

PLANNING REF : 262006
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Council Office
: Pearson Road, Sonning, Reading
: RG4 6UL
SUBMITTED BY : Sonning Parish Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 02/10/2026

COMMENTS:

Sonning Parish Council has carefully considered this application and has the following comments. The Parish Council finds the appearance of the site to be very acceptable and the mixture of the housing to be positive. The council is encouraged by the landscaping and finds the existing greenery and proposed appearance of the site to be essential to soften the mass of development and support wildlife and biodiversity. The site is naturally green, leafy, and surrounded by numerous trees and they welcome the additional planting, and the support this will offer to the environment and the eco system. The council asks that conditions and safety measures are applied to any permission to maintain this essential green ambiance for future generations. The council encouraged that the wooded area along the northern boundary is subject to a group TPO. The council are also encouraged by the positive Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy.

However, the following concerns remain.

- The cumulative pressure that this application for 50 dwellings, the adjoining development of 13 dwellings and that for 57 flats in Old Bath Road (also adjoining this site) will have on this part of Sonning and the wider area continues to cause concern. The additional pressure on the existing road system should not be underestimated, nor the pressure on local schools, doctors etc.
- Duffield Road. This is narrow and unlit with access to several dwellings to the south and Sonning Golf Club to the norther side. It narrows where it crosses the railwaybridge, giving access to parts of Woodley, and traffic lights and a partial footpath were introduced a few years ago. For its size Duffield Road is very well used as a short cut, from the Woodley area to access Pound Lane, which leads to the A4, where traffic is often at a standstill at peak times due to the demand in the area. This makes this route very busy, particularly at peak times, when pedestrians from the proposed site will be in the area.
- It is assumed that the proposed dwellings will accommodate families with children of varying ages, who require access to local schools, both primary and secondary. In the interest of pedestrian safety, the council would expect to see improvements made to the surrounding footpath in recognition of the impact this development will have on this busy area.
- Currently Duffield Road only has one footpath installed to support pedestrian access across Duffield railway bridge, but this is not easily accessed by pedestrians leaving the proposed site as it only startson the other side of the Golf Club entrance.
- The outline permission (223458) did include a proposal to improve pedestrian access to Sonning, under condition 5. Walking Strategy: '5. Walking Strategy Prior to commencement of development, details of pedestrian connections from the development to be submitted for approval by the local planning authority. These details shall demonstrate how these routes will be upgraded. The measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of the first dwelling. Reason: In the interests of sustainable travel, convenience, and highway

safety in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP6.' • As the site is in Sonning it must be assumed that the inhabitants of the site will wish to take advantage of the excellent facilities Sonning offers. This includes 3 sports facilities (Reading Cricket and Hockey Club, Reading Rugby FC, Berkshire Sports Club, including new Padel courts), plus King George V Field with an excellent cricket club, two hostelryes (the Bull Inn and the Coppa Club fronting the Thames), St Andrews Church, which has a well-attended Youth Club, as well as various clubs and organizations (Guides and Scouts, W.I, Choir, Art Club, table tennis), to name a few. It also has a primary school Sonning C of E Primary, and the Reading Blue Coat School, both recognized as excellent establishments. • Sonning Parish Council were somewhat taken aback to learn that the proposed pedestrian access was to be moved to the other side of Duffield Road, leaving pedestrians to cross Duffield Road on leaving the development and to then recross in order to make their way to Sonning and all it has to offer. The alternative would be to walk along the sloping grass verge and past the water filled ditch where the verge narrows. Neither of these options offer a safe route for mothers with children, especially with a buggy or older children or other walkers. The plan in the outline application is the only route that allows pedestrians to face oncoming traffic but would require the water in the ditch to be diverted to the existing surface water pipes enabling the ditch to be filled in and facilitate a pathway to be installed. • Given the large numbers of users that will be generated by the proposed site, the introduction of a new crossing should also be considered in Pound Lane, to enable pedestrians to safely cross to the opposite side of Pound Lane where the existing footpath is cut short. This leads to the crossing on the A4, which provides access to Sonning. • Why was the proposed footpath removed from the proposal, it is explained (only by reading a letter in the previous application, 260779, which was added after the consultation period ended) that the highways inspector had suggested that the footpath be removed to the other side of Duffield Road due to the location of the ditch. • This proposal would seem to be extraordinary given Wokingham's current approach to pedestrian safety, the safer routes to schools' initiative and common sense. It can only be assumed that those who made the decision were unaware of the situation or that this was done to reduce costs. Pedestrian safety surely should be of the utmost importance, and this change would fly in the face of all those current initiatives for pedestrian safety. If there were to be an accident on either side of Duffield Road, due to the removal of the original proposed footpath, those making the decision must bear the responsibility • The parish council suggests that a site visit at 8.30am is the only way to appreciate how busy this area is during these times. • It has been brought to the council's attention that the hours associated with this application are 7.30am to 6.00pm. This would seem to be unreasonable, particularly as the council has received constant complaints that the builder working on the adjoining site (for 13 dwellings on land previously owned by Sonning Golf Club) have arrived at the site at 6.30am and begun work, often making unacceptable levels of noise at that time of the day. Complaints to the onsite agent met with the response that the builders had been informed, but they had short memories. Totally unacceptable and Sonning Parish Council ask how these times are monitored once planning permission is given, is no provision to supervise this unacceptable and invasive act provided as it appears

to be ignored. Given the concerns about pedestrian safety the Parish Council cannot see how this proposal for phase 2 can proceed until the pedestrian safety issue, in phase 1 (above) are addressed. The Parish Council therefore urgently request that this application is refused pending reinstatement of the pedestrian footpath from the site to Pound Lane, as described in outline permission 223458. Lesley Bates (Clerk) 2 October 2026