

4th August 2025

Our Ref: 333101011/A3/CD

Wokingham Borough Council
Development Management,
Wokingham Borough Council,
Civic Offices, Shute End,
Wokingham,
RG40 1BN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LAND WEST OF HIGH COPSE, SHINFIELD
PLANNING PORTAL REFERENCE: PP- 14194874
FULL PLANNING APPLICATION

On behalf of our Clients the University of Reading, we are pleased to submit via Planning Portal (ref: PP-14194874) details pursuant for a full planning application for the proposed allotments at Shinfield West. The proposed description of for which full planning permission is sought is:

“Full planning permission for allotments”

The following documents are submitted in support of the planning application:

- Red line boundary plan, prepared by Stantec, reference: 333101011-RG-LD-95
- Southern Allotment GA Plan, prepared by Stantec, reference: 333101011 RG-LD-94 Rev C
- Ecological Impact Assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain, prepared by EPR, reference: 30/29-3A (including a biodiversity net gain metric)
- Construction Environmental Management Plan, prepared by ALP, reference: A243-R013 B
- Transport Statement, prepared by Abley Letchford, reference: A243-R011 C
- Flood Risk Assessment, prepared by Abley Letchford, reference A243-R012
- Shinfield Southern Allotments, Baseline Tree Survey, prepared by FLAC, reference: CC38-1035

This application has been submitted electronically via Planning Portal (ref: PP- 14194874).

This Planning Statement provides an assessment of this proposal in consideration of national policy (i.e., the National Planning Policy Framework (‘NPPF’) and the relevant policies of WBC’s Development Plan to demonstrate that the proposed allotments is in accordance with local and national planning policy.

Background Context

By way of background, outline planning permission for the Shinfield West development was granted by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 8th November, 2012 for up to 1,200 dwellings, 150 additional units of specialist housing (including sheltered housing) for elderly persons, a local centre, a community building, primary school, areas with potential for extension of existing primary schools, public open space, a sports pavilion, an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to the south of Church Lane (the “Ridge SANG”), access and landscaping. The site originally was envisaged for two areas of allotments, one at northern end and one at the southern end. The northern end received approved 12th April 2017 and has since been implemented (ref: 163543). It was originally envisaged for further allotments to be situated closer to the Sports Pavilion. However, the Sports Pavilion, associated parking arrangements and infrastructure has taken up the land originally proposed for allotments. As a consequence, the University of Reading is now bringing forward this application which adjoins the sports pavilion and provides an alternative location which is equally well

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related to the Sports pavilion and associated parking. It was originally proposed that 0.4 hectares of land would come forward for allotment space at the southern end of the Shinfield West site, however the University of Reading is proposing to provide a greater area, providing 0.73 hectares of land which is a significant benefit. This land lies within the University of Readings ownership and presents an opportunity to provide allotments in an ideal and sustainable location beside the pavilion where access and parking is already provided in a location well connected to new residential areas at Shinfield by connecting foot and cycleways.

Site and Surrounding Area

The site lies south of the residential parcels for Phase 1 and 2, south of High Copse Common and Ryeish Green. The site is bordered by ancient woodland at the northeast of the site and benefits from footways connections allowing access throughout Shinfield.

The Site comprises solely of grassland, and shrubs.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is not within any conservation area.

The proposed Development

Stantec has been instructed by the University of Reading to produce a detailed application for:

“Full planning permission for the provision of allotments”

Vehicle access to the development Site will be achieved from the site's western boundary, the location of which is principally fixed as part of the neighbouring sports pavilion layout which is currently under construction (planning ref: 223286). Pedestrian access will also be facilitated through the provision of a suitable footway.

In terms of drainage, the Site lies entirely within the Environment Agency Flood Zone 1 category and is only marginally influenced by Overland Surface Water routes. Both are considered to be a low level of flood risk posed by these sources.

Planning Policy Context

This section sets out the national and local planning policy relevant to the planning application.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan

The adopted Development Plan for WBC comprises:

- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (January 2010);
- Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (February 2014);
- Central and East Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2023);
- South East Plan Policy – NRM6 (Natural Resource management)
- Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2017)

Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy

WBC's Core Strategy was adopted in January 2010 and sets out where development will occur within the borough to 2026 and includes a range of planning policies relating to housing, retail, employment and community facilities.

The planning policies contained in the Core Strategy that are most relevant to the proposed development are provided in full below.

Policy CP1 (Sustainable development) - Planning applications that accord with the policies of Wokingham Borough Core Strategy will be granted, and this policy will be delivered through the Managing Development Delivery DPD and Sustainable Development SPD. The site is in a sustainable location within a walkable distance to residents and adjoins the Sports Pavilion which will provide necessary parking and toilet facilities.

Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development) - notes that planning permission will be granted for proposals that have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape or geological features or water courses and maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they have responded to the criteria of this policy through the submission of Design and Access Statements, clear and informative plans, elevations and street scenes and where required Masterplans, Development Briefs, Concept Statements and Design Code.

CP7 – Biodiversity - Sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site in terms of its international or national importance. As previously mentioned, this proposal has potential to support and promote biodiversity through additional planting and management of natural features. The proposal will meet the biodiversity requirements as set out in legislation.

Policy CP11 (Development Outside Development Limits) – states that development proposals located outside of designated development limits will not normally be permitted, in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the countryside. Exceptions may be made for proposals that are necessary for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, or other uses appropriate to a rural area, or for affordable housing where a proven local need exists. Proposals must demonstrate how they meet these criteria through the submission of robust supporting evidence, including planning statements, needs assessments, and where applicable, ecological or landscape impact assessments.

Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (MDD)

Wokingham Borough's MDD Local Plan was adopted in February 2014 and supplements the policies within the Core Strategy. The planning policies that are most relevant to the proposed development are listed below.

Policy CC01 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy CC03 (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping) notes that development proposals should; provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks; promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between existing green corridors including public right of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways; promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside, protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features; and incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping.

Policy TB08 (Open Space, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development)

– This policy sets out the open requirements in terms of size. In respect of allotments, the requirement is 0.52ha per 1000 people. As previously stated, the requirement for allotments in this location was 0.4 ha, however the University have found an opportunity to provide a community growing space on land beside the Sports Pavilion which will provide 0.07ha of space which is an overprovision and a benefit for the area.

Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2017)

Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan recognises Shinfield's strong sense of community and states that community spaces are of great value to the area and are generally well utilised. This is supported by Policy 10 (Community and Sports Facilities) where it states that housing developments should seek to provide community spaces such as allotments and communal gardens.

Supplementary Planning DocumentsWokingham Borough Council Design Guide (2012)

Wokingham Borough Council Design Guide (2012) sets out the Council's aspirations in terms of design for the Borough. In terms of allotments and open space, it states that a variety of public open space should be provided that caters for a wide range of residents and activities. High quality open spaces are required to be provided in association with residential development and should be designed for safety and integrated into development proposals.

Borough South of M4 SPD (2011)

South of the M4 strategic development location was set out by Wokingham Borough Council to guide future development. Design principle 1c states that landscape framework and green infrastructure features to the SDL to enhance and protect the residential setting and quality. Paragraph 1c(v) states that allotments and orchards should be accessible for residents and form attractive and interesting focal points of neighbourhoods.

Emerging Policy

WBC is currently preparing a new Local Plan, known as the Local Plan Update. This will include a vision, objectives, and strategy for the level and distribution of development in the borough up to 2040, including housing, economic and retail development, and new infrastructure.

The Local Plan Update was submitted for independent examination on 28 February 2025. The Inspectors submitted their Initial Questions to the Council on 17 April 2025 and hearing sessions are expected to be scheduled in summer 2025. Therefore, the emerging Plan currently has limited weight when determining planning applications.

Below is a list of relevant draft policies from the draft version of the Plan. Due to the stage at which the Plan is at, these draft policies are considered to have some weight, if limited, with regard to these proposals.

- Policy SS1: Sustainable Development Principles
- Policy HC1: Promoting Healthy Communities- Policy HC1 highlights the importance of creating strong, vibrant and healthy communities with support to well being and reducing health inequalities.

- Policy HC2: Community Infrastructure - Policy HC2 reinforces the principle of creating an accessible place which promotes social inclusion whilst accommodating for a range of community uses.
- Policy HC4: Open Space, Sports, Recreation and Play Facilities
- Policy NE1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy NE1: Landscape and Design

National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was originally published on 27th March 2012, however, has since been subsequently updated in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024. It is a material consideration in determining planning applications and the chapters of the NPPF that are most of relevance in this instance include:

- Chapter 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Chapter 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Chapter 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

The key paragraphs of the NPPF relevant to the proposals are listed below.

Chapter 2 - Achieving sustainable development

Paragraph 8, part a set out the economic objective:

that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

Paragraph 8, part b sets out the social objective:

to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being;

Paragraph 8, part c sets out the environmental objective:

to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Chapter 8 of the framework is focused on promoting healthy, safer, and inclusive communities. Paragraph 96 outlines the importance of accessible and high-quality open space and recreational areas highlighting the importance this has for the health and well-being of communities.

Chapter 8, paragraph 98 highlights the importance of providing social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the communities need supporting the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community. Part a) states:

Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

Chapter 8 recognises the importance and the value that shared spaces and community spaces provide people. This section of national policy also supports proposals which are accessible and meet the needs of everyone.

Paragraph 103 of Chapter outlines the importance of access to high quality open spaces and it's important for the health and well-being of communities. This policy recognises the benefits that open spaces can provide and the wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.

Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places

Paragraph 131 states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, and outlines the importance of good design as a key aspect of sustainable development, creating better places in which to live and work.

Paragraph 135 emphasises that planning decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, are sympathetic to local character and history, establish or maintain a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

Paragraph 136 emphasises the important contribution trees make to the character and quality of urban environments, and can help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published on 6th March 2014 (and is updated on a periodic basis) and, alongside the Framework, provides guidance notes on various matters including Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities, Green Space and Climate Change.

National Design Guide

The National Design Guide sets out the fundamental principles for good design and demonstrates what good design means in practice covering ten characteristics including identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, context, Uses, Homes and Buildings, Resources, and lifespan. This guidance outlines the importance of well-designed places and recognises community facilities as being a 'place for everyone'. Policy B1 promotes community facilities being close to other facilities and reinforces the importance of having accessible places for older and disabled people, and those with young children.

Planning Assessment

This section of the Planning Statement assesses the proposal against relevant national and local planning policy.

Principle of Development

The proposed development of community allotments adjacent to the Sports Pavilion is considered acceptable in principle and aligns with the strategic objectives of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy and the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan.

The site is located in a sustainable and accessible location, within walking distance of the surrounding residential areas, and benefits from proximity to the existing Sports Pavilion, which will provide essential facilities such as parking and toilets. This supports the objectives of Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) and Policy CC01 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development), which promote development in sustainable locations and encourage the efficient use of land and resources.

In accordance with Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development), the proposal has been designed to ensure there is no detrimental impact on ecological, heritage, landscape, or geological features. The site layout and management plan will incorporate measures to protect and enhance local biodiversity, including the retention of existing landscape features and the introduction of native planting.

Under Policy CC03 (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping), the proposal will enhance the Borough's green infrastructure by providing a well-integrated, accessible green space that connects with existing public rights of way and open space networks. The design will retain and enhance existing trees and hedgerows where possible and incorporate high-quality landscaping using native species.

The proposal also exceeds the quantitative requirements set out in Policy TB08 (Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities). While the identified need for allotments in this area is 0.4 hectares, the proposed scheme will deliver 0.73 hectares of growing space, an overprovision and a valuable community asset.

Furthermore, the proposal accords with criteria 1 and 6 of Policy CP11 (Development Outside Development Limits), as it represents an appropriate use in a countryside location that supports community well-being and enhances the character and function of the area without undermining the separation or identity of nearby settlements.

Arboriculture

Policy CC03 of the MDD notes that development proposals should provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping.

A Baseline Tree Survey has been prepared by FLAC in support of this application, in accordance with BS5837:2012. The majority of trees are located either along the site boundary or outside of it. Within the site, there are three Category B trees situated to the west and south, all of which are to be retained as part of the proposal. Additionally, a number of Category U trees have been identified; however, these are located outside the site boundary and are therefore unaffected by the development. A further technical note, including a Tree Protection Plan, will be submitted to the Council in due course.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Policy CP07 of the Core Strategy and policy TB23 of the MDD set out the policy requirements in relation to biodiversity, and the conservation and enhancement of habitats and species. Policy TB23 sets out that planning permission will only be granted where developments provide opportunities to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing features, provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites and habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation, and ensure that they are ecologically permeable.

A Ecological Impact Assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain Note have been prepared by EPR and are submitted as part of the planning application.

The Site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations, and the proposed development will not affect any nearby designated sites due to distance and lack of ecological connectivity. While the Site supports habitats of local ecological value, including neutral grassland, hedgerow, and scrub, these will be retained and enhanced as part of the proposals.

Ecological surveys confirmed the presence of foraging and commuting bats, including several UK Priority Species. No roosts were identified, and the development has been designed to avoid impacts through sensitive lighting and habitat enhancement. No evidence of Great Crested Newts, reptiles, or badgers was found, and precautionary measures will be implemented during site clearance.

The proposals include the planting of eight native trees, 110m of new native hedgerow, and enhancement of existing hedgerows. These measures, alongside off-site habitat delivery, will ensure a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in accordance with the Biodiversity Gain Requirement Regulations 2024.

Transport

A Transport Statement has been prepared by Abley Letchford in support of this planning application.

The proposed allotment site is well connected to the surrounding area via a network of existing pedestrian and cycle routes. A 1.5m footway links the site to the Pavilion car park and continues north as a 3m shared-use footway/cycleway to Bolton Drive, providing a continuous and safe route for pedestrians and cyclists. Additional connections to Hyde End Road and Langley Mead SANG are available via existing hoggan paths.

The site is also accessible by public transport, with the nearest bus stops located on Bolton Drive approximately 420m away. These are served by the frequent Reading Buses service 600, offering half-hourly connections Monday to Saturday.

Vehicular access is provided via a 4m wide carriageway from the Pavilion car park, with a turning area to allow vehicles to exit in a forward gear. Parking provision includes three spaces, in line with Wokingham Borough Council's standards, and additional capacity is available in the adjacent Pavilion car park if required. Secure cycle parking for four bicycles will also be provided.

The layout has been designed to accommodate disabled users, with accessible parking and step-free access throughout. Swept path analysis confirms that emergency and maintenance vehicles, including fire tenders, can safely access and manoeuvre within the site.

The proposed development is therefore considered to be fully accessible by sustainable modes of transport and compliant with relevant local and national planning policies.

Drainage

A Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared by Abley Letchford in support of this planning application.

The site lies entirely within Flood Zone 1, indicating a low risk of fluvial flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been undertaken in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024). The Sequential and Exception Tests are not required.

While the site is identified as having some susceptibility to groundwater flooding, this risk is considered manageable. The risk of flooding from sewers is low, and there are no records of historical flooding within the site boundary. The site is also outside any reservoir breach zones.

A surface water drainage strategy has been developed in line with SuDS principles. It includes permeable paving, a gravel haul road, swales, and an attenuation basin, with runoff discharged at a controlled rate to an existing ditch. The system is designed to accommodate up to the 1 in 100-year storm event plus 40% climate change allowance, with exceedance flows safely routed through landscaped areas.

The SuDS features will also provide water quality improvements, with treatment stages sufficient to mitigate pollutants from the site. A maintenance strategy will be implemented to ensure long-term performance, and adoption responsibilities will be agreed with relevant authorities or management bodies.

Summary and Conclusion

This Planning Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application at the west of high copse, Shinfield, for:

“Full planning permission for the provision of allotments”

It has been demonstrated that the principle of development within this location is acceptable, that the proposed design is appropriate to the character of the Site and surrounding area, and that there are no unacceptable impacts on trees or biodiversity, meeting the requirements of WBC's Local Plan and the NPPF.

We trust that the submission is complete and hope the planning application can be validated without delay. Should you have any questions regarding the enclosed documents, please feel free to contact me via email at Caitlin.daly@stantec.com.

Yours Faithfully,



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