

PLANNING REF : 250517
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Barnetdale
: Basingstoke Road, Reading, Berkshire
: RG7 1AA
SUBMITTED BY : Mr James Reid
DATE SUBMITTED : 08/04/2025

COMMENTS:

Dear Planning Officer/Council,

I am writing to object to the proposed planning application to build up to 420 dwellings and other facilities in Spencers Wood. My reasons are listed below.

1. Proximity to AWE and Evacuation Plan

The site in question lies within the Evacuation Zone of AWE (Atomic Weapons Establishment), an area where an emergency evacuation plan is regularly reviewed by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) in the event of a fire or radiation leak from the facility. It is critical that any

development in this area accounts for the potential risks posed by the proximity to AWE. At present, evacuation routes from the site head towards AWE rather than away from it, a dangerous situation that could exacerbate the crisis in the event of an emergency.

2. Insufficient and Unsafe Evacuation Routes

The evacuation routes currently proposed are inadequate, particularly in light of the high traffic volumes during peak hours. At specific times of day, such as 7:30 AM to 9:00 AM and 4:30 PM to 6:00 PM, the area experiences significant congestion. It can take upwards of 20 minutes to travel just 2 miles. This makes the evacuation of the site in an emergency situation highly problematic.

3. Suitability of Land for Development

The land designated for this development is currently graded as suitable for "moderate development" only. The construction of 420 homes far exceeds what is considered moderate, and such a scale of development would place undue strain on local infrastructure, services, and the environment.

4. Unsold Capacity from Previous Housebuilding

The nearby development is still ongoing and has a significant amount of unsold capacity. The introduction of another 420 homes in close proximity will put further pressure on an already saturated market, raising concerns about the long term viability of such a development and the strain it will place on the area.

5. Road Safety and Access Points

The proposed access points for the development will introduce significant road safety issues, particularly along Basingstoke Road. These access points will likely result in "rat runs" using Kingsbridge Lane, Back Lane, and Lambs Lane, which will further exacerbate congestion and safety concerns. Specifically, the Lambs Lane School has existing parking and road crossing safety issues, which will be worsened by the influx of traffic.

Furthermore, Lambs Lane, Kingsbridge Lane, and Whitehouse Lane are predominantly single-track roads without suitable provision for

vehicles to safely pass each other, let alone accommodate increased traffic volumes. These roads also lack footpaths and proper lighting, making them unsafe for pedestrians, particularly children and the elderly.

The Beech Hill Road junction with Lambs Lane and Whitehouse Lane is already a known accident black spot, with numerous severe accidents having occurred in recent years. The proposed access points are, therefore, not suitable or safe.

6. Inaccurate Transport Statement

The transport statement included in the planning application is factually incorrect in its assessment of the number of vehicles the development would generate. The majority of homes in this area have at least two cars per household, with many households possessing three or more vehicles. This will create a far greater increase in traffic than the proposal suggests.

7. Education Provision

At the current point in time there is not enough primary schools in the area for the existing population with many residents not being able to put their children into their local school and instead having to drive them to schools further afield. Whilst an additional primary school would be welcome to actually keep up with the current capacity (never mind that being brought by additional houses) you would need more than one school.

This is also an issue for secondary schools where the lack of local provision sees local children being bussed out of the area every morning to enable them to get to schools which are further afield adding further to traffic congestion. This proposal does nothing to address this shortfall and just adds further pressure to the situation.

8. Safety Concerns Regarding Aviation Fuel Line

A significant safety concern for any development in this area is the presence of a high-pressure aviation fuel line that runs through the site and extends all the way to Southampton. This fuel line, with numerous branch lines, presents a significant hazard, and it is necessary to address these risks before any development can proceed. Notably, the Grazeley Village development was rejected by the Ministry of Defence on safety grounds due to the presence of a tributary fuel line in that area.

9. Access Points and Safety Issues

The proposed access points raise significant safety concerns. The Century Drive access would create pedestrian and cycle traffic that would pass directly through an established children's play area, increasing the risk of accidents. Additionally, the Barracks Lane access is on private property and is a single lane track without proper lighting or pavement. This track exits onto a stretch of pavement that is frequently crossed by vehicles at high speeds, creating an unsafe environment for pedestrians.

10. Environmental Impact

The proposed site is home to several endangered and protected species, including red kites, bats, and badgers, all of which are covered by protection orders and "do not disturb" legislation. The development could result in the disturbance of these species.

There is a lot of wildlife in Spencers Wood which is appreciated by everyone and the site contains a number of important habitats. The destruction of trees noted in the arboriculture report would lead to a loss of these habitats and whilst there are lots of counter measures noted in the reports, there is no commitment to any of them and no guarantee that the developer will follow them. Surely the best way to preserve the habitats is to leave them intact?

11. Insufficient Public Transport

Existing public transport is extremely poor for an area the size of Spencers Wood and the population who live here, with the result that the majority of residents drive. Over the past 15 years the bus service has been steadily reduced such that there is an hourly service down Basingstoke Road toward Reading until you get to St. Michael's where the bus service improves to every 30 mins. There is no bus provision on a Sunday meaning that residents are without a bus and unable to travel into Reading. If you fancy getting to Wokingham forget it as there is no real bus service to speak of after it was cut. This proposal would do nothing to improve this and in fact would make the situation worse by adding more traffic movements to already clogged roads.

There is a good rail service from Reading but you'll struggle to get there without planning out your journey in advance so you can line up your bus and rail times. Again this proposed development with no improvement in bus provision (in fact there are no buses allowed down the new development) will neither improve the situation for the existing residents nor for the new ones.

12. Business Park

There are already three business parks in the immediate area - Lambs Farm, Heron, and Wellington. The small local B3349 road is unable to cope with the current levels of traffic, turning lorries causing delays at busy times. Any further heavy lorry traffic will exacerbate this issue.

Additionally, there are numerous business units to let in the area so the addition of a further business park will just add more available units to an already saturated local market therefore unlikely to create employment opportunities for local people in the area.

13. Traffic Congestion

The traffic in Spencers Wood is already congested with the Basingstoke Road being really busy at peak periods leading to queues all along the Road as people have to wait in congested traffic to get on to the dual carriageway. This development would exacerbate this issue as the new home owners (like all the other new developments) will be predominantly driving.

There have been a number of new developments in the area over the last 15 years all of which have already exacerbated the traffic congestion. There is nothing in the planning application which shows the cumulative impact of all these additional traffic movements thereby giving an accurate picture of what the traffic congestion

looks like over different times of day, different days of the week, and across seasonal variations. This wider traffic impact needs to be undertaken.

14. Electrical Supply

At least every couple of months we have an interruption to our electrical supply in Spencers Wood and whilst it has got better over time it is still an issue. Adding further homes and connecting them to the existing supply will only make this worse.

15. Disruption to Existing Residents

The plans indicate that it will take 7 years to build out the development in its entirety - that's 7 years of heavy lorries churning up the roads, 7 years of noise, and 7 years of the inconvenience that inevitably occurs when you're living in close proximity to a building site. This disruption to people's lives is unfair especially given that over the last 15 years we've already had to endure a lot of building work.

16. Not in Area Development Plan

This development is not part of the existing Area Development Plan so it's infrastructure needs have not been planned or catered for. At the minute the local amenities and facilities in the area are already inadequate for the additional development that has occurred over the past 15 years which this proposal does nothing to address.

17. NHS Facilities

The plan proposes that a new doctor surgery will be built which would be great as it is already challenging enough to get an appointment with the doctor. However, it's also challenging to access other NHS facilities such as a dentist who will accept NHS patients and also small walk in clinics for minor procedures. These facilities are needed now for the existing population so adding more people without providing these services is just going to add further to the strain. More population will also add further strain to Reading Hospital which already has a number of issues.

18. Flooding Concerns

Parts of the site are prone to flooding including the proposed access point in Lambs Lane which often has standing water in autumn and winter. Removing the natural drainage will increase the risk of flooding to existing homes and exacerbate the existing issues. The developer's drainage plans are vague and fail to address the long term impact of increased surface water runoff.

19. Overdevelopment and Loss of Character

This proposal represents an overdevelopment of the site, completely changing the character of the area. The density of the housing is far too high, with no thought given to preserving the rural feel of the location. The houses will be packed too closely together, with minimal green space, making it feel more like an urban estate rather than a country village.

Over the last 15 years we have seen the distinctiveness of Three Mile Cross, Shinfield, and Spencers Wood diminished as green spaces separating the villages have been in-filled with further housing so

that it feels like one large contiguous housing scheme. This proposed development just continues this trend leading to a loss of character which once made these villages distinct and unique.

20. Sewerage Issues

Over the past 15 years as more housing has been built in the local area there has been a substantial impact on the area's sewage capacity. During periods of heavy or sustained rainfall, the system becomes immediately overwhelmed unable to cope with the excess water. For some residents this has meant sewerage has had to be pumped out and has also led to their drains ceasing to function correctly. Thames Water as part of this application have stated that they don't have the information they need to make an impact. The building of additional houses is just going to make the sewerage problems worse.

21. Cycling

Throughout the proposal there is a presumption that the amount of cycling would increase. The reality of the situation from the additional building that has already occurred is that people predominantly travel by car and that a large number of households run two cars. As a result whilst the image of loads of more cyclists sounds lovely, it is far fetched and won't be realised.

22. Emergency Access

I believe that the limited access on to the site will represent a danger for the new residents as emergency vehicles will not be able to get on site to respond to an emergency situation given the limited road access points and the limited width of the road. I note there is no statement from the local Fire and Rescue Service.

23. Not in the Interests of the Local Community

The impression you may get from reading the Design and Access Statement from Richborough is that they have worked hard to design a green space where new residents can enjoy living in a sculpted environment which puts sustainability at its heart. However, as Richborough make clear on their web-site their interest is to "secure planning permission and best value for landowners". In fact they not only pride themselves on that but they also carry quotes from grateful landowners for maximising value for them. This development is being proposed for one purpose which is to extract the maximum value for the landowner, not to generate the maximum value for the local community.

24. Lack of retail and leisure facilities

The planning application says that Spencers Wood has a lot of retail and leisure facilities, but every resident I have ever spoken too feels that more is needed to serve the current population let alone the additional residents that would live here if this planning permission were to be approved. The current proposal does not add any additional retail space and other than a community centre no additional leisure facilities.

25. Water Infrastructure

Thames Water doesn't have sufficient detail to be able to identify the impact that the additional houses would have on the existing

infrastructure. So as a result permission for this development should not be granted as from resident's experiences already the existing infrastructure is unable to cope and the plans don't do anything to enhance this infrastructure.

In my view this planning application should be rejected as it does not serve the interests of the community for all the reasons listed above.

Regards

James P Reid