

PLANNING REF : 261695
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Meadow Gate
: Gipsy Lane, Wokingham
: RG40 2HP
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Robert Comber
DATE SUBMITTED : 14/08/2026

COMMENTS:

Planning application 261695

This application is on the same site as that used as a part of a previous application which was turned down, both by the borough council, and then by the Inspector on appeal.

Whilst the previous application 190286 was significantly different, in that it was for over 200 houses, a number of the Inspector's comments, and his reasons for refusing the application, are still valid.

I would draw your attention to the fact that his view that this site is the boundary between the urban edge of Wokingham and open countryside and therefore forms part of the rural setting of Wokingham, is still the case. His view was, and I quote "It is, in my view, a clear transition point between the urban edge of Wokingham and open countryside to the south and east. The site therefore forms part of the rural setting of Wokingham"

You may consider that, under certain circumstances, sports fields can, in planning terms, be considered part of the countryside. This may be acceptable if it is in an area in the middle of open countryside, but I would venture that this is not the case here. The boundary, as identified by the Inspector previously, between the more urban part of Wokingham and the countryside, would become blurred, and would no longer form the same boundary. The separation of town and countryside would cease to exist, losing the rural character of Wokingham, to which the Inspector referred. Additionally, the loss of this highly defined barrier would make future building in the more open areas much more likely, further destroying the rural aspect of Wokingham.

Equally, the Inspector felt that the visual impact on properties on Hart Dyke Close would be of major adverse significance. The current application is obviously different, yet the construction of a 3.5M acoustic fence topped by another 3 metres of ball netting abutting those properties would certainly be at least as bad, if not significantly worse. It would be hard to see how that would not constitute a major adverse effect without considerable effort in landscaping or planting, which, in its turn could provide a considerable loss of light to these properties.

Moving on to noise and disturbance, the applicant has acknowledged that noise and disturbance will be a factor, and they have sought to appear to address this. However, beyond the establishment of a physically intrusive noise protection fence, little if any thought seems to have been put into noise management or reduction. I strongly suspect that is because noise management on sports fields is to all practical extents, impossible. Therefore there could be considerable noise disturbance created in a residential area.

To exacerbate this point, the applicant seems to have purposely designed the site to create unnecessary difficulties to residents. A design that places the sprinting track right beside the properties on Hart Dyke Close, as opposed to the side next to an open field, seems nonsensical and is indicative of an applicant with no consideration of the effect of their design on the residential area beside it.

The Noise Impact Assessment seems to have been carried out on a site significantly larger than the one being planned. The Site Description in the NIA correctly describes three of the boundaries but then describes the site as being bounded on the East by the 'North Downs rail line to the East'. This is not true, and indicates their assessment is based on a plot of land approximately three times the size of the one in the application.

I also consider the Operational Context of the NIA to be fundamentally incorrect. It is hard to see how the 'established character' of this site, currently open grassland, could be considered to include sports fields, because there are some relatively nearby. They did not conclude that the character might be that of woodland, because that too is close by. I think that it is clear that this would be a change to the established character of the area being considered.

Equally the issue of lighting appears unresolved. As the applicant has said that they intend this facility, if approved, to be available for use not only by the school, but also by external groups yet to be identified, it is highly likely that this would necessitate significant lighting including, potentially, tall floodlighting akin to that used at other locations. Any use, including hiring out to other sports groups would almost certainly include operations in the dusk/dark during autumn and winter, where lighting would almost certainly be a prerequisite. This would clearly create a very significant disturbance in the neighbouring residential properties. There is no indication that the applicant will seek to minimise or ban such lighting.