

PLANNING REF : 243188
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Rectory Close
: Church Lane, Arborfield, Berkshire
: RG29HZ
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Oliver Jones
DATE SUBMITTED : 14/01/2025

COMMENTS:

My comments on the materials are:

- This EIA scoping document seems to have been created prematurely given that the regulation 19 Local Plan submission has yet to be assessed by the Planning Inspector. Is there not a real risk that this outcome is being pre-judged?
- The area is already prone to significant flooding on the Loddon flood plan (clue in the name) and even if the housing is built on the land that drains into this, changes in the nature and speed of water run off are likely to cause significant adverse issues. At the moment the fields act as a sponge to a degree and absorb large amounts of water, and this would not be the case with a scale development, leading to massive issues downstream at Showcase and beyond.
- The traffic in the area is already at breaking point, and I notice that the intention is to close Mill Lane to traffic. On the regular occasions where Mill Lane is already closed due to flooding, Mole Road up to Sindlesham becomes completely gridlocked. Proper traffic analysis in an EIA rather than computer "modelling" is likely to concluded that roads do not have the capacity for a development of this scale. If the scheme's numbers only "work" because they require the profit from this many houses to pay for the infrastructure, then it is a sign that the development itself is unsuitable. A case of the tail wagging the dog. Better to do a number of smaller developments across the WBC area instead?
- The outline plans show the tree lined avenue that links the original Arborfield Church with the end of Church Lane and the Old Rectory being dissected by a large new access road. This would severely compromise an important local heritage landscape feature, and one that is specifically mentioned as valuable in the Arborfield and Barkham local plan that was extensively consulted on by residents. Is this local plan simply being ignored?
- There needs to be an assessment in the EIA of the relative merits of this site versus others (e.g. in the North of the Borough). Access to transport is much better in the area around Twyford (mainline station / Crossrail), and also would not have the obvious flooding issues that exist with Hall Farm. No proper comparison of the options has been made in the various materials presented to date.
- The area proposed as community access is largely on the flood plain and will be under water and inaccessible for many months of the year, thus being entirely unsuitable as an amenity asset. And if UOR as so community spirited, why haven't they already opened up public access to this area?
- The entire scheme appears to be back-solving UOR's desire to monetise land and then fitting a story around that aim. Just because they desperately need the money should not be a pre-requisite that this development needs to happen - it would be the worst possible reason for doing it.