V·SCORE

Planning application review

12 Orchard Close

Land adjacent to 12 Orchard Close, Northbrook, Northshire NB1 2AB

Northbrook District Council · 25/04321/FUL

Prepared for Example report recipient
31 October 2026

Prepared by VSCORE Ltd

Contents

1 Summary

Issues at a glance

2 Issues

- 1 Habitat removal with no ecological survey supplied
- 2 Self-build status not evidenced, so biodiversity exemption unsupported
- 3 Visibility splays rely on a 0.7m kerb offset
- 4 Heritage statement does not grade the level of harm
- 5 Frontage hedge removal sits uneasily with retention claims
- 6 Parking numbers conflict: form says 6, plans show 4
- 7 Infill claim not demonstrated against the settlement boundary
- 8 Archaeological evaluation deferred to a pre-commencement condition

3 Scope and sources

4 Important notice

PREPARED FOR
Example report recipient

REPORT DATE
31 October 2026

REFERENCE
25/04321/FUL

COUNCIL
Northbrook District Council

APPLICATION TYPE
Full application (application reference)

PROPOSAL
Development of 2no Custom Build/Self build dwellings with parking, landscaping and a modified vehicular access onto Market Street (B1037)

1 Summary

3 points could stop approval

Each of these could support a refusal on its own.
The other points are listed below.

could stop approval	3
needs work	5
in your favour	0

No decision found in online checks (31 October 2026)

Automated review for information only. Not professional planning or legal advice. See the Important notice.

1.1 Application stage: Submitted, awaiting a decision.

1.2 This application is submitted and awaiting a decision. 3 points could stop approval. Each of these could support a refusal on its own.

1.3 The other points are listed below. First, hedgerows, a tree and paddock grassland would be removed but no ecological survey is supplied, so protected species effects are unassessed. Second, the biodiversity net gain exemption rests on self-build status, yet the applicant is a developer with fixed house designs, no identified future owners, no metric and no signed undertaking supplied. Third, the visibility splays answer an earlier highway withdrawal but the northern splay relies on a 0.7m kerb offset, above the 0.5m normally accepted, with no highway authority agreement supplied.

1.4 Points that need work include heritage harm grading, a parking conflict (6 versus 4) and the unshown settlement boundary. At the policy date the council could not show a five-year housing supply, which weighs in favour of new homes, though the conservation area and listed church setting mean heritage policies apply in full. Final ratings: 3 could stop approval, 5 need work, and 0 are in your favour.

Issues at a glance

No.	Issue	Rating
1	Habitat removal with no ecological survey supplied	Could stop approval
2	Self-build status not evidenced, so biodiversity exemption unsupported	Could stop approval
3	Visibility splays rely on a 0.7m kerb offset	Could stop approval
4	Heritage statement does not grade the level of harm	Needs work
5	Frontage hedge removal sits uneasily with retention claims	Needs work
6	Parking numbers conflict: form says 6, plans show 4	Needs work
7	Infill claim not demonstrated against the settlement boundary	Needs work
8	Archaeological evaluation deferred to a pre-commencement condition	Needs work

How to read the ratings

Could stop approval

These points could support a refusal. Deal with them first.

Needs work

These points need more evidence, a change or a safeguard.

In your favour

These points support the application on the supplied evidence.

2 Issues

1 Habitat removal with no ecological survey supplied

Could stop approval

Evidence status: missing evidence

Finding

The site is described as an undeveloped paddock with native hedgerows, trees and grassland. The drawings show frontage hedges removed to achieve visibility splays and a tree removed to facilitate the development. The sustainability checklist refers repeatedly to a biodiversity statement or assessment, but no ecological survey or biodiversity statement is in the supplied set.

Evidence

> The land is currently an undeveloped paddock, featuring a mix of native hedgerows, trees, and open grassland.
>
> `Design, Access and Heritage Statement, p.4`

> Hedge removed located within highway boundary
>
> `Site Layout Plan - 1:250 A3, p.1` read from scan

> Biodiversity statement to be submitted alongside application
>
> `Sustainability Checklist, p.15` read from scan

Council could say

The council could say it cannot assess the effect on protected and priority species, such as nesting birds and species using the hedgerows and grassland, because no ecological information has been supplied for habitat that would be removed.

Remedy

Supply a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal by a qualified ecologist covering the hedgerows, trees and grassland to be removed, with any follow-up protected species surveys it recommends, before determination.

2 Self-build status not evidenced, so biodiversity exemption unsupported

Could stop approval

Evidence status: missing evidence

Finding

The applicant describes itself as a developer. Full, fixed house designs are submitted, and no initial owners are identified; the scheme is to be marketed to the self-build register after permission. The statutory definition requires the initial owner to have primary input into final design and layout. The biodiversity net gain exemption on the application form depends entirely on this self-build status, no biodiversity metric is supplied, and the promised unilateral undertaking is not in the set.

Evidence

> Scheme will be offered to qualifying members on the Northbrook District Council Self-Build Register
>
> `Published Retention Schedule. for More Information on…, p.2` read from scan

> The future occupiers will be fully involved in the construction and design of the two seperate self-build plots.
>
> `Published Retention Schedule. for More Information on…, p.5` read from scan

> The Unilateral Undertaking will be submitted and agreed upon prior to the determination of this application.
>
> `Biodiversity Net Gain - Letter of Intent…, p.2` read from scan

> Not applicable Custom/Self Build
>
> `Sustainability Checklist, p.18` read from scan

Council could say

The council could say that, with fixed designs by a developer and no identified initial owners, the dwellings do not demonstrably meet the statutory self-build definition, so the biodiversity net gain exemption is not made out and the required 10 percent net gain and metric are missing.

Remedy

Either supply a completed statutory biodiversity metric demonstrating the required net gain, or evidence identified initial owners with primary input into final design and layout together with an executed unilateral undertaking securing the self-build marketing commitments.

3 Visibility splays rely on a 0.7m kerb offset

Could stop approval

Evidence status: possible conflict

Finding

A previous application was withdrawn after Highway Authority concerns about visibility. The new site layout plan draws splays of 2.4m x 46m south and 2.4m x 37m north, but the northern splay is annotated with a 700mm departure from the kerb, above the 0.5m normally accepted. The splays also depend on removing hedges stated to be within the highway boundary, and no written agreement from the highway authority is in the supplied set. The statement describes hedge trimming while the drawings show hedge removal.

Evidence

> addressing the concerns raised by the Highway Authority in the previously withdrawn application
>
> `Design, Access and Heritage Statement, p.4`

> The necessary trimming of hedgerows within the splay zones will be undertaken
>
> `Design, Access and Heritage Statement, p.6` read from scan

Council could say

The council could say the northern visibility splay is only achieved by measuring from a point 0.7m into the carriageway and by works to vegetation on highway land, and without the highway authority's agreement safe visibility at the access is not demonstrated.

Remedy

Obtain and supply Northshire County Council highway authority confirmation that the splays, including the 0.7m offset and the hedge removal within the highway boundary, are acceptable, or redraw splays achieving the standard geometry within land under the applicant's or highway authority's control.

4 Heritage statement does not grade the level of harm

Needs work

Evidence status: missing evidence

Finding

The site is in the Northbrook Conservation Area with the Grade II listed Northbrook Parish Church adjoining to the north. The statement describes the assets and asserts preservation and enhancement, but it does not grade harm on the national scale (no harm, less than substantial, substantial), so the required weighting exercise cannot be checked from the documents.

Evidence

> It is situated within the Northbrook Conservation Area and is designated as Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.
>
> `Design, Access and Heritage Statement, p.4`

> The development demonstrates a balanced approach to heritage preservation
>
> `Design, Access and Heritage Statement, p.9`

Council could say

The council could say the application does not assess the degree of harm to the conservation area or the setting of the listed church, so it cannot carry out the statutory and policy balancing exercise on the submitted material.

Remedy

Supply a heritage assessment that grades any harm to the conservation area and the listed church's setting on the national scale and, if harm is found, sets out the public benefits weighed against it.

5 Frontage hedge removal sits uneasily with retention claims

Needs work

Evidence status: possible conflict

Finding

The statement says existing mature hedgerows will be maintained and enhanced and that the green tunnel effect along Market Street, a stated special characteristic of the conservation area, is preserved, and refers to trimming within splay zones. The drawings instead show frontage hedges removed to achieve the splays, with a new replacement mature beech hedge proposed, and a C grade apple tree removed.

Evidence

> ensuring that the “green tunnel” effect along Market Street
>
> `Design, Access and Heritage Statement, p.8 read from scan`

> Hedge removed located within highway boundary
>
> `Site Layout Plan - 1:250 A3, p.1 read from scan`

Council could say The council could say the drawings show removal of frontage hedgerow that the statement presents as retained or trimmed, and the effect of that removal on the conservation area's character needs to be assessed on the true position.

Remedy Reconcile the statement and drawings, quantify the length of hedgerow removed and replaced, and provide a planting specification and timescale for the replacement beech hedge secured by condition or landscaping plan.

6 Parking numbers conflict: form says 6, plans show 4

Needs work

Evidence status: clear conflict

Finding The application form states 6 proposed car parking spaces. The design and access statement provides two off-street spaces per dwelling, which is 4, and the site layout plan marks 4 bays

Evidence

> Total proposed (including spaces retained):
>
> `Application form, p.5 read from scan`

> Two off-street parking spaces.
>
> `Design, Access and Heritage Statement, p.6 read from scan`

Council could say The council could say the quantum of parking is not clear from the submission because the form, statement and layout do not agree, and it must assess the scheme against the layout as drawn.

Remedy Correct the application form or the drawings so the parking provision is stated consistently across all documents and matches the county parking standards calculation.

7 Infill claim not demonstrated against the settlement boundary

Needs work

Evidence status: missing evidence

Finding The site is designated Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt and the statement relies on Policy VILL1 for Northbrook, which supports limited infill. The site sits between the listed church to the north and Willow View and other dwellings to the south, which is consistent with frontage infill, but no plan in the set shows the Northbrook settlement boundary or demonstrates the site lies within it.

Evidence

> Policy VILL1 (Northbrook): Supports limited infill development.
>
> `Design, Access and Heritage Statement, p.6 read from scan`

> The site is bounded by residential development to the south, Northbrook Parish Church (Grade II listed) to the north, and open fields to the east.
>
> `Design, Access and Heritage Statement, p.4`

Council could say The council could say the principle of development depends on whether the site is within the village boundary or qualifies as limited infill under Policy VILL1, and the submission does not show the boundary position.

Remedy Supply a plan showing the adopted Northbrook settlement boundary relative to the site, with a short policy statement addressing VILL1 and, if outside the boundary, the rural infill and exception routes relied on.

8 Archaeological evaluation deferred to a pre-commencement condition

Needs work

Evidence status: missing evidence

Finding The site lies within Area of Archaeological Significance 29 with Anglo-Saxon and medieval interest nearby, and the statement commits to trial trenching before development begins as recommended by the county council, rather than submitting evaluation results with the application.

Evidence

> an archaeological field evaluation via trial trenching will be conducted before development begins
>
> `Design, Access and Heritage Statement, p.4`

Council could say The council could say archaeological interest can likely be handled by a pre-commencement evaluation condition, provided the county archaeological advisor agrees that approach for this site.

Remedy Confirm with the Northshire Historic Environment Unit that a condition-based written scheme of investigation is acceptable, or submit the trial trenching results before determination.

3 Scope and sources

The supplied set contained 15 documents and 78 pages. Pages without readable text are listed below.

Review based only on the 15 supplied documents assessed against the position at the 10 March 2025 policy date; the biodiversity statement, ecological survey and unilateral undertaking referenced in the submission were not in the supplied set, and the application's decision status was not checked (example report).

Policy date: 2026-10-31 (submission date)

Pages not read

Document	Pages
None.	

Documents skipped

- None.

Exact duplicates

- None.

What we checked online

Check	Result	Source	Checked
Northbrook District Council five-year housing land supply position at the March 2025 policy date	The council's published position was the March 2024 statement, and its interim calculation using completions to late February 2025 put supply at between 3.4 and 3.7 years, below the five years required, which adds weight in favour of new homes at the policy date.	Northbrook District Council, Monitoring and Five Year Land Supply	31 October 2026
Housing Delivery Test measurement in force at the March 2025 policy date	The 2023 measurement, published 12 December 2024, was the latest in force at the policy date; as later context only, the council's website reports a subsequent measurement of 102 percent with no policy consequences.	GOV.UK, Housing Delivery Test collection; Northbrook District Council monitoring page	31 October 2026

Quote checking

Every quotation in this report was checked against the extracted text for the cited document and page.

Use of this report

This is an automated document review. It is not legal advice and does not predict the decision.

4 Important notice

4.1 This report is an automated review of the documents supplied, produced with the help of artificial intelligence and limited checks of public records on the date shown. It is provided for information only.

4.2 It is not legal advice or professional planning advice. It has not been reviewed by a chartered planner unless stated on the cover. It does not predict the decision of any council, inspector or court.

4.3 Quotations have been checked word for word against the cited pages. The interpretation of that evidence, including each rating, is automated and may contain errors or omissions. Pages without readable text were not read and are listed in section 3.

4.4 This report is prepared for Example report recipient only. VSCORE Ltd accepts no duty of care to any other person. To the extent permitted by law, liability is limited to the fee paid for this report. Nothing limits liability that cannot be limited by law.

VSCORE Ltd · Registered in England and Wales, company number 14983226 · 78 Cranwells Park, Bath, BA1 2YE · info@vscore.tech

V·SCORE

Automated planning application review, with evidence traced to the supplied documents.

VSCORE Ltd · Registered in England and Wales, company number 14983226 · Registered office 78 Cranwells Park, Bath, BA1 2YE · info@vscore.tech