

PLANNING REF : 252498
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 89 Clements Close
: Reading, Berkshire
: RG71HH
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Sarah George
DATE SUBMITTED : 04/11/2025

COMMENTS:

I wish to formally object to the planning application for up to 2,800 homes as part of Reading University's proposed Loddon Garden Village. While recognising the need for housing, this development in its current form would have an extremely detrimental and lasting impact on local transport networks, essential services, and the surrounding communities.

The proposed development would add thousands of additional vehicle journeys to roads already struggling to cope. The surrounding areas of Shinfield, Arborfield, Sindlesham and Earley are already heavily congested at peak times, particularly along the A327, Hollow Lane, Cutbush Lane, and the M4 junctions 10 and 11, which also affects traffic using the A33 and the surrounding villages.

The addition of approximately 6,000-8,000 new vehicles from 2,800 homes will overwhelm local roads, increasing congestion, journey times, and air pollution. There are currently no credible or deliverable transport mitigation plans showing how this extra demand will be sustainably managed. The suggested new roads and bridges appear insufficient to offset the scale of impact, and there are limited realistic alternatives to car travel, with insufficient public transport connection to homes to the south of the M4 corridor. Without guaranteed and fully funded improvements to the road network and public transport before homes are occupied, this scheme would cause severe disruption to daily travel for existing residents and future occupants alike.

LOACL SERVICES

Local services and community infrastructure are already operating at or beyond capacity:

- Schools in Shinfield, Arborfield and Earley are full, with many families struggling to secure local placements.
- GP surgeries, dental practices, and healthcare centres have long waiting times and face ongoing recruitment pressures.
- Public transport links are limited, infrequent, and often unreliable, forcing dependency on private vehicles.

While the applicant has proposed two primary schools, one secondary school, and a health centre, these will not be available for several years, long after homes begin to be occupied. This delay means that the first residents will have no choice but to rely on already overstretched existing services, creating severe short-term pressure and long-term sustainability issues.

It is unacceptable to approve a development of this magnitude without clear, enforceable commitments to deliver education, health, and community infrastructure upfront, not years later.

FLOOD RISK! The proposed site lies directly adjacent to the River Loddon, a river system that has a well-documented history of flooding, particularly affecting Sindlesham, Earley, Arborfield, and Lower Loddon Valley. Parts of the development area are within or immediately beside Flood Zones 2 and 3, where flood risk is already high.

Building at this scale in such proximity to the river will

inevitably reduce the land's natural ability to absorb rainfall and river

overflow, replacing open permeable farmland with hard surfaces roads, driveways, roofs, and paved areas. These impermeable surfaces accelerate surface water runoff, which then flows into drainage systems and rivers far more quickly than the natural landscape can manage.

This change in drainage dynamics will:

- Increase downstream flood risk for existing homes, businesses, and community facilities in Sindlesham, Earley, and other low-lying settlements.

- Exacerbate the flooding already experienced along Mill Lane, Winnersh, and the Loddon Bridge area, where local roads and businesses frequently suffer closures and damage during heavy rainfall.

- Place additional strain on existing drainage and flood defence systems, which are already at capacity and were never designed to handle the cumulative impact of thousands of new properties and associated infrastructure.

- Create a long-term maintenance burden for Wokingham Borough Council and the Environment Agency, who will be left to manage ongoing flood risk for both existing and new communities.

Although the applicant refers to a "20% biodiversity increase" and new open spaces, no development on or near a functional floodplain can fully replicate the natural flood storage capacity that would be lost. Floodplain land acts as a critical "sponge" during high rainfall

events; once it is built on, that natural safety valve disappears, and the water must find somewhere else to go usually into existing neighbourhoods, roads, and businesses downstream.

The risk is not limited to new residents: the proposed development would worsen flood vulnerability for hundreds of existing properties and commercial premises that already face insurance difficulties and costly damage after heavy rainfall. The cumulative effect of additional developments (including those proposed by Gleeson Land and Hatch Farm) would further compound this risk, turning seasonal flood incidents into regular, severe flooding events.

Given the increasing frequency of extreme weather linked to climate change, it is wholly irresponsible to authorise large-scale construction on or adjacent to floodplain land without clear, independently verified hydrological modelling that demonstrates no increase in downstream flood risk.

Until such evidence is provided and robust flood mitigation measures are guaranteed and maintained in perpetuity, this proposal should be refused on flood risk grounds alone.

The promised "20% biodiversity gain" is questionable when such extensive farmland and habitat loss is involved. True sustainability cannot be claimed while replacing open countryside with thousands of houses and new roads.

The sheer scale of this scheme effectively a new town of 4,000 homes will permanently alter the rural and semi-rural character of Shinfield, Arborfield, and Sindlesham. It represents urban sprawl, not managed growth. The development would merge previously distinct communities and erode valuable green separation between settlements. This is only the first stage of a much larger scheme involving Reading University, Gleeson Land, and Hatch Farm. Approving it in isolation would be irresponsible without a clear, joined-up

infrastructure and transport strategy for the entire 4,000-home plan.

The cumulative impact of all these developments must be properly assessed before any part is permitted to proceed

For these reasons, I strongly urge Wokingham Borough Council to refuse this planning application in its current form. It would:

- Create unmanageable traffic congestion and travel disruption.
- Place unsustainable pressure on schools, healthcare, and other essential services.
- Damage the local environment and flood resilience of the area.
- Irreversibly alter the character and identity of local communities.
- Proceed without adequate infrastructure delivery or transport solutions.

This application represents overdevelopment without infrastructure. Sustainable housing growth must be led by the capacity of the area to support it, not the other way around.