

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	243126
Site Address:	Front Plot At Shinfield Court, Church Lane, Three Mile Cross, RG7 1HB
Expiry Date:	30 June 2026
Site Visit Date:	10 February 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. detached single storey building to form a members-only retail club (Use Class Sui Generis) with associated parking and access following demolition of the existing building.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Countryside
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone – Red Risk Zone
Ground Water Zones
Nuclear Consultation Zone
Strategic Development Location
Landscape Character Assessment Area
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones – 7km Linear Mitigation Zone

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP13 – Town Centres and Shopping CP19 – South of the M4 SDL
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk

	CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB04 – Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield TB12 – Employment Skills Plan TB17 – Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops TB18 – Garden Centres and other small rural units outside Development Limits TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM4 - Protection of Designated Landscape DM5 - Protection of the Countryside DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity DM10 - Flood Risk DM11 - Water Resources DM12 - Sustainable Transport Movements DM14 - Ancillary development DM15 - Site History
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document South of M4 SDL SPD Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
F/2007/1888	Proposed erection of new gospel hall with car parking and landscaping amenities. New caretakers cottage with bat loft above. Access from Church Lane. Demolition of existing buildings.	Approved 24/06/2008
F/2009/1229	Proposed erection of new gospel hall with associated car parking and landscape amenities, plus caretakers cottage with bat loft above, access from Church land and demolition of existing buildings (amendment to consent F/ 2007/1888.	Approved 16/09/2009
C/2009/0582	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent F/2007/1888: 3. Exterior lighting 4,28. Protection of bats 5. Reptile survey 8. Bicycle parking 13. Travel plan 25. Noise control.	Approved 17/09/2009

C/2010/1010	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent F/2009/1229: 2. Samples/details of materials. 10. Sustainable drainage scheme. 12. Details of surface water drainage works. 14. Details of surface water balancing works. 13. Details of foul sewerage works. 15. Hard and soft landscaping details. 17. Details of tree protection.	Approved 06/09/2011
VAR/2011/1243	Application for removal of condition 20 of Planning Consent F/2009/1229 for hedge maintenance.	Approved 01/08/2011
VAR/2012/0882	Application for variation of conditions 5 and 22 of planning consent F/2009/1229 to substitute drawing RG.10.03.Q for drawing RG.10.03.N in condition 5 and RG.10.03.Q, RG.10.02.L and RG.10.01.M for RG.10.03.N, RG.10.02.I and RG.10.01.H in condition 22.	Approved 03/08/2012
F/2014/0970	Proposed change of use and refurbishment of existing farm buildings to form Montessori Nursery School and studio commercial units.	Approved 05/12/2014
F/2014/0971	Proposed change of use and repositioning of existing agricultural barn to form office/workshop.	Approved 05/12/2014
VAR/2015/0839	Application to vary condition 5 and 22 of planning consent F/2009/1229 for the erection of a gospel hall. Condition 5 relates to vehicular access visibility splays and condition 22 is for the substitution of drawings RG.10.03.Q, RG.10.02.L and RG.10.01.M with RG.10.03.N, RG.10.02.I and RG.10.01.H.	Approved 10/08/2015
162337	Application to vary condition 2 of planning consent F/2014/0970 and F/2014/0971 for the proposed change of use and refurbishment of existing farm buildings to form Montessori Nursery School and studio commercial units. Condition 2 relates to Approved Details to allow for the demolition and erection of a new build building.	Withdrawn 09/09/2016
162915	Full planning application for the demolition of existing derelict farm buildings and erection of a new build Montessori nursery, new build community use studio, new cafe with kitchen plus new car parking and vehicle access.	Approved 31/01/2017
171916	Full application for the development of a two storey 64 bed dementia care home (use class	Refused 13/12/2017

	C2) with associated access, parking and landscaping.	
192263	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 162915 dated 31/01/2017. Condition 3. External Materials. 4. Landscaping. 5. Cycle Parking - details required. 6. Travel Plan. 8. Drainage. 9. Ecology Enhancement. 10. Access to be provided. 11. Parking and Turning Space to be provided. 13. Reptiles.	Split decision 04/10/2019
192874	Full application for the proposed erection of a Montessori Nursery, Community Use Studio, Cafe with kitchen, car parking and vehicle access, following demolition of existing derelict farm buildings.	Approved 03/02/2020
222787	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 192874 dated 03/02/2020. Condition 3. Cycle Parking. 4. Electric Vehicle Charging Points.	Approved 26/10/2022
223110	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 192874 dated 03/02/2020. Condition 5 Off site works Condition 6 Drainage details	Approved 25/11/2022
223232	Application to vary condition 5 of planning consent 192874 for the proposed erection of a Montessori Nursery, Community Use Studio, Cafe with kitchen, car parking and vehicle access, following demolition of existing derelict farm buildings. Condition 5 refers to Off site works, (No development shall commence until the footway and dropped curb are in place) and the variation is to allow off site works to be carried out prior to occupation.	Approved 12/12/2022
231128	Application for a Certificate of Lawfulness to provide confirmation that the development approved under 223232 has been lawfully implemented prior to the expiry date of the planning permission.	Approved 04/07/2023
240307	Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. detached single storey building to form a church community members-only retail club (Use Class Sui Generis) with associated parking and access following demolition of the existing building.	Refused 26/07/2024 Allowed at appeal 12/08/2025

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No comments received
 WBC Drainage – No objection subject to conditions
 WBC Highways – Request further information. *Officer comments: This will be discussed within the main report.*
 WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Community Infrastructure) – No comments received
 WBC Landscape and Trees – Request further information. *Officer comments: This will be discussed within the main report.*
 WBC Ecology – No comments received
 WBC Emergency Planning – No objection subject to conditions
 WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received
 WBC Ecology Newts – No comments received

External

Office for Nuclear Regulation – No objection subject to conditions
 Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received
 AWE Burghfield – No comments received
 West Berks Emergency Planning Officer – No objection subject to conditions

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Shinfield Parish Council object to this planning application on the following grounds: • It is in the countryside and therefore contrary to the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan. • It is a very large building that offered no community benefit. • Footways are not good in the area so it is unlikely people would walk. • An increase in the use of cars would increase traffic at an already busy and dangerous junction. • Concerns over flooding. • Concerns over the timing of deliveries. • The proposed entrance is close to the existing and this could cause confusion. • Protection of hedgerows and boundary edges. • The site is within the DEPZ so construction and evacuation plans should be submitted and approved before construction starts.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	17 neighbours have commented in support of this application on the following grounds: • The building is well screened from the road. • The new layout and entrance is an improvement from the previous application. • Reduction in travel time.

	• Opportunities for linked trips with going to the existing church building. One neighbour has commented in objection, and their comments are summarised below: • The existing Gospel Hall site has space for the proposed building and has a purpose-built parking/entrance. • This application misses the opportunity to re-site the building within the Gospel Hall site and does not satisfactorily address the access onto Church Lane.
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APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site sits within the boundary of Reading Gospel Hall, which is used by the Plymouth Brethren. The Brethren operate charitable schools, which are partly funded by private retail members clubs. The application proposes such a member's club, which would consist of wholesale delivery, mainly of food and household goods and then onward sale to members of the Church community only. The store would be run by unpaid volunteers, but with some unpaid part-time jobs.

Previous Application:

Application 240307 proposed a similar development to what is being proposed under this current application. The main differences between the applications would be that under 240307 the retail club was to be located on the northern boundary, whereas it is proposed against the south-western boundary under this application. Additionally, the proposed new access under the previous application was located approximately 20.5m from the existing access to the Brethrens Meeting Hall, whereas under the current proposal, the proposed new access is located 41.5m from the existing access.

Application 240307 was refused for the two reasons laid out below, however, this decision was overturned by the Inspector at appeal.

- 1. The proposed development results in the intensification of a sub-standard access to the detriment of highway safety. As such the proposal is contrary to the Core Strategy CP6, and the National Planning Policy Framework.*
- 2. In the absence of an appropriate legal agreement restricting the use of the retail members club to only members of the Plymouth Brethren there would be harm to the quality of the environment due to an increase in visits to the site, resulting in an urbanising impact and problems with highway safety. This is contrary to CP1, CP3, CP6 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, Policies 4 and 11 of the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.*

The appeal was accompanied by a planning obligation in the form of a unilateral undertaking which would restrict the use of the club store solely for use by members of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church, preventing its independent use. The Inspector deemed the planning obligation necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms. The obligation is directly related to the development, fairly and

reasonably related in scale and kind to the development, and it therefore meets the relevant tests. Additionally, the Council are content with this approach meaning that reason 2 falls away.

The Appeal Decision also sets out the inspectors thinking and reasoning for allowing the appeal. In the planning balance section of the decision, the Inspector states that they had not identified an unacceptable impact on highway safety. Therefore, the appeal was allowed.

As this current application proposes a better situation in terms of highways safety, the application is being assessed in-line with the Inspector's decision to allow the appeal. This meaning that a unilateral undertaking to restrict the use of the club store solely for use by members of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church will be required as per the Inspector's decision.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 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.

The NPPF indicates that:

To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

a) 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...

The proposal is for a private retail club in association with the existing church. The gospel hall is not open to the public in general, however the NPPF does not delineate between places of worship which are open to the public and are not. A retail club is a 'shop' where only members can purchase items. These have become widely distributed across the UK at organisations such as Costco.

TB15, TB16 and TB17 direct retail development to town, district and local centres. Given the scale of the proposal, it is not considered to be retail development and is essentially part of the gospel hall, being within the same site. It is noted that the proposal does not meet the size threshold to trigger a sequential or retail impact test as required by the NPPF or the retail policies. Given this and its association with the church, it is not considered that the proposal conflicts with retail policies and is essentially an ancillary part of the gospel hall.

The application site is in the Countryside and is therefore subject to policy CP11 of the Core Strategy. This states:

In order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where:

- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of the countryside; and*
- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and*
- Page 7 of 15 Public: Information that can be seen and used by everyone inside and outside the Council.*
- 3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement...*

CP19 of the Core Strategy indicates that measures will be required to retain separation between settlements. Policy 1 of the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan relates to the location of development.

The existing gospel hall was approved under planning application F/2009/1229. This built upon an earlier application under reference F/2007/1888 and accepted the use of the gospel hall in principle, outside settlement limits. Local and national policy has changed since this time, with the introduction of the NPPF, Core Strategy and MDD Local Plan.

It is noted that the proposal cannot be considered to accord with point 1 of CP11. However, it does accord with point 2, being within an existing cluster of buildings. As has been explained, it is also considered to be an ancillary part of the gospel hall. It is noted that the overarching aim of CP11 is to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. Given this, while there is some conflict with CP11, it is not considered that the proposal would lead to coalescence between settlements, nor would there be significant harm to the quality of the environment noting the proposed store unit would replace an existing building on the site. It is therefore not considered that this conflict with CP11 would substantiate a reason to refuse this application. This is on the basis that a legal agreement is required to ensure that it is only used by members of the Plymouth Brethren (refer to S106 planning obligation section of this report below).

CP19 and the South of M4 supplementary planning document do not direct retail facilities to this location. However, as has been mentioned, it is not considered that this is standard retail development. Therefore, it would not have a harmful impact on the delivery of appropriate retail facilities as envisaged within the SDL.

Character of the Area:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high-quality design. Policy 2 of the Shinfield Neighbourhood plan relates to general design principles. CC03 of the MDD Local Plan indicates:

CC03 of the MDD Local Plan relates to green infrastructure and states the following:

Development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the following criteria within scheme proposals:

- a) Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development*
- b) Promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors including public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways*
- c) Promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside*
- d) Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features*
- e) Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.*

3. Development proposals which would result in the loss, fragmentation or isolation of areas of green infrastructure will not be acceptable.

Policy 6 of the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan relates to Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland.

NR2 of the Borough Design Guide SPD indicates that non-residential development should be designed to contribute towards improving the character and quality of the area. Proposals will be required to demonstrate the appropriateness of the approach in each case. NR5 indicates that building height, bulk and massing should relate well to the local context.

The proposed retail club measures 25m x 15m and would have a maximum height of 4.3m. The building is set back approximately 12 metres from Church Lane and there is adequate planting along the site's front boundary. This ensures that the building would be well screened and not overly dominant on the street scene, and this is demonstrated on the submitted street scene plan. Additionally, the elevation facing the street is the shorter of the two, and this helps reduce the amount of bulk that faces the street scene, further reducing any potential impact on the character of the area. Overall, the proposed retail club would have an acceptable impact on the character of the area, and it would not significantly urbanise this countryside location and therefore it is deemed as being acceptable.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Due to the location of the proposal on the site and given its single storey nature, it is not considered that the proposal would lead to harmful overbearing, overlooking or loss of light impacts relating to neighbouring properties. Additionally, there are no concerns relating to potential noise and light spill impacts.

With regard to deliveries and general activity associated with the members-only retail club, the scale of the use, its restricted membership, and the separation from neighbouring dwellings indicate that the use would not give rise to unacceptable noise or disturbance. To ensure that position is maintained, it is reasonable to control delivery/service arrangements through condition where necessary.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

CC07 of the MDD Local Plan relates to car parking. CP6 of the Core Strategy relates to Managing Travel Demand. It states:

Planning permission will be granted for schemes that:

- a) Provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice;
- b) Are located where there are or will be at the time of development, choices in the mode of transport available and which minimise the distance people need to travel;
- c) Improve the existing infrastructure network, including road, rail and public transport, enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including provision for those with reduced mobility and other users;
- d) Provide appropriate vehicle parking, having regard to car ownership;
- e) Mitigate any adverse effects upon local and strategic transport network that arise from the development proposed;
- f) Enhance road safety; and
- g) Do not cause highway problems or lead to traffic related environmental problems.

The Council's Highways Officer was consulted on this application. They acknowledge that the proposed access being located further east is an improvement compared to the previous proposed location in application 240307, however, the concerns over intensified highways safety risks remain, hence the Highways Officer initially objected to the proposal again.

However, following the Highways Officer objecting to this application, application 240307 has since been allowed at appeal. Therefore, given that the access proposed under this application is an improvement in highways safety terms compared to the now approved access proposed as part of application 240307, the objection from the Highways Officer falls away.

In reaching this conclusion, significant weight is given to the Inspector's findings on application 240307 that the members-only retail club, subject to restriction, would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety. The current proposal is materially improved in highway terms because the new access would be positioned materially further from the existing Gospel Hall access than the appealed scheme. On that basis, and subject to conditions mirroring the appeal decision, the proposal is not considered to give rise to a highway safety objection.

Conditions are recommended in-line with the Inspector's Appeal Decision relating to visibility splays, a Construction Method Statement, access surfacing, gates/barriers, parking and cycle parking.

Flooding and Drainage:

Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan relates to flood risk. Policy CC10 relates to surface water.

The application site is located within flood zone 1 and it is at low risk from surface water flooding according to the EA mapping. The Council's Drainage Officer has no objection to the proposal subject to a condition which would require details of the drainage system to be submitted to and approved in writing by the LLFA. A condition to secure full details of the drainage system for the site is recommended in line with the suggested condition from the Inspector's Appeal Decision for application 240307.

Landscape and Trees:

The Council's Landscape and Trees Officer has identified that there is a Horse Chestnut tree 'B' quality within the site's front boundary. The tree will not survive the proposed incursion into its root protection area from the extended car park. The Landscape and Trees Officer has therefore requested a slight redesign of the parking area. While the tree is not subject to a Tree Preservation Order, its contribution to the site frontage and local character is a material consideration. The proposal would therefore result in limited landscape harm through likely loss of this individual tree. In this case that harm is considered limited and is outweighed by the other material considerations identified in this report, subject to conditions securing an Arboricultural Method Statement and replacement planting of appropriate size, species and location.

Ecology:

The site is located in an area being identified as a 'Red Risk Zone' for Great Crested Newts. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was submitted as part of this application and section 4.28 of the report sets out appropriate mitigation methods to ensure there is no harm to Great Crested Newts. Subject to works being carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures proposed in Section 4.28 of the report, it is deemed that there would be no unacceptable harm to a protected species. A condition is recommended to ensure works are carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures.

Atomic Weapons Establishment Burghfield:

The application site is approximately 3.25km from the Atomic Weapons Establishment Burghfield, which carries out operations relating to the UK's Nuclear deterrent. More specifically, the site lies within the AWE Burghfield DEPZ and Outer Consultation Zone (OCZ). Any planning application for new development within the DEPZ that could lead to an increase in residential (or non-residential populations), thus impacting on the off-site emergency plan, requires consultation with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and Emergency Planning Officers (EPO). For clarity, any new residential development within the OCZ of 200 dwellings or greater would also require the same consultation.

The Council's Emergency Planning Officer has issued the following response:

This site is within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) site at Burghfield. Generally, the Emergency Planning team is against additional development in the DEPZ, because an increase in the population residing or visiting this area will likely have an adverse impact on the ability for Wokingham Borough Council and other emergency services from implementing West Berkshire's Off-Site Emergency Plan, in the event an incident occurs.

Based on the information provided, in my opinion the development is unlikely to impact upon the plan, due to its function, size and the fact it is serving an existing community. It has limited scope to introduce additional populations into the DEPZ.

I welcome the additional submissions of the construction and end user emergency plans, which appear to be sufficient to mitigate the residual risk.

Additionally, the EPO at West Berks and the ONR have not objected to the proposal. However, to ensure that there is no impact on the ability to implement the off-site emergency plan required by REPPIR 2019, conditions are recommended that require a Construction Phase Emergency Plan and an End User Emergency Plan to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

Section 106 Planning Obligation

The applicant has submitted a Unilateral Undertaking under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which restricts the occupation and use of the retail club so that it may only be used by members of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church and may not operate as an unrestricted retail use. This obligation is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms because, without it, the proposal could operate as a materially different and more intensive retail use giving rise to greater comings and goings and a materially different effect on countryside character and highway conditions. It is directly related to the development because it regulates the occupation and use of the proposed building itself. It is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind because it secures only the restriction necessary to ensure that the development is assessed and operated on the basis proposed. The obligation therefore meets Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) and can lawfully be taken into account. The UU was completed on 8 June 2026.

Planning Balance:

The proposal is therefore in limited conflict with Policy CP11, primarily because it does not fall squarely within criterion 1 for countryside development. However, that conflict is tempered by the fact that the building would replace an existing building within an established cluster of development associated with the existing Gospel Hall, would not erode settlement separation, and would not cause significant harm to the quality of the environment. Substantial weight is also given to the fallback appeal permission under application 240307, subject to the same restriction on occupation/use. Weighing these matters together, the conflict with Policy CP11 attracts limited adverse weight and is outweighed by the material considerations in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion:

For the reasons stated above, the proposal demonstrates that it is acceptable in local plan policy terms and therefore is recommended for approval.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning

permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approve subject to a UU under s106
Date:	18 June 2026
Earliest date for decision:	28 January 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	18/06/26