

PLANNING REF : 250517
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 2 Loddon Court Farm Cottages
: Lambs Lane, Spencers Wood, Reading, England
: RG7 1JG
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Julian Jones
DATE SUBMITTED : 01/04/2025

COMMENTS:

DEPZ - The proposed development is not planning policy compliant and should be refused on the grounds that it is within the AWE Burghfield - Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ). Under the new Wokingham Plan (Section 4.51) the Council recognise the incorporation of further areas (including this site) under the AWE DEPZ, therefore no development is allocated here and instead new sites are identified to meet housing and employment needs elsewhere in the Borough. Under Policy SS7: Development in the vicinity of the AWE, the Developer clearly does not meet the criteria under this planning policy, where the development proposal will provide a significant increase to population and the development is of significant scale. I am concerned that the proposed uses are unsuitable for the DEPZ due to introducing a large quantum of vulnerable groups (420+ new residents, children attending the new school, care home residents, workers in the industrial units). If there were to be an emergency at the AWE then all of these vulnerable groups would need to be evacuated via one main viable exit with consequent delays to safeguarding lives. This proposal is therefore not compliant with the proposed new Wokingham Plan.

Whilst this Policy document is not yet in place, it is clear that the intent of these policies is safety and wellbeing of existing and future residents in Spencers Wood and the surrounding area. The application should be refused on this basis alone.

Industrial Use - Despite the demand report identifying the demand for industrial units in Reading, the proposed industrial buildings would provide oversupply in this location. The demand report does not identify any potential new occupiers for this specific location and I am concerned that these units would remain vacant or result in the existing industrial units near by becoming vacant. This part of the site should be kept as green space to benefit local wildlife and improve the biodiversity of the site and to compensate for the industrial sites on the other side of the road.

Height & Massing - The proposed height and massing of the industrial buildings would create a sense of enclosure between the existing buildings on Lambs Lane Business Park and the proposed very tall industrial units up to 12m high (see planning document Building Heights Parameter Plan), making the road dark and traffic less visible, with construction and HGVs using the road making it more dangerous. The industrial units should not be built in this location as it cannot provide road safety for all users.

Heritage & Visual Impact - I am concerned that the Heritage report has established that the proposed development has the potential to affect the significance of the Swallowfield Park and Adjoining

Stable Block, Swallowfield Park and Sheepbridge Court through changes within their respective settings. As a local resident, this is of concern and could be addressed by the Developer by removing the industrial units and increasing the green area, thus having a reduced negative impact on views across the site. This would also mitigate the loss of areas for wildlife and improve the biodiversity of the scheme.

Access - I am also concerned by the main entrance opposite Back Lane, as the proposed entrance will be servicing at least 1,000 vehicles. This is not including HGVs from the industrial units, which would create a hazard for all car and cycle traffic. The entrance to Back Lane from the Basingstoke Road is the main road to the Lambs Lane Primary School. At school starting and finishing times this road is full of parked cars for parents delivering and picking up children and I am further concerned by this from a safety perspective. The proposed industrial area with access via Basingstoke road close to Back Lane will cause HGVs to use both Basingstoke Road and Back Lane leading to Lambs Lane, which is dangerous and unacceptable. The site access should be reconsidered, or at a minimum appropriate road works should be a condition of the s.106 before any of the development works commenced.

Traffic Congestion & Highways - Congestion is an existing issue along the Basingstoke Road heading north to J11 of the M4. All of the construction and subsequent occupier traffic will have to use the Basingstoke Road to travel through Spencers Wood, again adding to the horrendous existing congestion along this road. At a minimum the scheme will host an additional 420 residential units, which with 2 cars per home, additional vehicle use for the retail shops, school, and GP surgery this would result in additional 1,000+ vehicles. I am very concerned the existing infrastructure is not sufficient to host this traffic nor has the traffic management plan addressed the meeting of pedestrian school children, cyclists, additional cars and HGV vehicles along narrow single track roads and proposed blind spots (by the industrial units). HGVs will undoubtedly use Back Lane, Lambs Lane and Whitehouse Lane to get to the A33. None of these single track country roads are built for HGV use. The turn onto the A33 is dangerous as cars are turning onto an A road from a small country road. Access to this turn onto the A33 should be blocked off / restricted before development commences, and if this development were to be consented mitigation measures should be conditioned in the s.106 to ensure safety and blocking of HGVs along Lamb's Lane, Back Lane and White House Lane ahead of development commencement. Additionally, the centre of Spencers Wood along the Basingstoke Road outside the post office and in front of the Garage is already dangerous with large HGVs parking in the road delivering to the Bakery, convenience store (post office) and storage facility. Further large vehicles and traffic coming from the new development will make it very dangerous. This development needs to address the infrastructure required to meet the existing needs of residents in addition to the new development, which it currently does not. As a local cyclist this is also of concern, given this part of the Basingstoke Road is a national cycle route.

Noise - The NIA has deemed the site to be suitable for residential use, however I am concerned that there isn't enough evidence in regard to the impact of noise from the industrial units / HGV vehicles and increased impact this will have on local residents and those within the new development, the industrial area should therefore be removed.

Community Uses / Services - Although I acknowledge that the developer has included community uses within their application, the suggested benefits of the development to the community do not outweigh the substantial impact the growth in population will have to the local area. The s.106 agreement should provide a contribution to the enlargement and development of Oakbank School, which is reflective of the considerable impact this development will have on local schools.

I am also concerned that the community uses will not be completed in a sufficient time for the growing population. I therefore believe that the s.106 should include conditions to mitigate this risk, such as a condition for the community uses (GP surgery, Primary School, community pavilion and landscaping, retail) to be practically completed ahead of practical completion of the market residential units or at a minimum ahead of them being let or sold.

Overall, this application should not be approved on the grounds of DEPZ and safety of residents. However, if this is overlooked and this application be approved, in order to achieve the New Wokingham Borough plan's vision and objectives of delivering a borough that focuses on the needs of communities, is sustainable and where places are valued and enriched, this development needs to reflect the existing design quality and charm of the area by removing the proposed industrial area, improving its proposition to provide services to the local community in a timely manner and ensure safe road management especially near the existing Lambs Lane primary school, ahead of the development commencing.