

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260779
Site Address:	Land At Sonning Golf Club, Duffield Road, Reading, RG4 6GJ
Expiry Date:	18.09.2026
Site Visit Date:	01.05.2026
Proposal: Application for the approval of reserved matters pursuant to outline planning consent 223458 (as amended by applications 242641 and 250553), for the Revised access off Duffield Road plus associated modifications to Sonning Golf Club, including reconfiguration of the golf club parking areas and conversion of the west wing of the existing clubhouse to accommodate a new golf simulator practice facility, including removal of external staircase and changes to fenestration (Phase 1).	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP15 – Employment Development
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB08 – Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB25 – Archaeology
Wokingham Borough Local Plan	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS5 – Development in the countryside SS8 – Meeting our employment needs

Update (LPU)	SS15 – Securing infrastructure SS16 – Safeguarded routes SS17 – Transport improvements CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development CE4 – Supporting a circular economy CE5 – Embodies carbon CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings CE7 – Low carbon and renewable energy generation CE8 – Protecting renewable energy generation C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C3 – Active travel C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging C6 – Technology and innovation in transport C8 – Utilities ER2 – Employment uses outside of Core Employment Areas ER3 – Supporting the rural economy FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH6 – Archaeology HC1 – Promoting healthy communities HC2 – Community infrastructure HC4 – Open spaces, sports, recreation and play facilities HC5 – Environmental protection HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
223458	Outline planning permission for the proposed erection of up to 50 no. dwellings with public open space and revised access off Duffield Road, plus associated modifications to Sonning Golf Club including reconfiguration of golf club car parking areas and relocation of the 18th green, addition of a practice putting green, new driving nets, new short game chipping area and conversion of the west wing of the existing clubhouse to	Approved: 30.11.2023

	accommodate a new golf simulator practice facility, including removal of external staircase and changes to fenestration. (All matters reserved except for access.)	
242641	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 223458 to amend planning conditions 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24 and 26 to enable phased delivery of proposal, with revisions to the site access and reconfiguration of the car parking delivered in advance of the dwellings.	Approved: 20.11.2024
250553	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 223458 to omit the relocation of the 18th green, addition of a practice putting green, new driving nets, new short game chipping area.	Approved: 25.04.2025

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection
WBC Drainage – No objection
WBC Highways – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Ecology – Further information
WBC Green Infrastructure – No comment

External

Natural England – No comment
Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue – Advisory comments

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	The Parish council have raised the following issues: • Ongoing concern regarding the lack of safe pedestrian access to the golf club and associated development. The applicant is considered to have failed to address or acknowledge these concerns, despite relying on pedestrian movements within the Travel Plan. • The Travel Plan is criticised as unrealistic, particularly in relation to: ○ Poor accessibility to bus services, including routes to Maidenhead ○ Unsafe walking routes along Duffield Road, which lack footpaths ○ Access to local schools via hazardous routes
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	○ Concerns that increased traffic from the proposal would exacerbate existing highway safety issues. • The Parish Council disputes the claim that local bus services are adequate. • Concludes that the revised proposals do not address these issues and maintains a strong objection on highway safety and pedestrian access grounds.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	2 comments which set out the following: • Concerns with the position of the proposed new access road. Its junction with Duffield Road is very close to the junction of the Duffield road junction with Pound Lane. There will possibly be up to 100 vehicles entering and exiting from the new access road once the 50 new houses are built. Pound Lane is already a busy road, and this proposal will only lead to more congestion.

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The reserved matters application site forms part of Sonning Golf Club, located off Duffield Road on the eastern edge of Sonning. The Phase 1 area covers approximately 0.9 hectares around the existing clubhouse and its associated parking. The overall outline permission also included residential development (phase 2) to the north, which will be subject to separate reserved matters application.

The site lies within designated countryside but is contained by residential development to the north and west and the wider golf course to the south and east. It comprises the existing clubhouse and two established car parks serving the golf club. The surrounding area is characterised by a mix of residential uses and open recreational land, with mature boundary vegetation providing strong visual containment.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Outline planning permission was granted under application 223458 for alterations to the golf course and clubhouse, together with residential development and revised vehicle access. The outline application approved the location of the main access onto Duffield Road with all other matters reserved including appearance, landscaping, layout

and scale. Given the distinct nature of the various elements of the scheme, the development was divided into two phases. Phase one principally relates to the golf course & club house and phase 2 the residential development. Although both phases share the approved access road, they otherwise comprise separate and largely independent developments. This reserved matters application relates solely to Phase 1, with Phase 2 to be considered under a separate reserved matters application.

The outline permission established the principle of development and approved, with all matters reserved except access, the reconfiguration of the golf course, alterations to the clubhouse, changes to the access arrangements and reconfiguration of the car parking areas. In granting permission, the Council concluded that, notwithstanding the site's countryside location and conflict with Core Strategy Policies CP9 and CP11, the benefits of the wider scheme outweighed its limited and localised adverse impacts. It is also notable that the golf club works, considered in isolation, would constitute an appropriate countryside use as development supporting outdoor sport and recreation without causing undue encroachment into the countryside.

The outline permission further established that the proposed golf club improvements, including alterations to the clubhouse and parking arrangements, would not adversely affect the viability or operation of the facility and were acceptable in planning terms.

This application does not revisit the principle of development. Instead, it seeks approval of the reserved matters for Phase 1 and provides the detailed design, layout and landscaping required to implement the approved scheme.

Since the grant of outline permission, the 2026 NPPF has come into force. The Phase 1 proposals remain consistent with national policy, particularly NDMP S5 relating to development outside settlements, as the works comprise development associated with sport and recreation.

Accordingly, having regard to the extant outline permission and the relevant national and local planning policies, the principle of development is established. The assessment therefore focuses on whether the reserved matters details accord with the approved parameters and are otherwise acceptable in planning terms.

Local Plan Update

The Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU) 2023–2040 is being prepared to replace the existing Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery plans and establish the borough's planning strategy to 2040.

The Proposed Submission Plan was submitted for independent examination on 28 February 2025. Two independent Planning Inspectors conducted Part 1 hearings in November 2025 and Part 2 hearings between March and June 2026, considering the Plan's legal compliance, soundness and strategic and detailed matters. The Inspectors have now issued a post-hearings letter indicating that the Plan is likely capable of being found sound and legally compliant, subject to modifications, with consultation on those modifications expected later in 2026. Therefore, the Council considers that the policies of the LPU, submission have modest weight in general at this stage.

This reserved matters application for Phase 1 would relate primarily to the golf club and club house and the principle of sport and recreation development in the countryside is broadly supported by Policy SS5 of the LPU. In addition, the development would also fall within other criteria of acceptable development in the countryside including the extension of existing buildings and the redevelopment of previously developed land.

Character of the Area:

The proposed development comprises the refurbishment and repurposing of the existing rear wing of the clubhouse, together with associated alterations to car parking and new boundary treatments. The works are largely confined to an existing built form within the established golf club complex, and therefore do not introduce significant additional built mass into the site.

The existing wing has a functional and utilitarian appearance which is at odds with the more traditional architectural character of the main clubhouse. The proposal retains the overall form and structure of the building, including the roof and key elements of existing brickwork, whilst introducing new openings and contemporary materials.

The use of vertical timber cladding, dark grey metal cladding and new glazing would be a satisfactory addition to the building. While these materials would introduce a more contemporary appearance, they represent an appropriate design solution for a building in this location.

The associated changes to the car parking areas and the introduction of boundary treatments and gates are modest in nature and reflect the established character of the site, including the use of brick piers and timber or metal detailing. As such, these works are considered to integrate appropriately with both the clubhouse and its landscaped setting.

Overall, the proposals would not result in harm to the character or appearance of the area and are considered appropriate in the context of the site and its surroundings.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The nearest existing houses are on the opposite side of Duffield Road and, given the scale and nature of the development, the proposal would not result in any detrimental impact on the amenity of those residents. The changes to the building, would mainly be perceived within the golf course.

A residential development is under construction to the north-west of the clubhouse. However, the proposed works would not adversely affect those dwellings, due to the intervening boundary treatment and landscaping that will be in place once the development is completed. In addition, there would be limited changes to the north-west elevation, and one existing side window would be removed.

The proposed simulator and practice nets would be enclosed by the building and there is no evidence these would cause detrimental noise and disturbance to the surrounding residents above the existing operation of the golf course.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Local Highway Authority raises no objection to the reserved matters application. The proposed vehicular access from Duffield Road and the car parking arrangements remain unchanged from those approved under outline planning permission ref. 223458.

The access has previously been demonstrated to be acceptable, with swept path analysis confirming suitable access for refuse and service vehicles, appropriate visibility splays provided, and no identified highway safety concerns. A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit was undertaken and all recommendations satisfactorily addressed. The detailed design of the access and offsite footpaths will be secured through the separate Section 278 technical approval process.

The proposed parking provision for the golf club remains consistent with the outline consent and includes appropriately designed manoeuvring areas and accessible parking spaces. The Local Highway Authority is satisfied that the parking provision is adequate to meet anticipated demand and therefore raises no highway or parking objections to the development.

The Parish Council has raised concerns regarding the limited pedestrian infrastructure serving the site. However, it is important to note that this phase of development relates principally to alterations to the existing golf club, which is a long-established facility. The proposals do not materially increase the overall capacity of the club, but instead seek to modernise and improve existing facilities.

Golf courses are typically located in more rural or edge-of-settlement locations due to their land requirements, and in this context the site is not uncharacteristic of such uses. The accessibility of the existing facility is therefore broadly comparable to similar developments, and the current proposals would not give rise to a significant change in pedestrian demand or associated impacts.

This phase of development includes the access road and its connection to Duffield Road. Whilst the main access remains unchanged, the layout and landscaping of proposed footpath arrangements and connection to the wider pavement network differ from those shown at outline stage. This is because the final alignment of the offsite footpaths has been informed by the location of an existing drainage ditch and advice from the Council's Highways Team. The footpath connections have therefore been arranged to avoid the ditch while still providing an acceptable access arrangement. The Highways Team has raised no objection to this approach and the main vehicle access remains unchanged.

The Council's Highway officer has not recommended any additional highway conditions because these are included in the outline consent and it would result in unnecessary duplication. These conditions are required to be discharged as part of separate discharge of condition consent.

Flooding and Drainage:

The application site lies within Flood Zone 1, which has a low probability of flooding. As such, the proposed development is considered appropriate in flood risk terms and

complies with national planning policy. The proposals comprise alterations to an existing building and associated changes to car parking areas, rather than extensive new built development. The level of additional impermeable surfacing is limited, and the scheme largely utilises existing hardstanding areas. Surface water drainage will continue to be managed through existing and approved arrangements secured under the outline planning permission, which established that the development can be adequately drained without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Accordingly, the proposed development is not considered to give rise to any unacceptable impacts in respect of flood risk or drainage.

The Lead Local Flood Authority has advised that the submitted drainage information is sufficient to demonstrate that the revised reserved matters proposals can be accommodated within an appropriate surface water drainage strategy. The submission includes existing and proposed impermeable area assessments, runoff calculations, site investigation information, BRE365 infiltration testing, detailed drainage layouts, drainage catchment plans, exceedance flow routing details and a Surface Water Management Plan. The Causeway Flow calculations demonstrate that the proposed soakaways have been designed to accommodate the 1 in 100 year storm event, including a 40% allowance for climate change.

The Ground Investigation Report confirms that infiltration drainage is feasible at the site, with soakage testing identifying infiltration rates suitable for traditional soakaways. The report also confirms that soakaways should be located at least 5 metres from structures and that groundwater was encountered only locally at depth during the investigation.

On this basis, the Lead Local Flood Authority is satisfied that the proposal is acceptable in flood risk and drainage terms.

Whilst the council has reviewed technical drainage details to ensure the development is acceptable, these are also required to be submitted to discharge conditions 16, 17 and 26 on the outline permission. Therefore, the details submitted are acceptable in principle for the purposes of these reserved matters, without prejudice to formal discharge or unnecessary duplication.

Landscape and Trees:

The Council's Landscape and Trees Officer raises no objection to the proposed development. The submitted landscape drawings SGC|001 rev F and SGC|002 rev F, including those relating to the car park layouts, entrance treatments and associated works, are considered acceptable. The proposals primarily relate to existing developed areas within the golf club and do not result in the loss of significant landscape features or trees. Existing boundary vegetation and the wider landscaped setting of the golf course are therefore largely retained.

The reconfiguration of the parking areas and introduction of new gates and boundary features are modest in scale and reflect the established character of the site. These elements are not considered to give rise to any adverse visual or arboricultural impacts.

Whilst the tree and landscape officer has stated the recommendation is subject to conditions, no additional conditions were proposed because these details are required to be secured by conditions 20 and 22 attached to the outline consent.

Ecology:

As stated above, this phase of the development relates to proposed alterations to the golf course, associated clubhouse and access onto Duffield Road. An Ecological Assessment was submitted with the outline application, which stated that the building was assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats. It was also observed in that assessment that the roof void and external features of the building would not be directly impacted by the proposed works. While the council's ecologist has requested an update to the original preliminary survey, the roof of the building is remaining in situ and the changes would be to the elevations. The applicant's ecologist for the outline application was also satisfied that the roof and external features would not be directly impacted by the development.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completion of the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement for all CIL-liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Conclusion:

The principle of development has already been established through the extant outline planning permission and is also supported by NDMP S5 of the NPPF 2026. This application does not reopen that planning balance. The relevant question is whether the submitted reserved matters accord with the outline permission, approved parameters and applicable design, amenity, landscape, ecology, drainage and transport policies.

Phase 1 relates to works to the existing clubhouse and site access. The reserved matters for Phase 1 relate to an existing built area within an established recreational use. The development would retain the majority of the existing built form and landscape framework, while introducing improvements to the visual appearance of the clubhouse wing and surrounding areas. The scheme is acceptable in respect of character and appearance, highways, landscape and trees, and flood risk and drainage, with no

objections raised by relevant consultees subject to conditions. Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to comply with the relevant policies of the development plan and, taking all material considerations into account, is recommended for approval subject to appropriate conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	22 April 2026
Earliest date for decision:	15 May 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	18.09.26