

PLANNING REF : 252498
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 1 Betty Grove Lane
:
: RG41 5DR
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Sue Manston
DATE SUBMITTED : 13/01/2026

COMMENTS:

I strongly object to this planning application for the following reasons:

1. Traffic

There are already queues and delays today, without the Loddon Valley Garden Village development, especially in rush hour there are very long traffic queues along Mole Road and Lower Earley Way in the mornings and evenings.

The Transport Survey was carried out by Stantec in November 2021 and this information is now well out-of-date and does not reflect current traffic levels. The level of traffic has increased enormously since 2021, particularly with the developments at Shinfield, Hatch Farm Way and Arborfield Green, and there are even more additional houses planned 900 at Arborfield Green and 300 at Barkham which can only cause further traffic queues and increase the risk of accidents.

Car ownership levels in Wokingham are some of the highest in the country, with around 40% of homes having 2 cars and 14% have 3 or more cars. Car ownership at LVGV will mean between 5000 6000 extra cars on the road. The impact of all this additional traffic on the rural road network will be highly damaging to the local heritage and environment around Hall Farm. Despite all the new roads planned inside the LVGV area, traffic will eventually have to spill out onto Lower Earley Way, Mole Road or Reading Road, all of which are currently operating beyond capacity. This has a negative impact on emergency vehicle response times as well.

The increased traffic queues will not only worsen congestion, they will increase air and noise pollution in the area, potentially affecting residents' health and wellbeing.

The LPU is relying very heavily on walking, cycling and public transport to alleviate car traffic on the road network. This is a commendable aim but will be difficult to achieve. It is noted in the LPU that getting buses to run through LVGV is a "key challenge" especially when reliant on private bus companies to offer these services.

2. Biodiversity

The section of the River Loddon affected by this proposal represents one of the last remaining natural stretches of the middle and lower River Loddon. It is an area of considerable ecological value, providing important habitat for wildlife and supporting the wider health of the river system. Development will result in habitat destruction and biodiversity loss. The degradation of this natural corridor would be an environmental disaster.

There is an abundance of wildlife in the development area, including protected species. Wildlife in our garden includes badgers, foxes, roe and muntjac deer, bats, weasels, hedgehogs, grass snakes, tawny and barn owls, newts and frogs. Otters have been seen on the river.

Far from "improving biodiversity", turning the river flood plain into a Country Park will be detrimental to the local wildlife and biodiversity in the area. The area will be frequented by people and dogs which will have a negative effect on the local wildlife. The biodiversity net-gain claims are not credible given the scale of habitat loss. It is far more likely that the development will result in a net loss of biodiversity and to suggest otherwise is not credible.

The proposed area for the Country Park is frequently flooded and when it isn't flooded it is often still very boggy. The Environment Agency Flood Alert website labels this part of the flood plain as "The Swamp" and for good reason!

The Environment Agency issued a flood alert for Arborfield, Shinfield, Lower Earley, Sindlesham and Winnersh on 19th December 2025. And more alerts were issued on 10th, 11th and 12th January 2026. I took a photograph of a flooded field in the western SANG area today (12th January 2026). I have tried to attach it here but it hasn't proved possible to do so.

When the area is flooded, wildlife currently makes for the higher ground i.e. the very ground that the planned development will occupy. Where, then, will the wildlife go? Where will they forage? There is no point in protecting woodlands for wildlife if there are no adjacent foraging areas. Badgers, deer, foxes, owls etc. live in the woodlands but they come out into the fields (and our garden) to find food.

There needs to be sufficient green space between each woodland and the development to allow for foraging. A single barn owl needs 0.5 square kilometres of foraging space (ref. The Barn Owl Trust).

SANGs will not replace the variety or interest of the natural landscape. They will be flooded for part of the year and they are too small to be interesting. The natural habitat which already exists is far more interesting and beneficial to wildlife than a SANG.

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. There are plenty of brownfield sites and empty houses that should be considered before destroying this wonderful habitat. The whole idea of the EcoValley / SANG area is simply GREENWASHING and will do more harm than good.

3. Water and Sewerage

Why on earth are WBC planning to increase housing in the south of the borough when there is a chronic shortfall of waste water treatment facilities in the area?

At times of heavy rainfall, Thames Water regularly pumps raw sewage into Barkham Brook, which flows into the River Loddon (a rare

example of a chalk river). There is no guarantee that sewage produced by the LVGV development will not end up in the Loddon.

According to the LPU, Arborfield Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTWs) is expected to exceed its capacity by 15,814 dwellings if the LVGV

development goes ahead. Major upgrades will be required. WBC's own Water Cycle Study says that typically around 5 years is required for WwTWs to be upgraded.

Whilst Thames Water claims it is possible to deliver the major upgrades required in terms of sewerage infrastructure, the Environment Agency has contradicted this. Given Thames Water's current situation, this timescale seems very unlikely to be met, if at all.

In contrast, the WwTWs at Ashridge is expected to have spare capacity of around 4,600 dwellings. It would make much more sense to develop land in the north of the borough rather than at LVGV.

4. Doctors, Dentists, Hospital & Emergency Services

There has been rapid growth in housing recently in the Shinfield, Winnersh, Three Mile Cross and Arborfield areas. Our health services cannot cope with the present demands GP services, dentists and

hospital services are all failing and an increasing number of pharmacies are closing. Arborfield Green still does not have a GP surgery or dentist. The RBH is crumbling and a new hospital is desperately needed.

Adding another 4,000 homes (c. 10,000 people) to the area is incomprehensible in the current dire situation. It will fail to meet the planning requirement for 'healthy and safe communities'.

Police, fire and ambulance services are already stretched and this development will place further strain on them, compromising public safety and emergency response times.

5. Lack of suitable Buffer Zone between settlements

This application contravenes WBC's Landscape Guidelines to "Conserve the rural character of the river corridor, to protect the individual identity of settlements and retain their sense of physical and visual separation."

Combined with existing developments in Arborfield, Shinfield, Three Mile Cross and Barkham, the cumulative effect on infrastructure and local services will be overwhelming. It will make Lower Earley, Shinfield, Sindlesham and Arborfield into a single, densely populated built-up area. The LVGV development is entirely out of scale and out of keeping with its surroundings it will remove valuable green space between existing settlements.

6. Heritage

The LVGV site has much valued local heritage which should be protected and preserved, not built over or surrounded by houses. It

includes listed buildings, the old Arborfield church, an old water mill, an iron age settlement and many ancient tracks. The proposed development threatens the character and heritage of the area, undermining the sense of place and community cohesion.

7. Gypsy and Traveller Pitches

The proposed Gypsy and Traveller Site Location, right next to dwellings, is completely unacceptable.

I say this having lived right next door to a Gypsy site for many years. The noise and disruption was appalling. The main problems stem from the significant noise, 24 hours a day. Much of the disturbance was caused by outdoor activities and vehicle movements large vehicles such as (but not limited to) mobile homes, caravans & motor homes, lorries, breakdown trucks, mechanical diggers, tree surgeons' vehicles, horse & other animal transport. Nig httime activity is prolific and not conducive to good sleep and good health.

Therefore, a gypsy and traveller site needs to be located well away from any dwellings where occupants might reasonably expect a good night's sleep. There needs to be suitable and safe access, with good visibility, on to the main road network for large vehicles not a Byway or a B-road. The outline plan does not include any indication of access point, but Betty Grove Lane and Mole Road are both totally unsuitable.

Betty Grove Lane is a Byway. A previous planning application (and an appeal) for a gypsy site in Betty Grove Lane was refused by both WBC and the Planning Inspectorate. The following are comments from WBC's Highway Authority and the Planning Inspectorate regarding Betty Grove Lane:

Report from WBC Highway Authority

"Betty Grove Lane is substandard in respect of width, alignment and construction. It is generally 2.5 3.0 metres wide, with no formal passing places and therefore does not allow two vehicles to pass safely, presenting a danger to other road users particularly in conjunction with any larger vehicles.

"It lacks any footways or street lighting. Pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians would be vulnerable when passed by vehicles negotiating the narrow carriageway.

"The visibility at the junction of Betty Grove Lane and Mole Road (B3030) is poor. Vehicles emerging onto the B3030 have restricted visibility; increased use of this junction would therefore increase the risk of accidents occurring."

Appeal refused by the Planning Inspector

"It seemed to me self-evident that, due to its narrow width, absence of formal passing places and uneven surface, the carriageway in Betty Grove Lane could not satisfactorily accommodate any appreciable

increase in residential traffic. Moreover, I saw, when attempting to drive a vehicle westwards out of Betty Grove Lane on to Mole Road (where there is no visibility splay in either direction), that what seemed to me a potentially dangerous manoeuvre was involved.

"I conclude that permitting the establishment of mobile homes on the appeal site would detract unacceptably from highway safety in Betty Grove Lane and the junction with Mole Road."

The gypsy site should be sited well away from any dwellings and with safe access onto an A-road e.g. the A327 Reading Road.