural Features**

8. "One and a half" storey houses with dormer style upper windows within the roof space should be encouraged as this reflects the architecture common in Barkham. Houses with high ridgelines should be discouraged as they tend to dominate their surroundings.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles Policy](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



9. Well designed gabled, half-hipped and hipped roof shapes are to be encouraged, as are dormer windows of an appropriate scale with pitched roofs (but dormer windows with flat roofs should be avoided). Decorative bargeboards, finials and ridge tiles also add interest.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles Policy](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



10. The use of vernacular materials such as red bricks, red clay tiles, decorative timber and weatherboarding should be encouraged to maintain the traditional character of Barkham.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles Policy](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



11. The innovative use of patterned brickwork (e.g. diapered, chequered), coloured brick banding and dentilations enhance the appearance of houses and should be encouraged.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles Policy](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



12. Chimneys are part of the rural scene and should be encouraged.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles Policy](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



13. The size and positioning of windows should be appropriate in relation to the building. Cottage style window frames are to be encouraged whilst large window frames or large areas of plain glass should be avoided. The use of patterned leadwork around dormer windows can also be an attractive feature.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles Policy](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



## **Arborfield Garrison**

14. The residential area of Arborfield Garrison has a distinct style of architecture, characterised by terraced houses with red brick and red clay roof tiles in a landscaped environment. New developments and extensions in this part of Barkham should remain in keeping with this style.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles Policy](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



A typical example of the military architecture

## **Extensions**

15. Extensions should reflect the features of the original dwelling so that they are able to blend with their surroundings. They may be distinguished from the original building, perhaps by slight stepping of elevations.

[WOS3 Development Control Principles](#)

[Draft Core Strategy CP2 General Principles of Development](#)



Extension over garage exactly follows original design

16. In considering the conversion of garages to living accommodation there should be adequate off-road parking available without the need to create additional hard standing.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles](#)



Garage conversion retaining adequate parking

## **Parking and Driveways**

17. It is essential that new developments provide adequate off-road parking for both residents and visitors. This is because of the high level of car ownership in Barkham, the poor provision of facilities and services (including public transport) in the parish, and to avoid creating road safety hazards.

[WT6 Parking Provision](#)

[Policy WT7 Road Safety](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



Adequate parking is needed for ease of circulation

18. Drive surfaces of natural materials such as gravel, pebble and shingle give a more traditional look than tarmacadam and provide better water soak-away. Permeable surfaces utilising Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) should be encouraged. Extensive areas of hard standing or block paving should be avoided wherever possible.

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WIC15 Surface Water Run-Off Liable to Cause Flooding](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP1 Sustainable Development](#)



Natural gravel drive ensuring adequate drainage

## Trees and Boundaries

19. All trees should wherever possible be retained and cared for. New tree planting should be encouraged so that the leafy appearance of Barkham is conserved and enhanced. In particular locally native broadleaf species should be planted such as field maple (*Acer campestre*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), common beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*), myrobalan/cherry plum (*Prunus cerasifera*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and oak (*Quercus robur*).

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles](#)

[WBE4 Landscape and Planting](#)

[WBE5 Trees and New Development](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)



Barkham's green canopy conceals its houses



A variety of low borders creates an open and diverse scene



An attractive gateway using natural materials

[WOS1 Sustainable Development](#)

[WOS3 Development Control Principles Policy](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles for Development](#)

## Commercial Premises

22. Redundant agricultural buildings that are used for commercial purposes, including storage and parking facilities, should be adequately screened by planting evergreen or native broadleaf species of trees as above.

[WOS3 Development Control Principles](#)

[WRE2 Re-Use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings for Commercial Use](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP2 General Principles of Development](#)

[Draft Core Strategy Policy CP14 Proposals Outside of Development Limits](#)



Foliage should soon mask this building

# BARKHAM VDS ASPIRATIONS

The following aspirations are also intended to maintain the rural character of Barkham.

## Conserving Barkham's Greenery

1. The rhododendron drive in Bearwood Road is a unique part of the character of Barkham. Residents feel strongly that every effort should be made to maintain and preserve this special feature.
2. Green gaps that afford views of landscape features should be conserved. This particularly applies to the gaps approaching Coppid Hill from both east and west.
3. Every encouragement should be given to the maintenance and replanting of existing and new hedgerows with native species. Roadside trees should be properly maintained and where necessary replanted.
4. Barkham's rich history is well documented and all its fields and woodland have names. If there is a need for new developments to be named, preference should be given to historical names rather than made-up names.



The much admired rhododendron drive

## Parking

5. It is recommended that there should be at least one parking space per bedroom with a minimum of two parking spaces.



Fisher House was built in Fisher's Piddle

## Solar Panels and Wind Turbines

6. Solar panels should blend with the roof line rather than be free standing structures.
7. Wind turbines should be sited discreetly, preferably at the rear of properties.



Adequate parking for a 5 bedroom house

## Street Furniture and Lighting

8. Modern traffic management and road safety require prominent street furniture. Some road signs are, however, visually intrusive and detract from the rural setting of the parish. Consideration should be given to the visual impact of any signage on the landscape with a view to achieving the desired effect on traffic behaviour less obtrusively.
9. Bearing in mind the rural nature of the area, only the minimum street lighting consistent with safety considerations should be installed to avoid increasing light pollution.
10. The effect of light pollution should be considered for any domestic or commercial security lighting installation, with sensor controlled and intermittent lighting recommended instead of continuous lighting.
11. Roadside lights marking drive entrances should be of an appropriate height and brightness to avoid dazzle to road users.
12. Utility and telephone companies should be encouraged to share masts and posts where possible, and to place them in locations that minimise the visual impact.



The sign performs its task without being intrusive

## CONSULTATION



VDS Open Day at Barkham Village Hall



### Initial Steps

An initial public meeting was held on 18 Oct 2005 in the Barkham Village Hall. The meeting was advertised by flyers to all households in the parish and was attended by 50 people.

A VDS Group of 14 volunteers was formed, the first meeting being held on 21 Nov 2005. Team members undertook an initial photographic survey and assessment of village character, with the findings being used as the basis for a draft paper.

An article outlining the initial findings was included in the Spring 2006 issue of the Barkham Village Residents Association (BVRA) Newsletter. This was distributed to all households in the parish.

The first draft VDS, dated 27 Mar 2006, was submitted to Wokingham District Council Planning Department. Initial feedback on the draft was given by a representative of the Planning Department at a project team meeting held on 3 Apr 2006.

### Consultation with Residents

A second draft was prepared in April 2006, reflecting the comments made by the Planning Department.

The draft VDS was posted on the Barkham village website [www.barkham.org.uk](http://www.barkham.org.uk).

A second article appeared in the Summer 2006 issue of the BVRA Newsletter. The contents of this article included:

- Explanation of the role of the VDS in the district planning process
- Outline of the philosophy for developing the proposed Barkham VDS Design Guidelines
- Advertisement for a VDS Open Day to be held at the Barkham Village Hall on 8 Jul 2006
- Advice that the latest draft could be viewed on the Barkham village website
- Summary of the proposed Design Guidelines
- Invitation for residents to make comments.

The VDS Open Day was further advertised by flyers hand delivered to all households in the parish.

The VDS Open Day, which was attended by more than 50 people, included:

- Summary of the written material included in the draft VDS
- More than 200 photographs to illustrate the key findings and the proposed Design Guidelines
- Large scale maps
- Presentation about the concept of a VDS
- Questionnaire for visitors to complete and the option to make written comments
- Opportunity to talk with members of the VDS group.

49 questionnaires were completed, either at the Open Day or subsequently. The first part contained questions related to the proposed Design Guidelines. Generally these received extremely high approval ratings. The second part asked people what they liked about Barkham and invited further comments: the responses are summarised in the section "What Matters to Village People" on page 1.

A third article appeared in the Autumn 2006 issue of the BVRA Newsletter. This reported on the VDS Open Day and gave a detailed account of the main findings of the questionnaire.

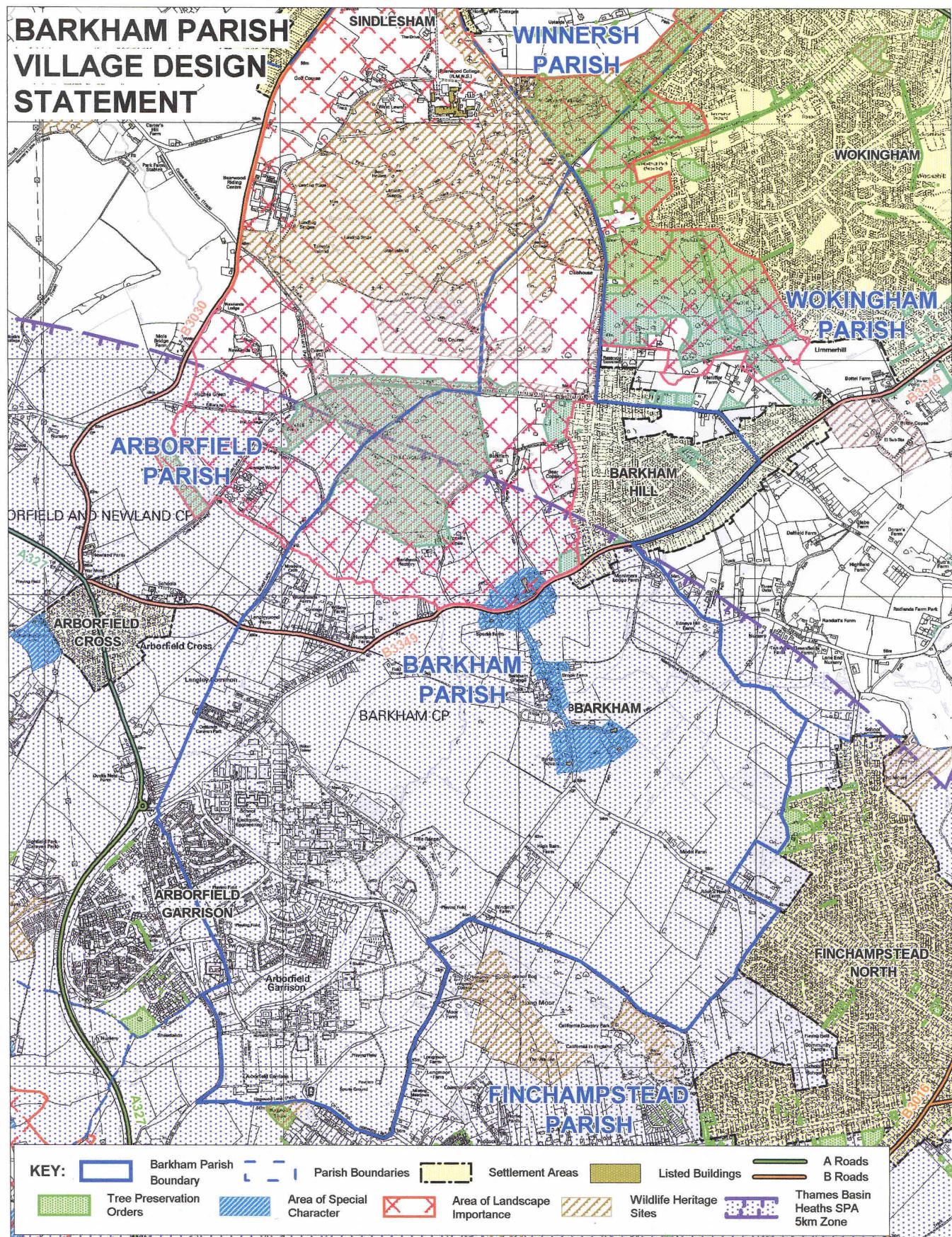
A third draft was produced in November 2006 reflecting the feedback received. This was posted on the Barkham village website and publicised by an update in the Winter 2006 issue of the BVRA Newsletter.

### Consultation with Other Parties and Finalisation

The third draft was also circulated for comments to 87 other parties in November 2006. Recipients included landowners, local developers, businesses, utilities and local authorities. By the end of the four week consultation period, twelve sets of responses had been received.

A fourth draft, incorporating feedback from the latest round of consultation, was produced in January 2007. This version was formally submitted to Wokingham District Council on 19 Jan 2007 for adoption by WDC as a Supplementary Planning Document, together with a separate Statement of Consultation.

# BARKHAM PARISH VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT



KEY:

- Barkham Parish Boundary
- Parish Boundaries
- Settlement Areas
- Listed Buildings
- A Roads
- B Roads
- Tree Preservation Orders
- Area of Special Character
- Area of Landscape Importance
- Wildlife Heritage Sites
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA 5km Zone

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Wokingham District Council. September 2006



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