

Planning applications:

Spencers Wood Primary School

241861 Detailed Application for Outline Consent O/2013/0346 (130162)

241862 Discharge of Condition 4 of Outline Consent O/2013/0346 (130162)

Application 241861

Shinfield Parish Council **Objects** to Planning Application 241861 for the following reasons:

- Failure to mitigate the impact of the development under consent O/2013/0346 (130162)
- Failure to mitigate impact of other developments in Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield approved since 2013 (and including the 272 dwellings, in Three Mile Cross, approved in 2011 under 102544)
- Failure to provide safe sustainable travel routes to the school
- Failure to design a safe on-site road and parking arrangements
- The building location and massing is incompatible with planning for future increases in capacity

Failure to mitigate the impact of the development under consent O/2013/0346 (130162) and Failure to mitigate impact of other development in Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield approved since 2013.

Outline Consent O/2013/0346 (130162) approves 900 new dwellings and a new Primary School at the application site with a 1 to 3 form entry. The size of the school to meet the needs of the community of Spencers Wood to mitigate the impact of the development approved in consent O/2013/0346 (130162). The site was defined in 2 areas totalling 1.27 Hectares.

Since 2013 further consents for new housing have granted in Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield totalling a further 918 new dwellings (see Appendix 2) **above** the 900 permitted in these developments.

The detailed application 241861 proposes a Single form entry school which fails to meet the needs of the community. Furthermore, the application proposes to develop Land parcel 1 (Primary School Land B) only and dispose of Land parcel 2 (Primary School Land C) for alternative uses.

SPC objects to this application as it fails to ensure Wokingham Borough Council will comply with its statutory duty under **Section 14 of the Education Act 1996**, to ensure that there are sufficient primary (and secondary) school places for all children living in the area. Appendix 1 to this objection provides a detailed analysis demonstrating the proposed school is too small for Wokingham Borough Council to meet its statutory duty.

The change of use and disposal of the additional land parcel will prevent further development of the school if expansion from 1 form entry to up to 3 form entry is required.

Failure to provide safe sustainable travel routes to the school.

The drawings and Travel Plan do not provide any safe sustainable travel routes to the school from the southside of Fulbrook Avenue or from the West of Shinfield.

The plans do not include a controlled pedestrian crossing from the school to the southside of Fulbrook Avenue to reach the west bound 600 bus stop, Hyde End Lane South, the playground on Fulbrook Avenue or the pedestrian and cycle path to the West of Shinfield.

The plans do not include any traffic calming measures or a controlled crossing across the entrance to the one-way northbound Hyde End Lane South which prevents safe access to the east bound 600 bus stop and access to the Ridge Sang

The plans do not include any traffic calming measures or controlled crossing across the exit from the one-way northbound Hyde End Lane South at the junction with Ryeish Lane which prevents safe access from the pathway along the eastern edge of the school site to the pavement on the east side of Hyde End Lane; to the houses in Ryeish Green; and to the Ridge SANG along Footpath 13.

The plans make no reference to the issues already apparent on Hyde End Lane getting past the residential properties on the east side, nor the congestion issues around Oakbank School at drop-off/pick-up times.

The plans do not include any proposals to increase the frequency of bus route 600 which connects Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood and Shinfield to the school from hourly in each direction or to alter the timetable to provide better times for parents, children and staff to access the school.

The plans do not identify outline Construction Traffic Management for the site, including parking, access and wheel washing, which have been raised on other development sites.

Failure to design a safe on-site road and parking arrangements.

The layout of the on-site roadways and parking arrangements will cause safety issues due to school vehicular access onto Fullbrook Avenue. and is detailed in Appendix 3 along with other design comments.

The building location and massing is incompatible with planning for future increases in capacity.

The position and layout of the buildings is arranged for one-form entry which does not allow for further development. The proposal to dispose of the other parcel of land is incompatible with further expansion.

Details relevant to the response to Application 241862

SPC's objection to Application 241862 is part of this objection and is attached to this objection.

Summary

This application is unacceptable unless the Shinfield Parish Council objections are resolved by ensuring a 3-form entry school may be built in the future, safe routes to school provided and a safe on-site layout suitable for expansion is provided with conditions 50 and 59 being properly discharged.

Application 241862

Shinfield Parish Council **Objects** to Planning Application 241862: Discharge of Condition 4 of Outline Consent O/2013/0346 (130162) and other matters for the following reasons:

Condition 4 Primary School Development Brief

Failure to mitigate the impact of the development under consent O/2013/0346 (130162) and Failure to mitigate impact of other development in Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield approved since 2013.

Outline Consent O/2013/0346 (130162) approves 900 new dwellings and a new Primary School at the application site with a 1 to 3 form entry. The size of the school to meet the needs of the community of Spencers Wood to mitigate the impact of the development approved in consent O/2013/0346 (130162). The site was defined in 2 areas totalling 1.27 Hectares.

Since 2013 further consents for new housing have granted in Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield totalling a further 918 new dwellings (see Appendix 2) above the 900 permitted in these developments.

The detailed application 241861 proposes a Single form entry school which fails to meet the needs of the community. Furthermore, the application proposes to develop Land parcel 2 (Primary School Land B) only and dispose of Land parcel 3 (Primary School Land C) for alternative uses.

SPC objects to this application as it fails to ensure Wokingham Borough Council will comply with its statutory duty under **Section 14 of the Education Act 1996**, to ensure that there are sufficient primary (and secondary) school places for all children living in the area. Appendix 1 to this objection provides a detailed analysis demonstrating the school is too small for Wokingham Borough Council to meet its statutory duty.

The change of use and disposal of the additional land parcels will prevent further development of the school if expansion from 1 form entry to up to 3 form entry when it is required.

Condition 50: Energy Strategy

The Energy Strategy is not complete and does not confirm how the school will comply with the requirements of government policy to reach Net Carbon Zero, BREEAM Very Good rating for new school buildings, Wokingham Sustainable Design and Construction SPD and Wokingham Climate Emergency Action Plan.

SPC expects all buildings to achieve the latest DFES sustainability targets.

Condition 59: Drainage Strategy

The area Flood Risk rating is nominally “**LOW**” but due to poor local drainage Ryeish Lane and Hyde End Rd south suffer regular flooding. The Drainage Strategy does not confirm how the increased surface run-off from the new school will be mitigated.

SPC expects all new development to fully mitigate the risk of additional flooding.

Details relevant the response to Application 241861

SPC's objection to Application 241861 is part of this objection and is attached to this objection.

Summary

This application is unacceptable unless the Shinfield Parish Council objections are resolved by ensuring a 3-form entry school may be built in the future, safe routes to school provided and a safe on-site layout suitable for expansion is provided with conditions 50 and 59 being properly discharged.

Appendix 1 – Primary School Capacity serving Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield

Contents:

- 1 Primary Schools serving the Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield area
- 2 Applications and allocations in the Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield area
- 3 Practical consequences of the above situation:

1. Primary Schools serving the Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield area

- A) There are only two primary schools within the Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield area, namely:

Grazeley Parochial Primary School has a catchment that embraces the entire South of M4 SDL and was expanded in 2013 (using s106 monies) from 15 to 30 intake with consequent total capacity of 210 across years 1 to 7 (one form entry). There is no Nursery provision and no specific additional SEN provision.

Lambs Lane Primary School has a total capacity of 210 across years 1 to 7 (one form entry). There is no Nursery provision, and it has a resource to cater for 10 SEN provision within its capacity.

This makes a total capacity of 420, with an annual intake of 60.

- B) There are three primary schools within the Shinfield area that are within walking distance for some of the Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross area, but notably not Swallowfield.

Shinfield Infants and Nursery School has a capacity of 330 across Nursery, Reception and years 1 to 2 (three form entry). There is Nursery provision and no specific additional SEN provision. It was expanded via s106 arising from the “Mitford Fields” development.

St Mary’s CE Junior School has a capacity of 360 across years 3 to 6 (three form entry). There is no nursery provision and no specific additional SEN provision

Alder Grove Primary School has a capacity of 420 across Nursery, Reception and years 1 to 6 (two form entry). There is no nursery provision and no specific additional SEN provision. This school was directly created by s106 commitments.

This makes a total capacity of 1110, with an annual intake of 150.

The requirement for a Spencers Wood Primary School was specifically identified for the South of M4 SDL with an entry of one form, with option to expand to two or three forms.

The original additional dwellings were limited to 900 (specifically including the 272 dwellings, in Three Mile Cross, approved in 2011 under 102544). Under government guidelines, given in “**New Homes fact sheet 5: New homes and school places**” (0.25 places per dwelling), this requires the creation of 225 primary school places i.e. a minimum one form entry school.

It was specified in multiple sources that the completion of the Spencers Wood Primary School should be complete “before the occupation of the 200th house”.

There have been a total of 1818 additional dwellings approved in Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield. This is an additional 918 dwellings to the original maximum, and this requires a total of 454 primary school places (225 + a further 229) i.e. at minimum a second entry form.

In conclusion, the direct implication of the approved developments is that the Spencers Wood Primary School should already exist as a one form entry school and be expanding to a two-form entry school. This requires both Primary School Land B and C sites to be used.

2. Applications and allocations in the Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield area

The NPPF (December 2023) paragraph 99: states: “It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education”.

The total number of applications for the September 2024 intake was 242 for the Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield area, against the total available annual intake of 210 in the primary schools listed previously.

The result is that all the schools are full (as defined by >95% of maximum roll):

- Alder Grove received 115 applications for 60 places in 2023 and 96 for 60 places in 2024.
- As allocations are made on proximity, the area from which the schools draw their intake is very small indeed. In 2024 Alder Grove recruited from within 0.430 miles of the school. (For information: the site of the projected school is 0.650 miles from the Alder Grove and School Green Centre 0.546 miles).
- Lambs Lane and Shinfield recruited from less than a mile of the school premises and Grazeley within 1.5 miles of the school.
- There are therefore a large number of children who live too far from any school to get their first preference choice.
- The consequence is that children have therefore been allocated to relatively distant schools with spare capacity, including The Coombes in Arborfield and schools north of the M4: Hawkedon, Hillside and Radstock in Earley, and Mortimer St Johns in West Berkshire. This has been the pattern for several years.
- It should also be noted that the 2023 closure and relocation of Farley Hill School to Arborfield Green practically removed a relatively near primary school resource once available to Swallowfield residents.

The situation is acknowledged by WBC in its ‘Wokingham Borough School Places Strategy, 2024/5 to 2029/30’ (April 2024), and its predecessor, which recommends the creation of 210 places to serve Shinfield (i.e. 30 a year) with the possibility of another 210 places in the future (p. 13). The document does not comment on the problems faced by Swallowfield.

3. Practical consequences of the above situation:

- In May 2024 a quarter of Shinfield children were being educated out of Shinfield parish (1069/1441). Given Shinfield's relative isolation from the remainder of the borough, this implies that the children have to travel some distance to school.
- 85 children were at The Coombes, 26 at Radstock, 27 at Hawkedon and 57 at Hillside. In Swallowfield ward, only half were being educated in either Shinfield South or at Swallowfield wards. 26 were at The Coombes and 47 at Farley Hill. An unknown number attended Mortimer St John. This demonstrates that a substantial minority of parents have awkward journeys to get their children to school because of a lack of local provision. There is no prospect of walking them to school. There may also be an obligation on the Borough Council to provide transport in some cases, placing increasing demand on statutory transport costs that are reportedly £750,000 over budget for 2024/25.
- Large parts of the parish cannot get into their nearest school because of the numbers who live nearer. For this reason, no Swallowfield children are admitted to Lamb's Lane school but are allocated to schools which are significantly further from Swallowfield, such as Farley Hill or Mortimer St John. The result is there is a significant outflow to schools in other wards (or out of borough) and at some distance from the child's home.
- Given the pace of development in adjacent wards, there are increasing concerns that the schools to which Shinfield children are currently allocated will not continue to be able take them. In fact, we would predict that The Coombes will come to serve Arborfield exclusively.
- The Planning Inspector recognised that there is no current school provision available to serve the Trowes Lane development in Swallowfield and stated that it was the Local Authority's responsibility to resolve this.
- The prospective North of Arborfield Road development in Shinfield would pose demands on the primary schools in the Shinfield area further disadvantaging children in the Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield.
- Another key issue is that a notably low proportion of children are getting their first-choice schools in the borough.
 - In 2024 had over 90 per cent of children in the Borough secured their first-choice school.
 - In Shinfield South ward the proportion was 75.6 per cent:
 - in Swallowfield 73.2 per cent.
 - Shinfield South had the largest number of third preference allocations of any ward (12 children out of 24 over the borough). It had an unsatisfactory number of children allocated to schools to which they did not apply.
- There may be an assumption that the current numbers represent an age bulge and as this moves through the school system the local demand will fall. Given the scale of building potential in both Shinfield and Swallowfield, in addition to the recently increased building target numbers for Wokingham, this seems unlikely.

Appendix 2 – Dwellings approved in Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield

The South of M4 SDL was approved with a total of 900 new dwellings in Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield, note that this total explicitly included the 272 dwellings already approved under 102544 as “Mitford Fields”.

As of 26th August 2024, the total number of approved dwellings for Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Swallowfield, since 2013, is 1818 (including the Mitford Fields development previously approved).

- 1) For completeness, it should be noted that a total of 154 dwellings had already been approved (all but 4 of these were in Three Mile Cross) in the period 1998 to 2013 which are NOT included in the South of M4 SDL, but which will have had an impact on numbers of children requiring Primary School education and the s106 expansion of Grazeley Parochial Primary School in 2013 may be assumed to be partly due to these dwellings, using s106 arising from the “Mitford Fields” development. A similar sum of s106 was allocated for Shinfield Nursery and Infants school for expansion there.
- 2) Similarly, it should be noted that the number of additional dwellings in Shinfield, since 2013, is 1539, with another 191 in the process of application for North of Arborfield Road and two further unquantified development sites reported to be being brought forward by the University of Reading.

Appendix 3 – Application specific comments

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1. Failure to design safe on-site road and parking arrangements.

The layout of the on-site roadways and parking arrangements will potentially cause safety issues due to:

- the single vehicular entrance/exit onto Fullbrook Avenue and the 'kidney shaped' turning area, combined with the entry/exit to the car park
- the lack of a one-way system (e.g. that might be encompassed in a horseshoe entrance and exit), and the risk of logjams/conflict between vehicular movements
- there being no highlighted prioritisation of taxi/minibus access for less mobile children

2. Blue Light access

The plans do not identify blue light access to the north side of the building, especially if the car park is fully occupied.

3. Biodiversity Net Gain

- a. The plans do not include how a baseline assessment of the site is to be achieved, and it is recommended that the baseline should be based on the site before it was used as a developer establishment location.

4. Shading

- a. The plans do not identify how immediate shading for young children is to be achieved, particularly the infants whose classrooms and playground are on the southern side of the site.
- b. The plans do not identify provision of suitable outside shading areas, natural and built to mitigate heat stress caused by climate change.

5. ASHP practical experience

- a. The plans do not specify the ability of ASHP's to properly service the building in periods of extended winter conditions. This has been an issue identified in other new community buildings in the parish. There is no apparent consideration here, especially over distal parts of the building.

6. The Energy Strategy Report

- a. The Energy Strategy Report indicates that there will be solar panels on the roof for sustainability (quotes 49% carbon reduction) but does not contain the following:
 - i. No mention is made of batteries to store any excess generation for utilisation when conditions require it.
 - ii. It also appears to ignore variations in solar conditions (overcast, snow etc.) which should influence peak power demand of the site. Consider dark winter days and peak heating demand.
 - iii. It is confusing that the solar panels are SE facing when all recently published information states that south facing is optimal.
 - iv. It is not clear whether the solar panels be supplying excess generated electricity to the National Grid when not required by the school e.g. weekends and school holidays.

7. Satellite provision

- a. There is a specific statement in the Design documents that the school will be a satellite to a nearby primary school (presumably Alder Grove) and will therefore share some facilities in this respect. These facilities are undefined and the consequences on catchment unclarified. [Note: Oliver Gill (Head of Education Access & Sufficiency for WBC) has responded in writing to SPC that no decision has been made on satellite/self-contained status which conflicts with the Development Brief within the applications].

8. SEN provision

- a. The plans show two SEN classrooms, clarified as 14 ambulant SEND children (ASD/SEMH). Clarity is required on whether these spaces will be for local children or for a wider catchment involving traffic from outside of the South of M4 SDL.
- b. The plans do not include any explanation of the separation of SEN classrooms and the two SEN resource rooms and the two SEN Therapy/MI rooms on the first floor, requiring their access using stairs/lift and corridors past classrooms.

9. Dining facilities

- a. The plans do not explain how preparation, service and dining will be facilitated to cover 30 nursery, 210 pupils, 14 SEN pupils, and 29 staff. The space provided does not appear adequate for a one form entry and certainly not for any potential future expansion of the school.

10. EV charging

- a. The plans do not include any detail of EV charging points.

11. Security by Design

- a. The plans state that external lighting will be time controlled (and include the assurance that it will meet legal and safety requirements), however it will not operate when the building is not in use with no mention of site security and ASB considerations.

12. DEPZ sheltering

- a. The plans do not identify if the school construction will be suitable for DEPZ sheltering under the Emergency Response protocols.

13. Education Nature Park project

- a. There is a 'forest school' shown but no school garden for planting etc – a serious omission given the NHM supported Education Nature Park project - involving schools & nurseries (nearly 3000 at last count) – this is a huge missed opportunity given the NHM establishment on the Thames Valley Science Park and its commitment to Community Engagement.