

PLANNING REF : 251310  
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Conifers  
: Church Road, Farley Hill, Reading, Berkshire  
: RG7 1TU  
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Nicholas Ward  
DATE SUBMITTED : 24/06/2025

COMMENTS:

I strongly object to the proposed development as it completely ignores multiple aspects of the Wokingham borough council Local Plan and its Spatial Strategy. These will be outlined if a subsequent planning application is put in.

Due to the location and size of this proposed development, and the ecology, wildlife and habitats impacts, an ecological impact assessment is imperative. As per the local plan, the countryside around Farley Hill is defined as "countryside", rural and a "valued" landscape. This site does not meet the rural exceptional site rules, does little to protect and does not enhance the biodiversity that is already present.

The site lies within 600 metres of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and within the risk zone of the Bramshill SSSI. The Thames Basin Heath is of international importance and development close to it is well recognised to have an impact upon it and the species that rely upon it. The Arborfield Garrison development will already have an impact upon this area and this proposed development will be additive to that impact and is substantially closer being only 600 metres away.

Within the site itself there are two areas of ancient woodland, and further areas of ancient woodland on the immediate boundaries. These are regarded as irreplaceable habitats, and their loss or deterioration is not acceptable. Development immediately adjacent and around them can only be at detriment to their biodiversity. There are other sites of local importance such as priority species and habitats in the immediate vicinity. Within close proximity there are noted to be populations of Nightjar, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler, all of which are protected species.

In conjunction with the developments on the eastern side of the A327, this proposed development equates to an extension of urban sprawl to the West and is urban-rural fringe intrusion. The local plan indicates that there must be buffer zones between developments and protected species, priority species and priority habitats. This proposed development does not account for this. It also does not account for wildlife habitat corridors, which the local plan states must be safeguarded.

There are other important species that are likely to use the proposed area as their habitat. In the submission's own ecological report, it is recognised that this is a likely area for bats. The ancient woodland within Farley Hill hosts several species of bats which are regularly seen by the residents, (including roosting in my loft). There is also mention of great crested newts immediately to the South of the development, but with ponds and ditches within the development site which would make favourable habitat and are likely to be utilised for breeding. I have personally witnessed Newts in my

garden, several hundred metres from the site. Dormouse have also been recorded in past years. All are protected species. I have also witnessed slow worm and grass snake in Farley Hill.

There appears to be further information regarding amphibians within the ecological report, but worryingly, there appears to be redacted entries that have been obliterated before it was published. This is concerning considering the ecological sensitivity and possible impacts on development that amphibians can have.

There is likely to be significant light pollution from the proposed development due to its sheer size and density having its effect on night-time species and the glare impacting on Farley Hill to the detriment of the dark skies that are particularly important for bats and the local area. There is little ambient light at night time in Farley Hill as there are no street lights, housing is scattered, and the extensive wooded areas keep it dark after dusk.

Furthermore, there's expected to be significant noise pollution, affecting not only local residents through increased heavy congestion, but disrupting the local environment, of which consists of many bird species in particular that are (clearly) not present in the current developments to the East of the A327. As mentioned, the bordering woodland is more extensive than the ecosystems surrounding Aborfield Garrison/ Finchwood Park and other projects, and this proposed development is intruding into a cohesive environmental landscape (and independent village who value these surroundings) that stretches for miles and is therefore irreplaceable, and any damage is subsequently irreversible.

Air pollution is another huge consequence that affects many on a local and large scale. Farley Hill is a small hamlet that's built among fields and farms and has virtually no public transport. Private car use is a necessity here, but this proposed development will also rely heavily on private car use; contrary to the Local Plan. Elderly residents do not walk or cycle any significant distances, and the working age residents will drive to work. The village, due to being placed between many roundabouts and main roads, is used as a short cut for a significant number of rush hour vehicles (who already go over the speed limit) and a large development would only contribute to this social and environmental based pollution.

Finally, this proposal needs a Biodiversity Unit Score using a Natural England Biodiversity Metric. As per the Local Plan, all development proposals should demonstrate a minimum biodiversity net gain of 10%. Despite the ecological "window-dressing" in the submission, this proposal will only be of detriment to the local and Borough-wide ecology and diversity. This small, rural part of the Borough needs protecting. Once lost, it will not be recovered.