

PLANNING REF : 251310
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 11 The Mews Farley Castle
: Castle Road, Farley Hill, Berkshire
: RG7 1XD
SUBMITTED BY : Mr James Adam Howard CEng MICE ACGI
DATE SUBMITTED : 18/06/2025

COMMENTS:

Dear WBC,

I write as a Chartered Civil Engineer of 30 years; I have run infrastructure for developments the size of Reading, built motorways and airfields. My professional view is that this proposal lacks key detail on its viability and sustainability. It feels like WBC are willing to take significant risks to meet a Government target that is agnostic of its impact on environment and frustratingly is not clearly solving our local housing issues.

Object to this proposed development. Without evidenced answers on all the following issues/questions, the proposed development is incoherent and an unsustainable further drain on scarce public services. It falls short of being a net positive or solving housing issues.

1. Fundamental Change of Nature of Farley Hill. Development significantly changes the nature of Farley Hill Village. The Village is a small rural conurbation with almost no retail or public facilities (e.g. transport) and barely has sufficient infrastructure (e.g. roads & pavements) for its current domestic and farming population. The addition 650 homes, at a circa 10 fold increase in the Village's domestic dwellings, fundamentally changes the nature, purpose & use of the Village. On what grounds is this change of purpose justified? We chose to live here because of its rural nature. What right does WBC have to change this without the consent of its current residents. A 'greater good' (housing target) argument is both flawed and legally contestable.

2. Explain Rationale - the Housing Demand Imperative is at very least unclear/assertive/case not made and in reality is likely to be flawed. Please justify, factually and not just with loose assertion, why this specific development is needed? While anticipate the headline Gov/Council targets will be cited, what is the imperative for this particular site (with all its negatives & sub optimal facets) and over other options? E.g. demonstrate there are no better brownfield sites that would avoid the issues here or sites with more facilities e.g. nearby Aborfield or Shinfield. If the assertion is that development is needed to meet national & local housing shortages, please explain how 60% non-affordable (i.e. ~ 360 of the properties) meets/solves this shortage and makes housing available to those who really need it - the low paid and first time buyers. 360 'expensive' homes do not. Similarly how does the 40% 'affordable' do this - to justify it does, please reveal the price point of these houses and confirm that such are in reach of people on average UK wage (i.e. meet a reasonable definition of affordable). Furthermore, please confirm preferential access to the affordable homes will be given to local first time buyer/average wage earners. Without such

a guarantee, even the affordable element of development fails to address Berkshire's housing shortfalls.

3. Require Proof of Infrastructure Sufficiency. But one example. Farley Hill's road system is barely sufficient for its current population/usage. It is in poor condition and deteriorates significantly year on year. The majority of roads are barely two way, many are effectively single, there are very few pavements and only a small proportion of the roads are curbed (significantly affecting lifespan of road pavement). The drainage is mostly rudimentary. 650 homes would add circa 1200 cars to the traffic load on the Village. The sad accident on PM 17 Jun on A327, which just north of the Farley Hill turn, diverted some traffic into the Village. It demonstrated the point that its road network cannot safely sustain this sort of increase. Of particular danger is the impact on pedestrian, equine & cycling traffic and to all wildlife. I tried to walk along Castle Road (no pavements, near single track, no kerbs) at 1800, I was nearly run over three times by speeding cars with no regard for the Village environment.

4. Require proof of Crime Prevention Sufficiency. Crime prevention in Farley Hill is woeful. The Village regularly sees fly tipping with zero effective prevention of this. Require evidenced, funded uplift of Policing in Farley Hill commensurate with the proposed 10 [?] fold increase in its population, including the vulnerable retired. Without such, the proposed development is literally 'unsafe'.

5. Require proof of Environmental Impact & Mitigation of Risks. Farley Hill has rich and diverse ecology/eco-system. Amongst many species, deer, montjacks, geese, horses, migrating toads, woodpeckers, kites, pheasants all thrive in Farley Hill. Request clear evidence that the habitat for these will not be harmed by the development or its significant addition to vehicular traffic. Given there will be impact require detail of all the mitigations that will be put in place and sustained to avoid harm to the Village's rich wildlife habitat.

6. Require proof of sufficient incremental uplift in Services that support Farley Hill. This must span rubbish collection, schooling, social care, Primary Health Care (PHC), Dentistry, power supply, sewage, fibre etc. Simple example. It already takes 2 weeks to secure a GP appointment for an urgent condition (e.g. a cancer flag). Require evidence of GP services sufficiency and of a funded and recruitable uplift to meet the addition of ~1200 patients, many of whom will be elderly and prevalent consumers of PHC. Ditto all the other services that are required to provide a sustainable development - in particular require evidence of uplift in social care provision noting retirement element of development.

There is more, I am sure.

Grateful for evidenced/unequivocal answer please without which I suspect WBC will face legal challenge if they are ignored or glossed over with assertion.

James

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