

PLANNING REF : 252498
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Monks Cottage
: Off Church Lane, Arborfield, Reading, Berkshire
: RG2 9JD
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Paul Frame
DATE SUBMITTED : 12/01/2026

COMMENTS:

Re: Planning Application for Loddon Valley Garden Village
Development at Hall Farm, Arborfield

IMPORTANT NOTE: PARALLEL PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Two planning applications are currently running in parallel for the Loddon Valley Garden Village development:

1. University of Reading (Hall Farm) - Application Reference 252498

2. Gleesons (RG2 9JD) - Application Reference 252769

Both applications materially impact Monks Cottage and the surrounding community. Whilst this formal response specifically addresses

Application Reference 252498, the objections, concerns and comments raised herein apply equally to both applications. These applications are intrinsically linked and form part of the same overall development scheme. It would be negligent for them to be considered in isolation.

The cumulative impact of both applications must be assessed together as the combined effect on Monks Cottage with respect to the local infrastructure, transport networks, utilities, flood risk, ecology and the wider community is far greater than either application considered separately. Any determination of one application without full consideration of the other would be fundamentally flawed and contrary to proper planning assessment principles.

Critically, the environmental assessments submitted with these applications are fundamentally flawed because they consider impacts on Monks Cottage from each application separately, whereas Monks Cottage will be positioned between and engulfed by, both developments. The actual impact will be cumulative from both developments

simultaneously. Environmental assessments evaluating noise, air quality, construction disruption, traffic and other impacts from only one application fail to reflect the true conditions Monks Cottage will experience. The property will face impacts from both developments at the same time, creating a combined burden that has not been properly evaluated in either application's environmental documentation. This represents a serious deficiency in the assessment methodology that undermines the validity of the conclusions reached.

STATEMENT OF OPPOSITION

I formally and unequivocally object to the above planning applications for the proposed Loddon Valley Garden Village Development. This

development represents fundamentally unsustainable, inappropriate and undeliverable planning that will cause severe and irreversible harm. My objections centre on:- the unprecedented impact on Monks Cottage, a 200-year-old property that will be entirely surrounded by the development site; the absence of railway access creating car-dependent sprawl generating up to 11,700 additional daily

vehicle movements; the unfunded M4 bridge critical to transport strategy; Thames Water's ability to deliver the required sewage infrastructure in a timely fashion; unreliable SUDS systems with 30-90% effectiveness placing properties at flood risk; permanent destruction of 8.72 hectares of priority habitat, ancient woodlands, and veteran trees; devastating impact on wildlife including deer, badgers, foxes, stoats, weasels, dormouse, owls, 852 invertebrate species, 94 bird species, 9 bat species, critically endangered European Eels; loss of the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land and the grossly inequitable concentration of over 90% of borough development in the south pf the borough whilst infrastructure is already at breaking point. These are fundamental flaws that render the development undeliverable and unsustainable. The applications must be refused.

MONKS COTTAGE: UNPRECEDENTED POSITION WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT SITE

Monks Cottage is a 200-year-old property that sits within the heart of the development site, bordered on all sides by the proposed Hall Farm (Application 252498) and Gleeson (Application 252769) applications. We are in a unique position as the most impacted privately owned property within the development area.

Monks Cottage has existed within a rural agricultural landscape for its entire history. As one of the remaining buildings within the former Arborfield Hall estate, the heritage significance of the property is intrinsically linked to this rural setting the relationship between the historic building, which acted as farm-workers cottages and its agricultural surroundings has defined the property's character for two centuries. As such, the property has been consciously preserved as a rural setting by multiple deed owners across 200 years of its inhabitance.

The proposal to fully surround this historic building with up to 3,930 homes across both the Newlands Farm and Hall Farm developments esents the complete obliteration of the rural context that defines the heritage asset's character and significance.

Unlike typical planning objections from neighbouring properties, Monks Cottage will be entirely engulfed by this massive development of circa 3,900 homes, schools, employment areas, and extensive infrastructure, materially changing the fabric of its present character. The construction period will span multiple years, meaning prolonged disruption during the build phase followed by permanent transformation of the property's setting post-completion.

The scale of impact is therefore massive both during the extended construction period and in perpetuity once the development is operational.

The proposal to construct such development around an existing occupied dwelling represents an extraordinary planning scenario that demands exceptional scrutiny and protection measures that are entirely absent from the current application.

CONSTRUCTION PHASE IMPACTS

While planning applications typically do not consider nuisance and disruption during construction periods, the exceptional scale and duration of this development spanning decades makes construction impact a significant material consideration that cannot be dismissed as temporary inconvenience.

Impact on Monks Cottage:

The construction period will span several decades, during which Monks Cottage will be engulfed by building activity on all sides.

Environmental Statement Chapter 15 acknowledges significant noise impacts but fails to properly identify Monks Cottage as a Noise Sensitive Receptor requiring special protection. Proposed mitigation measures appear designed for properties external to the development site and are wholly inadequate for a property surrounded by construction zones.

Construction impacts will include: severe and prolonged noise pollution from multiple directions simultaneously with no satisfactory buffer zone or respite; dust generation affecting air quality and property condition; vibration damage risks to the building structure; complete loss of privacy and peaceful enjoyment and serious safety concerns regarding construction traffic around an occupied dwelling. The application provides no credible assessment of how these impacts will be managed for a property within the construction zone, nor adequate safeguards post-completion.

Impact on Wider Community:

The construction phase will bring disruption to the entire surrounding area over multiple years. Installation of infrastructure including roads, sewage systems, schools, and the M4 bridge will generate widespread noise, dust, vibration, and traffic impacts affecting existing residents in Arborfield, Shinfield, and surrounding areas. Heavy goods vehicle movements, plant machinery, and construction traffic will create congestion and safety concerns on local roads already operating at or near capacity.

TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC

Impact on Monks Cottage:

The construction phase will bring thousands of heavy goods vehicle movements through and around the site over multiple years, with no assessment of construction traffic routing, safety measures for existing residents within the site, or protection from damage to property and infrastructure. For Monks Cottage, located within the development site, there is no escape from construction traffic movements around an occupied dwelling. The application provides no credible safety protocols for protecting residents living within an active construction zone, creating unacceptable risks from heavy vehicle movements, site access conflicts, and construction activity on all sides.

The operational phase will see Monks Cottage surrounded by roads carrying an estimated 7,800 to 11,700 additional vehicle movements daily, fundamentally transforming the property from a peaceful rural setting to one engulfed by high-volume traffic corridors. This creates severe ongoing health and safety concerns including: increased accident risk from high-volume vehicular activity on all sides; significant air quality degradation from vehicle emissions affecting respiratory health; chronic noise pollution impacting mental and physical wellbeing; and complete loss of the safe, quiet environment that currently defines the property.

Our family specifically chose this rural location due to existing health conditions requiring a quiet, peaceful, low-pollution environment. The dramatic increase in traffic volume and associated pollution will directly compromise their health and wellbeing, making the property unsuitable for continued occupation.

Impact on Wider Community:

This application represents fundamentally unsustainable development that will create a car-dependent community with wholly inadequate transport infrastructure. The transport deficiencies alone warrant refusal.

The development site has no direct railway station access. The nearest stations at Winnersh, Wokingham, and Reading are several miles distant with no realistic walking or cycling access. This geographical isolation means the development will generate an estimated 7,800 to 11,700 additional vehicle movements daily.

The application presents this as a sustainable "garden village" but the reality is a large suburban estate that will be almost entirely car-dependent. Nearly 10,000 new residents will have no practical alternative to private car ownership, fundamentally contradicting national and local planning policies promoting sustainable transport and reducing carbon emissions.

Wokingham Borough Council has invested in numerous cycle lanes throughout the community, yet these remain seriously underutilised, demonstrating that cycle infrastructure alone does not create modal shift without genuine connectivity and safety. The application fails to demonstrate how residents of this development could safely access existing cycle networks. There is no viable route from the development site to existing cycle lanes without travelling on dangerous roads unsuitable for cycling. The proposed cycle infrastructure within the development will be similarly isolated, creating another underutilised facility that fails to provide a realistic alternative to car use.

Whilst the application references future bus services, history demonstrates such services are invariably underutilised and ultimately withdrawn or reduced to minimal levels. Without railway access and with dispersed destinations, bus services cannot provide a realistic alternative to car use. The application fails to provide binding commitments regarding bus service frequency, routes, operating hours, or long-term funding.

The development will generate massive traffic increases on roads already operating at or near capacity. The A327 Reading Road, Lower Earley Way, and local roads through Arborfield and Shinfield will experience severe additional congestion. The application fails to demonstrate that existing junctions can accommodate this traffic increase without unacceptable delays and safety implications.

Traffic modelling relies on unrealistic assumptions about modal shift given the lack of railway access.

The proposed M4 bridge is critical to the development's transport strategy, yet there are serious unresolved concerns about its funding and delivery. The application fails to provide clear evidence of

secured funding. Bridge construction over a major motorway is extraordinarily expensive, requiring extensive engineering, safety measures, and coordination with National Highways. Without transparent evidence that funding is secured and sufficient, there is real risk the bridge will never be built.

If the M4 bridge is not delivered, the development becomes fundamentally unworkable. Northern portions would have severely constrained access, forcing all traffic through southern access points and creating bottlenecks on already congested roads. The development would be left with inadequate connectivity, undermining the entire masterplan. The application must demonstrate, through binding legal agreements and financial guarantees, that the M4 bridge will be delivered before a specified number of dwellings are occupied.

The application also fails to adequately assess cumulative impact with other major developments in the area. The cumulative effect will be gridlock during peak hours, with severe impacts on air

quality, journey times, and quality of life for existing residents.

UTILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE - THAMES WATER SEWAGE CAPACITY

Impact on Monks Cottage:

The installation and of sewage infrastructure will create additional disruption through excavation, pipe laying, and connection works. For Monks Cottage, this represents yet another source of noise, vibration, traffic, and disturbance that has not been adequately assessed or mitigated.

If Thames Water fails to deliver new sewage or significantly upgraded infrastructure for Arborfield Sewage Treatment works and attempts to connect the development to existing sewage infrastructure that is already operating at or near capacity, this could lead to increased sewage flooding risks, reduced service reliability and environmental pollution affecting Monks Cottage.

Impact on Wider Community:

The application's reliance on Thames Water to provide adequate sewage infrastructure represents a fundamental risk to the development's viability and deliverability. Thames Water is experiencing an unprecedented financial and operational crisis that casts serious doubt on its ability to deliver the sewage works upgrades required to serve 3,900 new homes.

Thames Water is in severe financial distress, carrying debts of 16 billion and facing record regulatory fines for environmental failures. The company's historical lack of investment means new capital

investment programmes are under severe pressure, with Thames Water struggling to maintain and upgrade existing infrastructure, so new capacity for major developments is not priority.

Thames Water needs to invest 18.7 billion between 2025 and 2030 to address failing infrastructure, including outdated sewage works, chronic leakage problems, and sewage spills. If Thames Water are struggling to maintain critical existing infrastructure, it questions the timely delivery of incremental sewage works capacity required for nearly 10,000 additional residents at Loddon Valley Garden Village. Even if funding were available, Thames Water faces severe resource and labour constraints that make timely delivery highly doubtful. The

water industry is experiencing significant skills shortages, and specialist infrastructure projects require experienced engineers and contractors who are in extremely short supply.

Without guaranteed sewage capacity, this development cannot proceed. The application must demonstrate, through binding legal agreements, that sewage infrastructure will be delivered at specific phases before specified numbers of dwellings are occupied. No such guarantees are evident in the application materials. The application provides no answers about delivery risks and no contingency plans.

FLOOD RISK, DRAINAGE AND SUDS

Impact on Monks Cottage:

Monks Cottage currently exists in a rural setting with natural drainage patterns, close to fields that periodically flood. The wholesale transformation of surrounding agricultural land into hard surfaces, roads, and buildings will fundamentally alter water flow patterns, potentially placing the property at significantly increased flood risk.

The application relies on Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to manage surface water runoff. However, recent research reveals that SUDS regularly fail in practice, resulting in malfunctioning systems, water nuisance, and high costs. SUDS effectiveness varies enormously depending on design and location, with efficiency ranging from 30% to 90%. With the massive volume of runoff from this development, there is little room for error. The consequences of SUDS underperformance or failure would be severe for Monks Cottage, potentially including surface water flooding, property damage, and ongoing flood risk anxiety.

The application provides insufficient analysis of how the new SUDS infrastructure will interact with existing natural drainage systems serving Monks Cottage. Hydrologic-hydraulic modelling of urban catchments achieves accuracy ranging only from 78% to 95%, meaning such margins of error could translate into significant real-world flooding. The application provides no sensitivity analysis, no assessment of SUDS underperformance scenarios, and no contingency plans for failure.

Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme rainfall events. SUDS are typically designed on historical rainfall data which may be wholly inadequate for future conditions. The application fails to demonstrate that SUDS capacity has been designed with sufficient headroom to accommodate more intense rainfall events increasingly likely over the development's lifetime. SUDS require ongoing maintenance to function effectively, yet the application fails to provide adequate detail on who will be responsible for maintenance in perpetuity, how it will be funded, and what happens if maintenance is neglected. Experience shows SUDS maintenance is often inadequate, leading to progressive deterioration and eventual failure.

Impact on Wider Community

The same SUDS concerns apply to the wider community. The development of 3,900 homes will generate massive surface water runoff increases. Despite proximity to the River Loddon and known flood risks, the application fails to adequately demonstrate how flood risk will be managed and existing properties protected. The consequences of SUDS underperformance would include surface water flooding of existing properties, overwhelmed drainage systems, River Loddon pollution, and damage to ecological features the development claims to protect.

NOISE, VIBRATION AND AIR QUALITY

Impact on Monks Cottage:

The noise assessment relies on standard construction noise thresholds of 65 dB LAeq,16hr, which may be appropriate for properties at the development boundary but are manifestly inadequate for a property within the site itself. There is no recognition that Monks Cottage will experience construction noise from multiple directions

simultaneously, with no adequate buffer zone or respite. The cumulative impact assessment is entirely absent.

Furthermore, the operational noise from two primary schools, one secondary school, employment areas, sports facilities, significantly increased roads and traffic will continue indefinitely after construction completion. The application fails to demonstrate how acceptable noise levels will be maintained at Monks Cottage when surrounded by these active uses. It is clear that noise pollution at Monks Cottage will increase dramatically through the proposed

lopment.

Whilst the applicant's air quality assessment focuses on designated ecological sites, it provides insufficient analysis of air quality impacts on existing residents within the site boundary. Construction dust, vehicle emissions from thousands of new homes, and operational emissions from schools and employment areas will significantly degrade air quality at Monks Cottage. For a property surrounded by new roads and development, the air quality impacts will be severe and permanent with corresponding health implications.

Impact on Wider Community

The car-dependent nature of the development will generate thousands of additional vehicle journeys daily, with corresponding increases in

nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter, and other pollutants. The air quality impacts will affect the wider community, with health implications for existing residents in Arborfield, Shinfield, and surrounding areas. The cumulative effect of construction noise, operational noise from schools and employment areas, and traffic noise will significantly degrade the acoustic environment across the wider area.

ECOLOGICAL DESTRUCTION AND LOSS OF RURAL CHARACTER

Impact on Monks Cottage

The development will fundamentally and irreversibly transform Monks Cottage from a rural dwelling in an agricultural landscape to a property surrounded by suburban housing, schools, employment areas and urban infrastructure. The rural setting that defines the property's character and value will be completely obliterated.

The ecological destruction will be devastating. The development will result in permanent loss of 8.72 hectares of Floodplain Grazing Marsh, destruction of 0.11 hectares of lowland mixed deciduous woodland, loss of part of Rushy Mead Local Wildlife Site, destruction of numerous hedgerows and treelines, and loss of three veteran trees. The wildlife currently inhabiting the land around Monks Cottage will be fundamentally compromised, including the diverse species we regularly encounter: Deer, Badgers, Foxes, Stoats, Weasels, Dormouse, and Owls, alongside the impact on the whole site for 852 invertebrate species, 94 bird species, nine bat species, and critically endangered European Eels.

Impact on Wider Community

The same ecological destruction extends across the wider area. The development will destroy eight confirmed bat roosts and numerous potential tree roosts, eliminate 14 Skylark territories, and harm habitats supporting Great Crested Newts, White-clawed Crayfish, and reptiles in the River Loddon.

Whilst the applicant proposes various mitigation measures, these represent an attempt to offset irreversible harm rather than avoid it. The so-called "EcoValley" enhancement strategy cannot recreate the established ecosystems that will be destroyed. Ancient woodlands, veteran trees, and mature hedgerows have taken centuries to develop and support complex ecological communities that cannot simply be transplanted or recreated elsewhere. The Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) provision of 40.27 hectares is designed primarily to protect the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area from recreational pressure, not to compensate for the loss of the rural environment.

LOSS OF BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND

The destruction of productive agricultural land surrounding Monks Cottage will permanently alter the character and setting of the property. The agricultural landscape that currently defines the rural character will be replaced by suburban development, eliminating the agricultural context that gives the property its distinctive character and removing much needed farming resource. The development will consume substantial areas of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, classified as Grades 1, 2, and 3a under the Agricultural Land Classification system. This represents the most flexible, productive, and efficient agricultural land capable of delivering future crops for food and non-food uses.

National planning policy provides clear protection for BMV agricultural land. The National Planning Policy Framework, updated in December 2022, requires that "the agricultural land used for food production should be considered...when deciding what sites are most appropriate for development." Local planning authorities are specifically directed to take into account the economic and other benefits of BMV agricultural land, and where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, they should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

In an era of food security concerns, climate change, and increasing pressure on agricultural resources, the permanent loss of productive BMV agricultural land to housing development represents poor long-term planning and conflicts with national policy objectives.

The application fails to demonstrate that all brownfield alternatives have been

exhausted or that the benefits of this development outweigh the permanent and irreversible loss of this protected agricultural resource.

The destruction of BMV land is particularly concerning given that this classification system is designed to protect land specifically because of its superior capability to produce food and other agricultural products. Once developed, this land is lost forever it cannot be restored or recreated. The application provides no adequate justification for why this irreplaceable resource should be sacrificed when alternative sites on lower-grade agricultural land are available.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICIENCIES

The phasing schedule reveals that critical infrastructure will not be delivered in a timely manner, meaning that Monks Cottage will be surrounded by an incomplete development lacking essential services and facilities for many years. This will compound the construction phase impacts and extend the period of disruption and inadequate amenity.

The phasing schedule reveals critical infrastructure gaps that will severely impact quality of life for future residents and place additional pressure on existing community facilities.

The secondary school is not scheduled for delivery until 2037, yet over 2,000 households are planned before this date. The additional pressure on existing schools in Wokingham, Arborfield and surrounding areas has not been adequately assessed. This represents a failure to provide essential infrastructure in a timely manner.

Healthcare provision is similarly inadequate. The application mentions GP surgeries but provides no concrete commitments or capacity assessments. The existing healthcare infrastructure in the area is already under strain, and adding approximately 9,750 new residents (based on 2.5 persons per household) without guaranteed additional capacity is irresponsible planning. Electricity, water supply, and telecommunications infrastructure must also be proven adequate before development commences. The application provides insufficient evidence that existing infrastructure can support this massive increase in demand.

INEQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT CONCENTRATION AND CUMULATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURE

Monks Cottage will be engulfed within a vast conurbation merging formerly distinct villages, losing both its immediate rural setting within a continuous suburbanisation stretching from Reading to Wokingham.

Over 90% of Wokingham Borough's recent housing development has been concentrated in the south, primarily at Arborfield Garrison and Shinfield. This application eliminates remaining gaps between Winnersh, Barkham, Arborfield, Shinfield and Lower Earley, permanently destroying centuries-old village identities.

Infrastructure in South Wokingham is already severely strained - roads congested, schools oversubscribed, GP surgeries at capacity and sewage systems struggling. Adding 3,900 homes will push infrastructure beyond breaking point, with catastrophic traffic impacts on the A327, Lower Earley Way and local roads. Environmental impacts are equally severe: agricultural land loss, habitat destruction, increased flood risk from massive hard surfacing, air quality degradation and additional pressure on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

The application fails to assess these cumulative impacts adequately. While individual developments claim mitigation measures, the cumulative effect creates irreversible consequences: loss of village identity, merging of settlements, elimination of green gaps, and transformation from rural to urban character.

The south has absorbed over 90% of housing whilst the north remains protected. No adequate assessment has been made of cumulative environmental, social and infrastructure impacts. Development could have been more equitably distributed. The Council has failed to consider the social and environmental justice implications of this grossly inequitable distribution.

The application must be refused as the unacceptable culmination of a development strategy placing disproportionate and unsustainable burden on South Wokingham Borough. The cumulative impacts have not been adequately assessed, the loss of village identities and green gaps has not been justified, and concentrating over 90% of development in one area represents fundamentally inequitable and unsustainable planning.

ALTERNATIVE SITE CONSIDERATIONS - ASHRIDGE

The failure to properly consider alternative sites means that Monks Cottage faces unprecedented impacts that could have been avoided entirely if the Council had conducted a thorough and objective site selection process. The existence of more suitable alternative sites raises serious questions about why Hall Farm has been selected despite its fundamental unsuitability.

The application fails to demonstrate that Hall Farm is the most appropriate site for this scale of development when compared to available alternatives. The Ashridge site represents a significantly more suitable alternative that appears to have been inadequately considered by Wokingham Borough Council.

The Ashridge site offers several critical advantages over Hall Farm. Most importantly, it is not located on a flood plain, unlike Hall Farm which sits in proximity to the River Loddon with associated flood risks. The Ashridge site is also not designated as green belt, removing a significant planning constraint. Furthermore, Ashridge has good transport links and could potentially deliver approximately 3,000 homes.

The Ashridge site could be developed over the 15-year period that the Local Plan Update has to cover. In contrast, the Hall Farm site, with its larger number of houses and extensive infrastructure requirements, stretches out over two plan periods or 30 years of building in the area. This extended construction timeline means decades of disruption for existing residents and prolonged uncertainty about infrastructure delivery.

The Council's apparent commitment to Hall Farm, despite its fundamental unsuitability due to flood risk, lack of transport connectivity, BMV agricultural land loss, ecological destruction, and infrastructure delivery challenges, raises serious questions about whether alternative sites have been given proper and objective consideration. The existence of the Ashridge alternative, which addresses many of Hall Farm's deficiencies, suggests that the site selection process has been flawed and that the Council has prioritised its relationship with the University of Reading over sound planning principles.

The application must demonstrate through transparent evidence that a thorough, objective, and comparative assessment of alternative sites has been conducted, and that Hall Farm has been selected on planning merits rather than commercial convenience. Without such evidence, the application should be refused on the grounds that more suitable alternative sites have not been properly considered.

HUMAN RIGHTS, PROPERTY RIGHTS AND ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

The impact on Monks Cottage raises serious questions about the protection of property rights and the right to peaceful enjoyment of one's home under Article 8 and Article 1 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The application fails to demonstrate that the interference with these rights is proportionate or that adequate safeguards are in place.

The failure to consider the impact to Monks Cottage or engage with its residents on the planned development prior to application stage suggests inadequate regard for existing property rights and residential amenity.

If the development must proceed as proposed, the applicant should be required to offer suitable compensation or provide comprehensive mitigation including temporary relocation during construction, structural guarantees against vibration damage, and permanent noise attenuation measures.

POLICY CONFLICTS

This application conflicts with fundamental planning principles and policies.

The National Planning Policy Framework requires that planning decisions protect and enhance the natural environment, minimise

impacts on biodiversity, ensure a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupants of land and buildings, promote sustainable transport, and protect Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. This application fails on all counts.

Wokingham Borough Council's own planning policies emphasise protecting residential amenity, conserving and enhancing the natural environment, promoting sustainable transport, ensuring sustainable development, and protecting agricultural land. This application violates these policy objectives.

The proposal conflicts with policies protecting Local Wildlife Sites, ancient woodlands, priority habitats, and BMV agricultural land.

Whilst mitigation is proposed, the principle of avoiding harm in the first instance has been abandoned in favour of a "develop first, compensate later" approach that is contrary to established planning policy.

CONCLUSION

This application represents fundamentally unsustainable and inappropriate development that will cause severe and unacceptable harm to Monks Cottage, create a car-dependent community with inadequate transport infrastructure, destroys valuable ecological habitats and Best and Most Versatile agricultural land, and fail to provide adequate services and utilities for the proposed population. For Monks Cottage specifically, the unique position within the development site boundary creates impacts that have not been properly assessed or mitigated. The property will be surrounded by construction activity for years, subjected to severe noise, dust, vibration, and traffic impacts, and will lose its entire rural setting and character. The application provides no adequate protection measures, compensation, or alternative arrangements for this unprecedented situation.

For the wider community and location, the transport strategy is wholly inadequate, relying on a car-dependent model that contradicts sustainability principles and an M4 bridge whose funding and delivery remain unproven. The sewage infrastructure requirements depend on

Thames Water, a company in financial and operational crisis, to deliver the required upgrades in an acceptable timeframe. The flood risk and drainage strategy relies on SUDS whose modelling accuracy is acknowledged to be challenging, with little room for error given the massive volume of runoff and low confidence in the accuracy of proposed solutions. The ecological destruction, loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land protected by national policy, and inadequate infrastructure provision render this development fundamentally inappropriate.

The cumulative development burden on South Wokingham Borough, with over 90% of new housing concentrated in this area whilst the north of the borough has avoided significant development, represents inequitable and unsustainable planning. This development will act as the final connector that merges Winnersh, Barkham, Arborfield, Shinfield, and Lower Earley into continuous urban sprawl, eliminating village identities and green gaps that have existed for centuries. The cumulative impacts of multiple large-scale developments have not been adequately assessed.

Furthermore, the apparent fixation on the Hall Farm site, seemingly driven by the Council's agreement with the University of Reading rather than objective planning considerations, raises serious concerns about the site selection process. The existence of the

Ashridge alternative site, which is not on a flood plain, is not designated green belt, has good transport links, and could deliver development over a shorter timeframe, suggests that more suitable alternatives have not been properly considered.

These are not minor deficiencies that can be addressed through planning conditions. They are fundamental flaws that go to the heart of whether this development is deliverable, sustainable, and appropriate. The risks are too great: the risk that the M4 bridge will not be built, the risk that sewage infrastructure will not be delivered, the risk that SUDS will fail and cause flooding, the risk that thousands of homes will be built without adequate supporting infrastructure, the risk of catastrophic impacts on Monks Cottage and existing residents, and the risk that a more suitable alternative site has been overlooked in favour of commercial convenience.

I urge Wokingham Borough Council to refuse this application. If the Council is minded to approve despite these objections, I request that Wokingham Borough Council enter into direct engagement with me to discuss comprehensive protection measures to be secured through planning conditions and Section 106 obligations.