

PLANNING REF : 242484
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 14 Arborfield Road
: Shinfield, Reading
: RG2 9DY
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Robin Hicks
DATE SUBMITTED : 16/05/2025

COMMENTS:

Having strongly objected to the initial version of this application, I was hopeful that the revised application would address my concerns. Unfortunately the revisions are trivial. As my various reasons for objecting on 29/11/2024 all remain, I have repeated this submission below.

I was pleased to see WBC's Senior Landscape Officer raise some of my concerns and observations in part 10 of Table 1 in the Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment Addendum, regarding lack of consideration to the portion of Arborfield Road adjacent to the southern site boundary and the applicant's underestimation of how adverse the impact on this portion of Arborfield Road will be, both at the start of development and after 10 years. I find the applicant's response unsatisfactory. Within it I do not follow what the sentence ending "will likely result in a high magnitude of change at Year 1 on road users considered to be of low sensitivity" is attempting to say?

While "further hedgerow tree planting is now proposed as part of this mitigation planting to further soften views of the built form" this is a minor edit which does not go far enough. However, it is unclear what the newly proposed "further hedgerow tree planting" is. Looking at p84 of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and comparing to p13 of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Addendum, the only revision is additional proposed native tree planting on the portion of the boundary location labelled 13. While the additional trees at location 13 are welcome, these are largely irrelevant given the south of Arborfield Road on this portion of the site boundary is vegetation. The actual mitigation needed is to the west of the proposed road entrance, as this is where there are existing houses on southern side of Arborfield Road. There is no number label given to this part of the site boundary on p84 of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, or p13 of its Addendum.

The actual mitigation to the west of the proposed site entrance should be a significantly larger than proposed planting buffer with the southernmost houses being built further north from the boundary. As I suggested in the 29/11/24 comments, there are numerous overall benefits from this. Indeed, the proposed space and planting to the east of the proposed entrance, being at the locations labelled 7,8 and 13 on p13 of the Addendum, should be replicated to the equivalent locations to the west of the proposed entrance.

The 'Landscape Strategy Plan - 8395' received on 26/04/25 would be expected to be identical to p13 of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Addendum. However the green colouring of the hedgerows on the southern site boundary differs between the versions, being a lighter shade of green in the Landscape Strategy Plan which does not match to the colour of any hedgerow (or obviously to any other planting) in the document Key. Which of the documents is the

correct version? This apparent error is confusing and prevents me understanding what the actual final planting proposal is.

29/11/24 submission:

I strongly object to the plans to build 191 houses on the land north of Arborfield Road (application 242484). My reasons are listed below, primarily due to the location of the traffic access to the site and the lack of character integration with Arborfield Road.

I disagree with building over green space, especially when numerous brownfield sites can be regenerated in south Reading instead. It is important that this is not the version of plans approved, if planning is granted on this site.

I found it disrespectful that the developer put an A4 flyer through the door, instead of holding an in-person consultation with the local community. Per the Statement of Community Involvement "the team were conscious that not everyone is able to attend a physical exhibition given how busy people are". It is not for the developer to decide how busy people are. Receiving 10 comments from 1,154 addresses is not a surprise when the flyer is a couple of computer generated images with no further details. I suspect the developer does not care about local opinion, but hopefully the WBC planning committee do.

Traffic Access

This should be off the Eastern Relief Road, not Arborfield Road. Having built the Eastern Relief Road to 'relieve' local roads, it is illogical to add hundreds of additional daily car journeys to Arborfield Road. Having approved the building of LIDL and the additional traffic stress this will imminently bring to Arborfield Road, WBC should not approve another application adding extra car journeys into Shinfield village.

It would be far less disruptive to alter the Eastern Relief Road, which is a new (and non-residential) road, rather than Arborfield Road, which is residential. Including the traffic access point on the Eastern Relief Road instead would maintain the existing character of Arborfield Road, in part by ensuring the existing hedgerow does not need to be removed, while avoiding the cut through traffic which would be the case from Shepherd's Road. It also avoids residents on Arborfield Road being subject to noisy construction vehicles for several years and months of disruption while the access road is built. Furthermore access from the Eastern Relief Road would avoid any residential properties being subjected to dazzling headlights from cars entering and leaving the site. A pedestrian and cycle exit on the southern boundary would be appropriate.

The developer response in the Statement of Community Involvement to questions on location of the traffic junction was that "the access road into the site being from the south (Arborfield Road) rather than from the Eastern Relief Road is because it is considered to be the safest option given the speed limit on the Eastern Relief Road

is

50mph". WBC need to collaborate with the developer on these plans and reduce the limit at the southern end of the Eastern Relief Road to 40mph, as it is at the northern end, allowing the access location for the site to be changed.

Lack of fit with the existing character of Arborfield Road

Section 4.13 of the Wokingham Borough Council Design Guide (June 2012) asks "1. Do the proposals contribute positively and appropriately towards local character?" and "2. Do they relate well to their context, including both the existing site and neighbouring ties?" The planned properties do not relate well to the properties neighbouring the site on Arborfield Road, as they are contrasting in style and design, indeed the proposals would have a significant adverse impact on the character of Arborfield Road.

It is noteworthy that the properties on Arborfield Road directly opposite the southern boundary of the site, are overlooked throughout the planning documents. There are no images of these properties in Ref 10 in the Design and Access Statement. Table 7 in the Landscape and Visual Assessment is taken at the junction of Vickers Close, which is not even close to Arborfield Road's southern site boundary. This means some of Shinfield's most historic Edwardian properties, which are on Arborfield Road opposite the site, are not photographed in the planning documents. Their attractive style is in stark contrast to the generic new build red bricks proposed to be directly opposite, meaning the proposed properties will not be in keeping with the existing architectural environment.

Ref 10 in the Design and Access Statement includes minimal narrative on "the Character to Reinforce" with Arborfield Road. This limited narrative is consistent with the overall plans, where it feels as if no effort has been made to design the southern part of the site to be at least partly in keeping with the existing properties and their character. This is despite the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3.77) stating that "properties on the southern side of Arborfield Road with primary views of the Site" are "therefore of high sensitivity".

To better bridge between the character of Arborfield Road and the proposed development, the houses in the southern part of the site should have design features reflecting the current variety on Arborfield Road, where none of which are red brick new builds.

A greenspace buffer should be added to the southern portion of the site, which would have multiple benefits:

Firstly, to reduce visual contrast between the existing architecture and that of new houses. This is similar to how the nearby boundary of Shinfield Meadows with Hyde End Road (which features a mix of property styles similar to Arborfield Road) was designed, where there is a significant green buffer with thick vegetation and trees to the extent neither old or new properties can see each other.

Secondly, to better compensate for the removal of the existing native hedgerow, which will open Arborfield Road up to this land. 5.31 of the Landscape and Visual Assessment states "the Proposed

Development would likely result in a high magnitude of change on residents of properties along Oatlands Road and Arborfield Road to the west and south of the Site respectively (Viewpoints 3-5). This would lead to significant adverse effects. Once the proposals have established, it is considered that effects would reduce to non-significant effects on these visual receptors albeit with a material change to their visual amenity remaining". Per 5.28 it is only at Year 10, when proposed planting would have established, that the impact drops to "minor adverse". There should not be a net negative effect from the start of the development, yet alone having to wait years for recovery to the current level. The proposed planting is to replace the hedgerow with a single row of native trees. These are not an adequate replacement. Instead, multiple rows of native trees should be planted, providing a more like-for-like replacement from Year 1, with the positive impact increasing as they mature.

Thirdly, to provide increased biodiversity and habitats for wildlife.

Fourthly, to provide privacy to both existing residents on Arborfield Road and houses in the southern part of the site.

Fifth, to reduce the impact of noise and air pollution from Arborfield Road on the proposed houses, partly as they are set further back but also as the trees form a natural buffer. The Noise Impact Assessment identifies properties on the southern edge of current plans would need to be designed so that road facing bedroom windows could avoid being opened in hot weather without overheating, which is impractical and would be avoided by setting houses back into the site.

Flooding

Assessing the site as acceptable for flooding surprises me as I have seen standing water on the site from my house in the past few days. The flood risk is growing as extreme weather events become increasingly common.

Adverse impacts outweigh benefits

According to Planning Statement (5.2.11) "Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan Policy 1 (Location of Development) states that development within the development limits will be supported and that development adjacent to the Development Limits will only be supported where the benefits of the development outweigh its adverse impacts." The only planned benefit I can see from this development would be the extension of the Langley Mead SANG referred to in the Planning Statement, including at 3.4.6, given there are no other investments in overstretched local services such as schools.

However, what specifically is the proposed SANG expansion? Is it commensurate with the size of this development? Parts of the existing SANG regularly flood, even after moderate rainfall, preventing it from being used. Many of the fields bordering the Langley Mead SANG

are lower lying, so will be even more impacted by rainfall. As such addition in these fields would be a white elephant - theoretically attractive but practically pointless.

Phase One issues

It is notable how many residents are angry with this developer on various issues relating to their delivery and ongoing completion of Phase One. It would be odd to grant further planning permission to the same developer prior to those issues being resolved.

Number of houses

When plans were originally submitted with Phase One the land north of Arborfield Road was assessed as being suitable for 174 dwellings, per Planning Statement (2.3.2). Why does this application therefore include 191 houses? Removing houses from the plans on the western and southern edges of the site would allow better integration with the character of Oatlands Road and Arborfield Road. While the developer will want as many units as possible for profits, any approved plans should be considerate to existing residents.

3 storey apartment blocks

Inclusion of 3 storey apartment blocks in the plans is not appropriate given that this building type and height is not consistent with the rest of Shinfield.