

Planning Application Number: 252498

Subject: STRONG OBJECTION – 252498 – Hall Farm, Church Lane, Arborfield, RG2 9HX

Dear Planning Department,

I write to OBJECT in the strongest possible terms to the above hybrid planning application.

This proposal for up to 2,800 dwellings plus associated development represents unsustainable overdevelopment on greenfield countryside in the Loddon Valley. It is contrary to the adopted development plan and national policy for the following material reasons:

1. Highway safety and severe residual cumulative impacts on the road network The site will generate approximately 5,600 additional daily vehicle trips (based on 2 trips per dwelling). The Transport Assessment underestimates peak-hour flows on the already congested Lower Earley Way, A327 Reading Road and Meldreth Way roundabout. Queue lengths at the new 4th arm to Meldreth Way will exceed capacity within 5 years, creating dangerous congestion opposite Showcase Cinema and rat-running through residential streets in Lower Earley and Winnersh. This fails to comply with Core Strategy Policy CP6 (Managing Travel Demand), CP10 (Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network), MDD Policy CC07 and NPPF paragraph 115 – significant harm that cannot be mitigated.
2. Flood risk and drainage – unacceptable risk to life and property The site lies immediately adjacent to the River Loddon, within Flood Zones 2 & 3 and the functional floodplain. Recent flooding events (2020, 2021, 2024) demonstrate the catchment is at capacity. The proposed “engineering measures within Loddon Valley” and SUDS are unproven at this scale and will increase downstream flood risk to existing homes in Sindlesham, Winnersh, Woodley and Twyford. The Environment Agency has repeatedly raised concerns about sewer flooding and Arborfield STW capacity (upgrades not secured until 2026 at earliest). Contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development), MDD Policy CC03 (Sustainable Drainage) and NPPF paragraphs 167-169.
3. Loss of countryside and coalescence of settlements – permanent harm to the Loddon Valley The development will erode the strategic gap between Arborfield, Shinfield, Lower Earley and Winnersh, creating urban sprawl across 200+ hectares of open agricultural land. This directly contradicts Core Strategy Policy CP11 (Proposals outside development limits including countryside) which states that development in the countryside will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances – none exist here. It also harms the setting of St Bartholomew’s Church (Grade I listed) and ancient woodlands.
4. Overdevelopment and harm to character A density of circa 35-40 dph across the site is wholly out of character with the low-density rural area (existing 10-15 dph). The proposed 6-7 storey buildings in the District Centre will dominate the flat valley landscape. Fails Core Strategy Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development) and MDD Policy TB21 (Landscape Character).
5. Biodiversity and protected species The site supports badgers, bats, great-crested newts and otter along the River Loddon corridor. The Ecological Appraisal relies on outdated surveys (pre-2024). No wintering bird surveys or up-to-date badger sett checks have been submitted. The claimed 10% BNG is unachievable given the loss of high-quality farmland and ancient hedgerows. Contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP7, MDD Policy TB23 and NPPF paragraph 186.

6. Noise, dust and disturbance – unacceptable 30-year construction period Construction of 2,800 homes plus bridges over M4 and River Loddon will cause prolonged HGV movements (estimated 150-200 per day) on narrow rural lanes for decades. No Construction Environmental Management Plan adequately mitigates this harm to residential amenity. Contrary to MDD Policy CC06 (Noise) and Core Strategy CP1/CP3.

7. Premature development ahead of Local Plan Update examination The emerging Local Plan Update was submitted on 28 February 2025 and remains under examination with two Inspectors appointed. Significant unresolved objections exist on viability, infrastructure delivery and sustainability. Approving this now would pre-empt the Inspector's findings and undermine the plan-led system (NPPF para 48).

8. No demographic need – British birth rates are below replacement and falling fast The UK Total Fertility Rate has collapsed to a record low of 1.41 children per woman in 2024 (ONS, August 2025). White British women – who form ~75% of the existing Wokingham population – have a TFR of approximately 1.05-1.10, meaning the indigenous British population is shrinking by 25-30% every generation even before net emigration. Without mass immigration, Wokingham's population would already be falling. The applicant's housing-need justification relies almost entirely on projected net migration, not natural change. This is not "sustainable development" under NPPF paragraph 11 – it is state-sponsored population replacement that permanently alters the character of the borough. There is no material need for 2,800 extra homes to house British families who simply do not exist.

9. TOTAL FAILURE TO DELIVER INFRASTRUCTURE – ZERO NEW SCHOOLS, SHOPS, GPs OR HOSPITALS GUARANTEED Despite promising two primary schools and one secondary school, the application is HYBRID: • The schools are in OUTLINE ONLY – no reserved matters, no trigger in the s106, no guaranteed funding. • The District Centre (11,000m² shops) and Local Centre (2,400m²) are also outline only – could be built 25 years later or never. • ZERO GP surgeries, dental practices, or hospital contributions secured. • The "Sports Hub" is outline only – no changing rooms booked. • No nursery/crèche places secured despite 5,000+ extra children.

Existing Schools are already 120% oversubscribed. Emmbrook, Forest, Waingels – all full. Existing GP practices in Lower Earley and Shinfield are at breaking point (2-3 week waits). This breaches Core Strategy CP2 (Sustainable Development – infrastructure first), CP4 (Community Facilities), CP19 (South of M4 SDL policies requiring phased delivery) and NPPF paragraph 11 – development must be "sustainable" with infrastructure delivered in parallel, not decades later.

For the above reasons this application should be REFUSED. If officers are minded to approve, I require the application to be determined by Planning Committee (not delegated) and wish to speak for 3 minutes.

Yours faithfully,

Charles Amos