



Phillips Planning Services Ltd.

Town Planning and Development Consultants

Our ref: PW/043023
23 December 2024

Director of Planning Services
Wokingham Borough Council,
Civic Offices,
Shute End,
Wokingham,
RG40 1BN

Dear Sir

**REQUEST FOR A SCREENING OPINION UNDER THE TOWN AND COUNTRY
PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2017**
**Proposed Construction of up to 63 houses, associated access and landscaping on
land west of Stanbury House, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood**

Following the receipt of pre-application advice in April 2024 (ref: 233124) it is proposed to prepare and submit a planning application that will seek permission to allow the construction of 63 new dwellings on land west of Stanbury House, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood.

The Council's consideration of this request for an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening opinion is sought. The regulations require that a person making a request for a screening opinion must provide the following—

(a) a plan sufficient to identify the land;

(b) a description of the development, including in particular—

(i) a description of the physical characteristics of the development and, where relevant, of demolition works;

(ii) a description of the location of the development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected;

(c) a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development;

(d) to the extent the information is available, a description of any likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment resulting from—

(i) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant; and

*(ii) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity;
and*

(e) such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make, including any features of the proposed development or any measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.

This submission fulfils these requirements as follows.

(a). A plan sufficient to identify the site

Attached to this letter is a 1:2500 scale Site Location Plan which identifies in red the proposed application site boundary. The site comprises approximately 2.94 hectares.

(b). Description of the development including (i) a description of the physical characteristics of the development and, where relevant, of demolition works and (ii) a description of the location of the development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected

The Development

The application will seek outline planning permission to enable the construction of up to 63 new homes on land to the west side of Basingstoke Road in Spencers Wood. Fifty percent (50%) of the dwellings would be delivered as affordable housing.

The proposal is in effect a 'Phase 2' sitting just to the west of and adjoining the 57 new homes previously granted on the eastern part of the Stanbury House Site (original outline permission O/2014/21 and reserved matters approvals 212914 and variation 221904).

Characteristics of the Site

The application site comprises general grazing land. There are no buildings within the site which is largely grassed and open save for boundary hedges and some mature trees within the site and around the boundaries.

The site is accessed from Basingstoke Road through the existing 57 dwelling development site. There are not currently any public rights of way which cross the site.

The eastern boundary adjoins the western boundary of the Phase 1, site just west of Basingstoke Road. To the west is undeveloped agricultural / grazing land that is in the process of being converted to form 9.7 hectares of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

To the north, the site is bound by a tree lined access road which runs west from Basingstoke Road to serve a residential development known as Wellington Court. To the north west is the Kingfisher Grove site which is the subject of planning permission for 49 new homes. To the south the site again benefits from a strong tree lined boundary with three cottages, office, and commercial development at 'Highlands' beyond.

Site Location & Environmental Sensitivity of Geographical Areas that could be affected

Spencers Wood lies just to the south of Reading and is recognised by the Council as a sustainable settlement where new residential development can be considered appropriate as a matter of principle

The application site is located on the west side of the Basingstoke Road, the main road that runs through Spencers Wood, broadly in a north / south alignment.

The site is located within the enlarged Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) which surrounds AWE Burghfield. It will be necessary to consider the impact of the proposal on the adequacy of the AWE Off Site Emergency Plan as part of the future application submission.

The site also lies within the 5km zone for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and so must provide SANG mitigation. The Phase 1 development delivers a 9.7 hectare SANG which is located directly adjoining the site. This retains significant capacity to mitigate the development proposed.

The Council is proposing to designate the site and surrounding land as a Valued Landscape. This proposed designation is subject of formal objection as part of the Local Plan review process. The issue will however be considered as part of the application submission.

(c)a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development;

Flooding & Drainage

The site does not lie within a flood plain and there are no known flood or drainage issues, however, given that it exceeds 1 hectare in area it will be necessary to provide a flood risk assessment. This will consider foul and surface water drainage issues.

Traffic

The proposed development would result in some additional traffic to and from the site onto Basingstoke Road. This matter was considered by the Council's Highways Officer as part of pre-application advice reference 233124. No concerns or objection were raised.

The proposal would not result in any significant impact on local highway conditions. Full traffic modelling and junction details will be provided with the application.

Contamination:

There are no known areas of contamination. The site is largely green field and therefore unlikely to contain contaminants.

Biodiversity:

The site is not the subject of any specific designations. Ecological survey work has been carried out. This work has demonstrated that there are no significant habitats or other ecological constraints to the sites development.

A full, up to date ecological assessment and mitigation strategy will however be provided with the application.

Archaeology

The Council's archaeologist has historically commented that the site may have some archaeological potential and as a result required that a condition be attached to the SANG approval to the effect that a scheme of investigation should be agreed prior to any works commencing.

Rights of Way:

There are no public rights of way which cross the site.

However, to the west of the SANG, adjacent to the A33 runs 'Shinfield Byway 25, Woodcock Lane'. At its northern end, Byway 25 links to Shinfield Footpaths 20 and 26 which provide access to Three Mile Cross and the east side of Basingstoke Road.

Amenity of Existing Residents

The new development would be visible from the rear of the existing phase 1 development site. However there would not be any undue sense of enclosure or overbearing impacts and subject to the eventual design and layout of the houses no adverse overlooking.

The additional homes would generate some additional traffic through the phase 1 site but the roads and layout have been designed to accommodate this and there would be no materially adverse impacts upon the phase 1 residents.

Landscape & Trees

It is recognised that the landscape setting of Spencers Wood is an important consideration in the assessment of the proposals. The proposed allocation of a large portion of land west of Spencers Wood (including the site) as part of a Valued Landscape designation is also noted. This is however subject to formal objection and will be assessed as part of the Local plan review process.

As part of two previous Planning Appeal Inquiries relating to the Phase 1 area both of the appointed Inspectors concluded that the site should not be considered a 'valued landscape'. Views of the Phase 1 site were held as being limited and localised.

As this site sits directly behind and to the west of phase 1 there would not be any additional visual impacts when viewed from Basingstoke Road or The Square to the east as new development would be screened by the existing permitted development.

Services / Infrastructure:

The development will provide any financial contributions deemed necessary and to meet the CIL regulations as may be required to support local services, particularly in respect of education (schools) and other community services.

In summary, the proposed development does not exhibit any unusual characteristics nor would it lead to the loss of or adverse impacts to land which is recognised as being sensitive to change or containing important environmental features.

There are no other statutory designations or constraints affecting the site or neighbouring land.

(d)to the extent the information is available, a description of any likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment resulting from—
(i)the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant; and
(ii)the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity; and

There are no buildings or structure on the site requiring demolition and clearance.

There are no known factors that could give rise to any unusual or significant use of resources, production of waste, pollution, or risks to human health.

No such concerns have arisen in respect of the development of the Phase 1 site and nothing different is expected in this case.

(e)such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make, including any features of the proposed development or any measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.

The proposed development clearly falls to be assessed as Schedule 2 development within the regulations. However, it is considered that the site does not constitute a “sensitive area” as there are no significant environmental constraints. Further, the development is adjacent to the existing residential development (Phase 1) and the existing urban area recognised as being a sustainable location for residential development. The receiving environment is well positioned to absorb the impact of additional housing.

It is considered that the application would not result in materially detrimental environmental impacts and that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not therefore required in that respect. This was the conclusion of the Council and two separate Inspectors when assessing the Phase 1 proposals.

I would be grateful to receive your written response to this formal screening request within the next 3 weeks and trust that a copy of this will be placed on the Planning Register, in accordance with the Regulations.

Yours faithfully,



Paul Watson
PHILLIPS PLANNING SERVICES LTD.