

PLANNING REF : 252498
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Carter's Hill
:
: RG2 9JJ
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Janet Heard
DATE SUBMITTED : 15/01/2026

COMMENTS:

PA 252498

Objection.

It should be noted that the Environmental Statement has been absent from the website for a period during this stage, and therefore unavailable for residents to reference. Developers have conceded publicly that the Application is 'not easy to navigate'. They have presented their development at Consultations as being owned wholly by Reading University, this is misleading at best, as there are residents living within the site. Furthermore, the consultation has been patchy, with some residents expressing most strongly that they were not

consulted until this point. As the process progresses, I will take opportunities to comment further if needed.

The effects of the Access deficiencies in the Plan cut across the area of the PA, but they are felt nowhere-more-so than in the area of the Winnersh/Arborfield boundary. Residents have publicly expressed

concern recently to learn at this late stage that a Traveller site is earmarked for an area with no obvious easy or safe access, and from a Byway with limited width. It is over a mile from existing schools, and should be less than half a mile for infants, according to guide lines, plus it should be safe from heavy traffic with safe crossings, which do not exist along the route to the nearest school, Bearwood Primary, where there is only on-road parent parking. It is further than a mile from the nearest public transport, and GP, is in an area which should be classed as a 'gap between settlements' see Policy CC02 and is removed from the facilities that the new development has to offer. - Policy SS13 is failed in a lack of protection of identity and separation from nearby settlements. WBC Policy failures;

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS para4)

j. to enable provision of suitable accommodation from which travellers can access education, health, welfare and employment infrastructure.

k. for local planning authorities to have due regard to the protection of local amenity and local environment.

Also Para 13,

c) ensure that children can attend school on a regular basis

These points indicate strongly that this site is inappropriate for the Travellers themselves, and feature in WBC's policy Topic Paper of February 2025.

In the PA Chapter 12, 12.2.14 is an example that also fails to provide its aims, in a lack of active travel links, as it does not provide a walkable neighbourhood in the Mole Road area, so fails Policy SS1 also. Many Byways and footpaths intersect with Mole Road, yet there is no safe footway along most of its length. Therefore no Active Travel possibilities.

The PA generalises the provision of public transport from the PA site (17.3.9) as a whole; 'The fringes of the Site have access to various public transport services'. This is misleading, or disingenuous at best. Even to access the Railway Station at Green

Park from Shinfield by walking or cycle would daunt all but the most energetic. Parking on Shinfield Green is always full in recent years and the park unavailable for recreation users as commuters rush early to park, then take the bus into town. There is clearly pent-up demand not being met due to a lack of land space. Existing housing is too far from the Bus Route for Active Travel and these plans will not help. In this corner of the Site bordering Winnersh the nearest bus route is at the Sainsbury Crossroads, around a mile and a half away, with the railway station probably around 2 miles away. The proposed Traveller Site is within the rural Parish of Arborfield and Newland, and sits on the boundary byway of Winnersh which is a more urban Parish in nature, yet in a recent survey by Arborfield Parish Council those residents surveyed along Mole Road expressed a wish to remain within Arborfield Parish, and I believe stated that they identified more with that Parish. Currently the nearby housing in Winnersh is screened by hedgerow and trees, which visually merges the development into the countryside beyond in Arborfield. Even in the PA the parcel of land stretching from Winnersh to Carter's Hill is promised to be rural and green in nature, with existing woodland, hedgerow and trees partly screening the built environment, yet the Traveller Site inclusion seems out of place. NPPF Policy F pt 19 encourages LAs to consider 'traveller sites suitable for mixed use residential and business uses, having regard to the safety and amenity of the occupants and neighbouring residents'. Locating it in the main body of the development would provide more of the services required, and Brooks Green (Norfolk) is an example where proximity to essential services, schools, doctors, shops, has proven a recipe for success.

Still relevant for the siting of the Traveller Site, but also significant for the Mole Road area as a whole, there is a significant increase in Mole Road traffic predicted in the LGV Environmental Statement for 'Future Baseline' stats for 2032 (there seem to be no current figures to compare?) Also, note that the figures to 2040 show little change, indicating therefore that early years could be the worst, when there is little infrastructure planned. Accident Analysis 17.3.29; shows that well over half of accidents in a collection of locations over a five year period were to 'vulnerable users' including cyclists and powered two-wheeler riders. Driver error mostly to blame it is stated. Mole Rd is included in this analysis, which has no pavements, dangerous topography (hills, bends and blind corners) yet is connected in a number of places to the PROW network, and so non-motorised traffic is likely to join or cross the carriageway at various points. Point 17.3.8 of the PA highlights the 'significant variations in safety, comfort and convenience' of the access to neighbouring settlements, and the worst example of this is perhaps in the Mole Road area. There appear to be no plans in the PA to remedy the disjointed and dangerous lack of connectivity. The Hall Farm Analysis by David Lock Ass and Peter Brett Ass of 2018 (commissioned by WBC) states that 'The A237 and B3030 are characterised as high speed rural roads and would require some upgrading to create safer pedestrian/cycle routes'. Nothing has changed to alter this conclusion, and this PA does nothing to improve of provision for Active Travel in this area of the Site. This is contrary to CP 10, which stresses the need to improve use of cycles and cycle paths.

Visual Amenity from PROWs.

It is concerning that point 14.8.3 covers the adverse effects of the proposed development on existing PROWs but states that these will be subject to Reserved Matters. Had the Applicants consulted the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan, as was suggested in previous public consultations, and as is their professional duty, they would have observed that for the most part these adverse views are

designated in Annex V Landscape and Important Views by residents of the area involved. *A summary of the protected views affected from PROWs by this PA is included at the end of the document. It is not acceptable to examine the effect of this Application on sensitive receptors ie cyclists, walkers and riders during Reserved Matters, where the public have no input, having disregarded this heavily consulted upon document.

Sensitive receptors as identified by the PA Landscape and Visual Impact doc;

'High' susceptibility for "People engaged in outdoor recreation whose attention is likely to be focussed on the townscape and particular views"

Mitigation suggested in areas of the plan is to plant trees/hedgerow, this creates a boring 'tunnel' effect and deprives residents of the 'open views' that the area is praised for in the NP. Residents value the feeling of openness, space and remoteness which is not mitigated by riding, cycling or walking down endless tunnels of byway. The

Swallowfield Road Solar Farm already uses this type of 'mitigation' to obscure the industrialising effects of the development, and the plans for the Barkham Solar Farm include this strategy also.

Repetition of this strategy across the PROWs of the area will create a very

unattractive network of routes within the Arborfield/Barkham area.

The terms used in the Savills paper are deceitful. 'Mitigation' = 'reducing the severity, seriousness or painfulness of something'; these valued views will be gone, replaced by the built environment.

Equally,

'transient' = 'lasting only for a short time; impermanent'; no, gone for ever.

With regard to Visual Amenity, the PA lauds the proposed introduction of scrubland (10.45 ha, point 14.5.36) as an improvement in the landscape, but with regard to landscape quality it is most certainly inferior. It is noticeable that the Scoping Opinion for the

development from 28/02/2025 describes the site as 'agricultural, the majority of which is predominantly used for grazing for University of Reading dairy herd'. This application stresses the use of Arable production on the site, and it seems the grade of farmland described in the PA is suitable for either, and the existing combination of uses is not only productive, but if managed sustainably is also biodiverse. The study of the grading of farmland provided in the PA shows that the site is not based on marginal land, and so should remain in

cultivation as a source of food supply. Map ref RAC/9617/2 shows farm land grading, as having very little lower quality soil on the site, i.e. little grade 4 and 5. Also present but not I believe shown, is the possibility for 'lowland dairy grazing', as some areas are

frequently flooded. Not only does it help with regard to floodrisk, it is considered a sustainable and profitable approach to milk production by Elsevier B.V. 2010.

There is no doubt that farmland, pasture and meadows with grazing cattle is far more nourishing to the soul and therefore 'well-being' than scrubland. The existing network of PROWs allow adequate access to the public, and in particular views of the expansive landscape which create the much praised feeling of 'remoteness'. The Countryside park will at best be an 'intimate 'landscape', no different to nearby Dinton Pastures to the north and the Nature Reserve at Langley Mead to the south. The distinctive character of the area will be lost for ever, and is not respected in the way that the Neighbourhood Plan was intended. Contrary to what is stated in the PA, there are views of the site from Lower Earley, and it will be a loss of countryside amenity from that area.

The number of trees to be removed in the PA is also subject to 'Reserved Matters' (pt 14.5.34) and although it says that over 1000 trees new trees are to be planted, residents are familiar with the low 'strike rate' of such trees in new developments after a summer

drought. Furthermore, to equal the carbon stored in one mature oak tree (for example) a total of 3,068 3m tall saplings (approx. 4 years after planting) is required, or 48,000 saplings approx. 3 years after planting. With regard to visual impact on the landscape the removal of one large tree seen from a distance would not be compensated by any number of smaller trees. Proof that it is impossible to balance the impact of the development on the landscape without more precise information; the case for this 'benefit' of the Site is unproven.

Precedent

APP/X0360/W/19/3235572. 190286 - Appeal

The Appeal decision for this case in Wokingham is directly relevant to this Planning Application. The Inspector weighed the evidence of a lack of safe, sustainable access to the proposed site against the benefits of housing, which was in excess of the demonstrated need. Hall Farm proposes more housing in Wokingham than is its projected need over the period, yet in the Mole Road Winnersh/Arborfield boundary area the provision for safe, sustainable Active Travel is not addressed in this PA, and would be very costly and difficult to provide due to the narrow carriageway. If this item it is absent from the PA, which it is, it will not have been factored into the cost.

The Appeal Inspector concluded that;

157 I have also found that the scheme would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area and this carries a moderate level of weight against the scheme. I am unable to rule out that the

proposal would cause significant and severe impacts on the local highway network, resulting in highway safety concerns. I have also found that there is the potential for conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists along the foot/cycle path. I consider that these together carry a significant level of weight against the proposal.

There are direct parallels with this Planning Application, where the lack of space on the route into Wokingham (and onward travel services/commerce/facilities) from the site made the Application unsustainable, and it was refused. As should this Application.

*Summary of views protected in the NP Annex V;

Arbo5a*(from Betty Grove) Rated of Significant Impact in the PA

Arbo5 (Loaders Lane)Rated of Moderate Adverse Impact in the PA

Arbo3*(Barretts La)Rated of Significant Impact in the PA

Arbo2 (Cocklebury Cotts to Hall farmhouse) Rated of Moderate
Impact in the PA

Arbo1 Rated Major adverse impact (River Loddon/Hall Farm Link) in
the

PA

NB 4a = Julkes 1a, not mentioned, but the View will be adversely
affected