

PLANNING REF : 251143
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 1 White Cottages
: Upper Culham, Berkshire
: RG10 8NP
SUBMITTED BY : Ms CME James
DATE SUBMITTED : 29/09/2025

COMMENTS:

In the main, I refer to my objection raised regarding the previous plans, but given the change in layout, I also include the following points:

1. Given that the explanation given when the previous plans were submitted as to a lack of consultation with local residents due to 'confidentiality' issues, it is surprising that now the applicant's name is in the public arena that there has still been no reaching out to discuss with local residents how we can work together and to address our concerns. Instead, these updated plans ensure that the residents will have to contend with an additional polo field (making 2 x playing areas) and they are now proposed to be even closer to the residential properties in the hamlet with one being metres away from the residents of 1-4 White Cottages and that the muck heap with the associated smells and insect activity has been relocated from near the permissive byway to be closer to the stables and thus nearer to all the residential properties in Upper Culham. It seems strange that the applicant is ensuring that the residents will then suffer from an even greater loss of amenity, increased nuisance by way of smell and noise and an increase in traffic activity concentrated on the area nearest properties and furthest away from the less inhabited areas of the site.
2. The addition of a second polo field makes it clear that there is no intention that this will just be for personal usage but is to be a commercial enterprise, completely out of keeping with the area and will change this green belt land forever.
3. It seems strange that the top half of the site (the most level area) has now been kept free from any structure associated with the playing of polo but would, of course, be an ideal area for which to land multiple helicopters on or to seek permission later to put up buildings - for example, staff buildings or the hotel highlighted on the applicant's own social media feeds (since removed but seen by many residents).
4. The addition of the gate for the entrance from the A4130 creates even greater traffic dangers, being sited inside the site at a distance comparable to the length of a large HGV. This means that where one or more large HGV is entering the site, traffic on this busy stretch of road will back up behind it and long traffic queues will be inevitable, leading to increased pollution from idling engines, plus it is entirely foreseeable that the entrance, being placed where it is, and the amount of traffic entering the site and the likelihood of stationary HGVs, horse lorries and staff vehicles will lead to an increase of accidents on this national speed limit road with limited visibility at this point. Of course, the alternative to that would be that all these vehicles would then have to go via Culham Lane to prevent such accidents - a lane that is often single track with passing places and with a 7.5T weight limit and which would severely impact the amenity of the area not just for residents but also for walkers, cyclists and horseriders who are likely to avoid the area and thus contribute to the associated economic impact on local pubs and cafes who cater to these visitors.

5. I note that there is a comparison to Park Place but this is comparing apples to oranges - in terms of tree planting, this was done in the Victorian period where planning didn't exist and changed the landscape forever; Park Place was marketed as being one of the few large estates where there was no visibility of much of the landholding which is completely at odds with the open nature of Upper Culham Farm and its farmland; Park Place was also marketed as an estate that had no PROW, whereas Upper Culham Farm has these on the two sides that are not bounded by public highways. The argument that the planning should be allowed because there is an estate that made those changes nearly two hundred years ago seems weak at best.

6. In regard to the reservoir, the flooding report seems to rely on the fact that the reservoir is safe is based on a) the current risk from reservoir flooding in the area is zero to low while failing to highlight that this classification is based on the fact that the nearest water holding facility is at the top of Bowsey Hill and does not identify how that classification will change with the creation of a new reservoir that is similar in size to those that are under public ownership and are necessary for the provision of water to surrounding properties rather than for one person's use and b) the stats regarding once in 100 years anomalies does not address how these are no longer of that timeframe and these once in a 100 years events are becoming the norm c) that there is little discussion about how the bedrock

influences water flow - for example, it is well known that chalk is porous and in the event of above average then maybe the water will not overtop but it will drain through the chalk capillaries and under the public highway and into the bricks and mortar of the White Cottages as well as the other risks highlighted in my previous comments. There is no impact statement on this, no modelling yet it is a foreseeable

issue and I am surprised that the only inclusion in the report is how the reservoir will be maintained rather than the risk factors inherent in its placement and on the soil makeup. I was also unable to find a justification for why the plans changed initially so that there will be one large reservoir rather than several smaller ones - perhaps such irrigation ponds would have to be placed in the flat area that no longer has any built structures/changes and would impact on future planned building work?

7. The impact statements continually refer to the lack of buildings, yet show quite clearly the pump house which is the size of a small dwelling and my honestly held belief is that this will be added to with a hotel or other building in the unused part of the land where the stick and ball practice pitch was originally. I also cannot see how there will not be an application for some form of security station by the gate thus adding to the built up elements being forced through due to various work related legislation regarding employees' well being that will be difficult to turn down.

8. By placing all of these elements within the open plateau and increasing the built up areas that will be utilised on a daily basis the plans that already create overdevelopment and destroy the character of the area also ensure that the overshadowing and loss of privacy objected to on the previous plans will be even more exaggerated, that our quality of life will be affected both through the losses

previously mentioned but also through loss of amenity, a reduced quality of life for those in Upper Culham and the surrounding area, destroying elements of the location and neighbourhood that helps make the neighbourhood attractive and enjoyable for both residents and

visitors. The granting of planning permission would result in loss of light and overshadowing and loss of privacy for residents - particularly 1-4 White Cottages - and would fail to protect the living standards of local residents as well as having a negative effect on the character and appearance of the hamlet of Upper Culham and its environs and would seem likely to be opening a gateway for future development and commercialisation of the site.

Planning and the interaction with other statutory protections

As part of the planning process, I understand that other legal concepts and laws have to be considered and therefore I would highlight the following:

1. ECHR Article 8 rights - in effect, not only does the impact on my and my neighbours' article 8 rights have to be lawful but must fulfil a legitimate aim and be necessary. As part of that process there has to be a review of whose rights are affected and does the person who, in effect, takes those rights away have the legal right to do so but also that their rights on balance hold greater importance. I shall be interested to see the evidence that Planners use to decide on the rights of the sole applicant versus the rights of all the residents of Upper Culham.

2. Protocol1 Article 1 - the right to enjoy your property peacefully - by granting planning for this you would take away the right for us to enjoy our properties peacefully and while, of course, Wokingham Planning as part of the council and a public authority can restrict the way we live, again it will be interesting to see how this restriction will be dealt with particularly in regard to the public interest as a whole.

3. Nuisance - both under common law and statutory nuisance - one of the issues brought up in previous comments was in regard to the noise level which will now be doubled and even closer according to the residents thanks to the new plans with the inclusion of two polo fields with one being metres away from 1-4 White Cottages. The noise as well as smells from the muck heap and vibrations and disturbance and dust and increase in allergens during the all stages and from the horses themselves will be intolerable. There is clear case law on this (as there is in regard to the reduction of light) and it would be ironic if part of Wokingham Council granted planning permission while another part enforced injunctions and fines given that in regard to the noise in particular that it will be of a level that is known to be damaging to hearing and that the residents would be exposed to this on an almost daily basis for a large proportion of the year. When looking at case law on this, particularly other cases where church bells and cockerels have been silenced it can be appreciated that noise levels and regularity of these being far less than what is proposed in the application have been subject to injunctions and it would seem unbelievable that the proposed usage would not be similarly treated.

4. PSED - I understand that the planners have a duty to consider the Equality Act 2010 when considering any change of use/planning permission. It is clear that excavating a chalk plateau will release large amounts of potentially dangerous levels of dust into the surrounding areas. Not only will this trigger asthmas attacks (and I put you on notice that this will specifically affect my residence and those who reside and visit there), exacerbate those with lung

conditions including cancer, COPD etc and will be particularly concerning for elderly and very young residents who could suffer significant health issues due to their age and lung capacity and increase mortality. Furthermore, there are other disabilities that will be affected both by the work to create this commercial enterprise but also the activities that are proposed to be carried on at the site permanently. In the interests of transparency, I am disabled under the Equality Act and both the work on the land to change it from the farmland that it has been for centuries to a money-making commercial enterprise will affect me substantially as will the ongoing noise, lack of privacy, dust, vibrations etc. Therefore, I hope that you will note that you are not dealing with some ephemeral issue but one that will directly impact one of the residents and I find it hard to believe that I am the only one who will have a disability or whose health and wellbeing either or both physical and mental/emotional will be affected within the local area. I hope you give sufficient weight to those who have to live with disabilities and the way it will impact their lives and the likelihood that they will have to relinquish their houses if planning is granted so as not to exacerbate their disabilities and the unfairness of this. Mine is but one type of disability that will be affected by the noise, dust, smells, allergens etc and I hope that the planners give this due weight when considering the application.

5. Negligence - while I realise the local authority has no duty to prevent harm, they do have a duty not to cause harm and they have a higher level of responsibility to minors. The fact that this commercial enterprise with a high volume of traffic exiting and entering the site, the size of the reservoir and associated risks, the impact on those with health problems or disabilities, and the risk particularly to children's and the elderly's hearing and breathing and the risk of pedestrian, cyclist and horseriders injuries from an increase in traffic and being spooked by noise means that such a change in use and the ongoing use of the land makes it reasonably foreseeable that harm is more likely than not in numerous aspects of the plan and that the council has sufficient proximity to the residents if they approve the planning to have a legal relationship with residents to allow for a negligence case and that it would be fair, just and reasonable in the event that where any one or more of the residents or visitors to the area suffer any one or more of the injuries highlighted above and which have been drawn to the planners attention prior to their decision and would be able to hold the council to account and to be compensated for such injuries.

Therefore, this objection which is to be read in conjunction with my and other residents' previous comments is on the grounds of:

- Access and highway safety
- Impact on the environment both in the construction phase and ongoing in respect of queueing traffic and exhaust fumes from HGVs, horse lorries and staff and visitors' vehicles and the change in the landscape overall
- Impact on the local flora and fauna specifically during the construction phase
- Loss of ecological habitat post-construction and a change to ecological habitat that may not support the flora and fauna that

currently thrives on the site, many of which are on the red list (including the great crested newts that now reside here)

- Design and appearance of a dominating commercial enterprise out of keeping with the rural environs

- Close proximity to residential properties particularly of structures that will create noise, vibrations, disturbance, release of allergens and smells.

- Disturbance from smell, noise and vibrations at all stages

- Fear of crime

- Flood risk (particularly since this is an introduced risk)

- Layout and density of built structures and/or unnatural structures

- Loss of Daylight and overshadowing for 1-4 White Cottages

- Being overlooked and loss of privacy

- Overbearing nature of the proposal

- Loss of visual amenity for residents and visitors alike

- Loss of residential amenity

- The findings in previous appeal decisions specifically to Upper Culham Farm but also to Park Place

- The risk of creating a precedent and failing to protect the green belt and agricultural land and the nation's food security

- Traffic generation

- Inappropriate development on the Green Belt

- Against the local development policies

- Failure to fulfil the requirement of necessity - this would be just another polo enterprise which are already found in Park Place and just down the road in Henley - there is no need for another.

- The breach of other statutory laws and protocols and common law precedents.