

Date: 24 March 2025
Application: 242696



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

SDL Public Rights Of Way Officer

Development Management &
Compliance

P.O. Box 157

Shute End, Wokingham

Berkshire, RG40 1BN

Tel: (0118) 974 6000

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Dear SDL Public Rights Of Way Officer,

Approval of Reserved Matters Consultation

Application Number: 242696

Applicant: N/A

Site Address: Hogwood Farm, Sheerlands Road, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG40 4QY

Parish: Finchampstead

Grid Reference: Easting - 477609, Northing - 164068

Type of Development: Major All other developments

Proposal: Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2179 (as varied by 181194, dated 14/11/2018). The Reserved Matters comprise details of sports pitches, sports pavilion, allotments, car parking and play areas; along with associated landscaping, highways and drainage infrastructure. Details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered

Please find attached a re-consultation on **revised plans** from the Development Management team for the above site. The documents associated with this are available to view in Information at Work. Below is a recommended consultation response template. We would be grateful if you could utilise this template for responses where appropriate. Once complete, please index this response into Information at Work against the application 242696.

The new details are as follows: **Re-consultation on revised plans. Amended sports pavilion design, sports pitch layout, allotment layout, parking layout, site landscaping, play areas, drainage strategy (changes to site levels, removal of pumping station and incorporation of larger & amended SUDS basins).**

If you are recommending conditions please note that recommended conditions should also include reasons and relevant policies stating why the condition is required. A list of standard conditions can be found on the Z Drive at: [Z:\Standard Planning Conditions](#)

Your observations are required in respect of this application within **10 working days** of the above date. If you need any more information please do not hesitate to contact the case officer Nick Chancellor.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	Andrew Fletcher External PRow Consultant And Laura Buck Service Manager Green Infrastructure	To (Case Officer):	Nick Chancellor
Service	SDL Public Rights Of Way Officer	App No:	242696
Address:	Hogwood Farm, Sheerlands Road, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG40 4QY.		
Type of Development:	Major All other developments		
Proposal:	Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2179 (as varied by 181194, dated 14/11/2018). The Reserved Matters comprise details of sports pitches, sports pavilion, allotments, car parking and play areas; along with associated landscaping, highways and drainage infrastructure. Details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ Recommend approval but with condition(s) & reason(s) **stated below**;
- ☐ Recommend approval with no conditions
- ☐ Recommend refusal for the reason(s) **stated below**;
- ☐ Negotiate the amendments **stated below**; or
- ☒ Request further information before determination as **stated below**.

Comments On Proposal

Comments prepared by Andrew Fletcher Consultancy on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council's Public Right of Way team.

Introduction

1. Wokingham Borough Council have asked me to consider the above application from a public rights of way perspective, and provide advice as to whether the application, if approved and constructed, will have a detrimental impact on the public rights of way network and if so, recommend improvements that could mitigate the impact.

2. This advice has been prepared for consideration by the Wokingham Borough Council Green Infrastructure Service to assist in the preparation of their response to the planning application consultation.

Background and network context

3. The proposed development consists of a sports hub, allotment site, community orchard and a bridleway.

4. The proposed development is bounded to the north by an existing residential development under construction, with a further development proposed under PA 242653. To the east the proposed allotments are bounded by Shepperlands Studios, and the route of the proposed bridleway extends to the south and west of Shepperlands Studios, parallel to Park Lane. The advice contained in this briefing note has been made in anticipation of the development under PA 242653 being approved.

5. Finchampstead Bridleway 4 runs to the East of the site, terminating on Park Lane. The nearest public footpath (Finchampstead Footpath 28) exists approximately 380 metres to the south of the development and runs from Park Lane to Reading Road through the West Court SANG.

6. Overall, the inclusion and creation of the bridleway is a welcome addition, providing a crucial link in the public rights of way network and also supporting the permeability of the residential sites to the north and west.

Specific comments on the application and consideration of the impact of the proposed development

7. Surface of the proposed bridleway

The surface of the proposed bridleway is listed at Enviropave, as specified by the Council. This surface material is a good option for the bridleway, and will be similar to that used for the Greenways project. The surfacing material has proved popular with walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Attention should be paid where vehicles are going to be driving along this surface, and where vehicles are turning there is a significant risk of damage to the surface.

It is understood that the route of the bridleway extends further than the particular site under consideration. For consistency, the same surfacing should be specified for the whole route in each separate planning application.

Maintenance of this surface should also be considered. Regular weed clearance will be needed to prevent upgrowth from damaging the surface material, and to maintain any guarantee periods. If the bridleway is to be passed to the Council for ongoing maintenance, this will be an ongoing cost, and a commuted sum could be considered to cover this additional burden.

8. Links to the existing public rights of way network.

The proposed bridleway extends to Park Lane, near to the junction with Finchampstead BR 4. This is a welcome design, and it will provide a very useful link and valuable extension to the rights of way network. It will create a nearly completely off-road link to California Country Park and the Greenway network. With the addition of the linking path to the SANG, there will be a link for pedestrians between the West Court SANG and California Country Park.

9. Ensuring rights of access for the future

It is not clear within the documents provided for the proposal whether the proposed bridleway, or the linking path from the bridleway to the SANG will be dedicated as public rights of way. It is strongly recommended that a dedication of public rights be included as part of this development, rather than the use of these routes being left as permitted use only. The reason for this is that permitted routes are not secure and permission could be withdrawn in the future, leading to a significant loss in the network. Dedication of these

routes secures the rights for the future, and also can help to address liability concerns that exist with permitted routes.

It is recommended that a creation agreement under Section 25 Highways Act 1980 be used to dedicate new public rights for the bridleway and the linking paths. Consideration is needed on how to best protect the pedestrian and cycle routes; there is no provision for recording pedestrian and cycle only routes in the Wokingham Borough Council Definitive Map and Statement (DMS). It is possible that these may need to be recorded as a cycle track.

10. Vehicular crossing of the bridleway

It is noted that there is a proposed vehicular crossing point from the car park to the sports hub and pavilion. The level of vehicular use here should be examined to ensure that it will not cause conflict with Non-Motorised Users (NMU) using the bridleway. It is noted that this will serve as the main vehicular access to the pavilion for supplies and also provides access to disabled parking. From the plans it appears that a gate is intended to be installed from the car park, however it is not clear if this is an automated gate intended to control all traffic, or simply a gate that is opened at the start and end of a working day.

If the gate is an active access control to the pavilion, the level of vehicle use over the bridleway will be less than if the gate is a simple gate to be opened and closed once a day. In the latter scenario there is potential for a significant level of vehicle use over the bridleway and accordingly an increase in the risk of conflict between vehicles and bridleway users.

In either situation, visibility splays should be considered at the junction of the bridleway and the vehicular crossing point to ensure that both vehicle users and bridleway users have ample opportunity to check the crossing and ensure it is safe before proceeding.

The level of highway rights over this section also need to be considered. It is my understanding that the bridleway is intended to be a continuous route, and the vehicular crossing to the pavilion is not intended to be a road carrying carriageway rights. If this is the case, then the bridleway rights would take precedence over the vehicular use. If the access to the pavilion is intended to be a carriageway, then the bridleway needs to be shown on the DMS to have a break in it where the higher carriageway rights exist, avoiding dual recording of highway statuses between the DMS and the Wokingham Borough Council statutory list of streets.

It is recommended that warning signs are installed to advise vehicles that there is a bridleway crossing.

11. Access to the bridleway from the residential areas

Access to the bridleway and the sports hub facilities is shown to be from the north of the proposed sports hub site, from the vehicular access to the pavilion in the middle, from the proposed pedestrian/cycle path to the south and from the western junction of the bridleway with Park Lane near to Finchampstead Bridleway 4.

There is a point on the plans which shows a more direct route from the proposed residential areas and the sports hub gate entrance, as shown below:



As shown, there does not appear to be any physical barrier preventing residents accessing the sports hub directly over this land and there is a high likelihood for this to become an unofficial and unprotected path. It is recommended that a path is constructed at this point to formalise this potential use, or if this is not a desired impact, a barrier is erected to prevent such use.

12. Access to and from the trim trail, and its interaction with the bridleway

The entrance to the trim trail from the bridleway is on a sharp 90 degree bend, with vegetation detailed on both sides. There is a risk of collision at this point between people exiting the trim trail, and people using the bridleway. For the majority of use this will be a low risk of impact, however this risk increases when considering faster traffic such as cyclists.

Visibility plays should be considered at the junction of the trim trail and the bridleway to ensure that both trim trail and path users have ample opportunity to see each other and avoid a potential collision.

13. Turning head to the south of the sports hub

The Sports Hub Land Illustrative Masterplan - Changes Mark up document (Dwg No CSA/6689/140A) shows that a reinforced grass turning head is included at the south side of the site, where a pedestrian and cycle access link has been included (considered below). This turning head implies vehicle use of the bridleway which will pose a risk to the public using the bridleway, particularly where there are little opportunities for members of the public to move out of the way of any vehicular traffic. It is not clear what the need is for this turning

head, or the level of vehicular use of the bridleway is expected, but it is considered that this may be for the use of maintenance vehicles.

It should be borne in mind that once a bridleway, it is an offence under Section 34 Road Traffic Act 1988 to drive along it by a vehicle without lawful authority.

The surface of the bridleway at this point is detailed as Enviropave, which is a rubber crumb/aggregate mix. This type of surfacing is particularly susceptible to damage caused by vehicles “dry turning” on the bridleway, which will bind with the rubber in the mix and significantly damage the surface.

It is recommended that the need to drive along the bridleway is reduced to an absolute minimum for maintenance, and that the requirement and opportunity for ‘dry turning’ of tyres against the bridleway surface be eliminated. A suggested option would be to extend the maintenance track near to the SUD feature to the west of the bridleway, so that maintenance vehicles do not have to turn round at the bottom of the site and can continue in a wider loop.

An alternative solution would be to remove the rubber crumb element of the Enviropave surfacing, using aggregate alone.. This however would result in a very hard asphalt type surface, reducing the utility of the surface to the public. This option is included for consideration but is not recommended as the best way forward for the whole route but may be an accessible option for a short section of bridleway at the turning point to protect the surface where it is most vulnerable.

14. The linking path from Park Lane to the bridleway, and proposed cycle gate.

The Sports Hub Land Illustrative Masterplan - Changes Mark up document (Dwg No CSA/6689/140A) shows that a short section of path is proposed to the very south of the proposed development allowing pedestrian and cycle access between Park Lane and the bridleway. It is not clear under what rights of access the public would be using this path. As it is intended to be for pedestrians and cyclists this would not form part of the bridleway rights and consideration will be needed on how best to secure this link for the future. As stated above, permitted access holds an inherent risk that the permission could be withdrawn in the future, and dedication of rights is considered to be the best long term strategy for securing access.

As this linking path is intended to be for pedestrians and cycles only, there will need to be some signage in place to advise equestrian users that there are no rights for them to continue along the linking path to Park Lane.

It is not clear from the documentation what barrier is intended as a “cycle gate”. Any barrier along the path has the potential to cause issues to disabled users and the Council is recommended to consider its duties to disabled people under the Equality Act 2010 to consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act, and to take steps to meet the different needs of disabled persons. It is recommended that the Council be mindful of the British Standard for Gaps, Gates and Stiles (BS5709:2018), in particular the hierarchy of structures and the selection of the least restrictive option. A gap is the most accessible and preferred option, followed by a swing gate, followed by a kissing gate.

The positioning of the gate is also crucial; any structure should be set back from the road to allow a safe refuge off-road that is sufficient for pedestrians and cycles.

It is noted that this linking path exists along Park Lane near to the entrance of a proposed path in the Wokingham Borough Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020-2030. This path is described as “N-S route from road (Park Lane) past Wheatlands Manor to existing

path N of Eversley (FP 28)", as either a new footpath or bridleway. If the route was to be achieved in the future as a bridleway, there would be an increased strategic need to open the linking path up for horse riders as well as pedestrians and cyclists to provide a more consistent and coherent network.

Visibility splays should be considered at the junction of this linking path and Park Lane to ensure that both vehicle users and path users have ample opportunity to see each other.

Dwg No CSA/6689/140A makes it clear that this path is a new addition to the proposed development. Whilst welcome, the plans do not detail what surfacing is used for the path. It could be beneficial for this path to have a different surface, or a different colour, from the bridleway to denote in an easy way that it is a different path with differing rights. The surface should be suitable for all year use, but for consistency it would be logical for this linking path to be of a similar appearance to the paths used within the SANG. Having said this, there are some doubts as to the efficacy of hoggins for pedestrian/cycle use during the winter months.

15. The link to West Court SANG from the bridleway

It is noted that a linking path for pedestrians and cycles is offered at the South West corner of the site, leading to West Court SANG. As this route is not intended for use by equestrian users, there will need to be some signage in place to advise equestrian users that there are no rights for them to continue along the path to the SANG. Notwithstanding my advice above regarding suitable barriers and gates, there remains a risk that this path will be used by equestrian users.

Similar to my advice above regarding the linking path, it is not clear under what rights of access the public would be using this path. As it is intended to be for pedestrians and cyclists this would not form part of the bridleway rights and consideration will be needed on how best to secure this link for the future. As stated above, permitted access holds an inherent risk that the permission could be withdrawn in the future, and dedication of rights is considered to be the best long term strategy for securing access.

The Sports Hub Land Illustrative Masterplan - Changes Mark up document (Dwg No CSA/6689/140A) makes it clear that this path is a new addition to the proposed development. Whilst welcome, the plans do not detail what surfacing is used for the path. It could be beneficial for this path to have a different surface, or a different colour, from the bridleway to denote in an easy way that it is a different path with differing rights. The surface should be suitable for all year use, but as stated above, for consistency it would be logical for this linking path to be of a similar appearance to the paths used within the SANG. Having said this, there are some doubts as to the efficacy of hoggins for pedestrian/cycle use during the winter months.

16. Community Orchard positioning

Whilst not a public rights of way aspect, during my examination of the plans I noted that the community orchard appears to be held within the locked allotment area. If this is the case it is likely that the only people who would be able to benefit from the community orchard would be the allotment holders.

Summary of recommendations

17. A contribution is sought for the ongoing maintenance of the proposed bridleway, as a continuing additional maintenance burden

Policy context:

Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy 2010-2026

CP3 – General Principles for development

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

h) Contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities;

CP6 – Managing Travel Demand Page 7

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

- c) Improve the existing infrastructure network, including road, rail and public transport, enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including provision for those with reduced mobility, and other users;
- e) Mitigate any adverse effects upon the local and strategic transport network that arise from the development proposed;

Local Plan 2023-2040

Policy C3 - Active Travel

3. Development proposals should:

- b) Maintain and enhance the quality of cycle routes as appropriate, including those identified in the most up-to-date walking and cycling strategy, as well as maximising opportunities to add to or extend these, in order to support a high quality integrated cycle network;

Policy C4 - Green and Blue Infrastructure

New development should:

- d) Provide clear arrangements for the long-term maintenance and management and/or enhancement of the green and blue infrastructure assets

18. The vehicular use of the bridleway should be minimised and addressed, and the potential conflicts at the pavilion entrance reviewed to minimise the potential for conflict between users. The bridleway uses should have priority over any shared vehicle use. All gates and structures on the bridleway and linking paths should be accessible and consider the needs of disabled persons. The advice contained in the British Standard for Gaps, Gates and Stiles (BS5709:2018) should be adhered to.

Policy context:

Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy 2010-2026

CP2 - Inclusive Communities

To ensure that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs, planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of:

- c) People with special needs, including those with a physical, sensory or learning disability or problems accessing services;

CP6 – Managing Travel Demand

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

- a) Provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice;
- f) Enhance road safety;

Local Plan 2023-2040

Policy C3 - Active Travel

2. Development proposals should: Page 8

- a) Prioritise and improve the pedestrian environment and contribute towards achieving a high-quality public realm, including the provision of facilities for pedestrians to rest and relax (including seating) and high-quality and safe road environment (including safe crossings, where needed).
- b) Be permeable, easy and safe to walk and wheel through, and enhance existing routes which are adequately lit, create step-free legible access and entrance points

whilst providing direct links to other pedestrian movement corridors.

c) Avoid severance and, where necessary, provide for routes and crossings close to desire lines, particularly those to everyday facilities.

f) Consider the needs of all users through inclusive design.

National Planning Policy Framework - December 2024

117. ... applications for development should:

a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;

b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;

19. A new footpath should be considered to link the residential areas to the bridleway and sports hub where a potential desire line point has been identified, as detailed in paragraph 11 above.

Policy context:

Local Plan 2023-2040

Policy C3 - Active Travel

2. Development proposals should:

c) Avoid severance and, where necessary, provide for routes and crossings close to desire lines, particularly those to everyday facilities.

20. Visibility splays should be considered for the bridleway at the trim trail junction and the vehicular crossing point at the pavilion/car park crossing. Visibility splays should also be considered at the Park Lane junctions of the pedestrian/cycle linking path at the south of the site and the western termination of the proposed bridleway.

Policy context:

Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy 2010-2026

CP6 – Managing Travel Demand

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

f) Enhance road safety;

Local Plan 2023-2040

Policy C3 - Active Travel

2. Development proposals should: Page 9

a) Prioritise and improve the pedestrian environment and contribute towards achieving a high-quality public realm, including the provision of facilities for pedestrians to rest and relax (including seating) and high-quality and safe road environment (including safe crossings, where needed).

b) Be permeable, easy and safe to walk and wheel through, and enhance existing routes which are adequately lit, create step-free legible access and entrance points whilst providing direct links to other pedestrian movement corridors.

c) Avoid severance and, where necessary, provide for routes and crossings close to desire lines, particularly those to everyday facilities.

f) Consider the needs of all users through inclusive design.

National Planning Policy Framework - December 2024

117. ... applications for development should:

a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas;

21. The linking paths from the West Court SANG and from the bridleway to Park Lane should be surfaced with a material suitable for all year use, and be of a different material or colour to the bridleway to distinguish the two public spaces.

Policy context:

Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy 2010-2026

CP3 – General Principles for development

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

h) Contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities;

CP6 – Managing Travel Demand

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

c) Improve the existing infrastructure network, including road, rail and public transport, enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including provision for those with reduced mobility, and other users;

g) Do not cause highway problems or lead to traffic related environmental problems.

Local Plan 2023-2040

Policy C3 - Active Travel

2. Development proposals should:

a) Prioritise and improve the pedestrian environment and contribute towards achieving a high-quality public realm, including the provision of facilities for pedestrians to rest and relax (including seating) and high-quality and safe road environment (including safe crossings, where needed).

b) Be permeable, easy and safe to walk and wheel through, and enhance existing routes which are adequately lit, create step-free legible access and Page 10 entrance points whilst providing direct links to other pedestrian movement corridors.

f) Consider the needs of all users through inclusive design.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Further information is requested in order to determine our position:

- The vehicular use of the bridleway should be minimised and addressed, and the potential conflicts at the pavilion entrance need to be reviewed to minimise the potential for conflict between users. The bridleway uses should have priority over any shared vehicle use. All gates and structures on the bridleway and linking paths should be accessible and consider the needs of disabled persons. The advice contained in the British Standard for Gaps, Gates and Stiles (BS5709:2018) should be adhered to.
- A new footpath should be considered to link the residential areas to the bridleway and sports hub where a potential desire line point has been identified, as detailed in paragraph 11.
- Visibility splays should be considered for the bridleway at the trim trail junction and the vehicular crossing point at the pavilion/car park crossing. Visibility splays should also be considered at the Park Lane junctions of the pedestrian/cycle linking path at the south of the site and the western termination of the proposed bridleway.

Subject to the above detail being provided and agreed by the PRoW team, a

contribution will be sought for the ongoing maintenance of the proposed bridleway, as a continuing additional maintenance burden.

Date:	05/06/2025	Signed:	L Buck
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