

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251538
Site Address:	Shinfield Baptist Church, Fairmead Road, Shinfield, Wokingham, RG2 9DL
Expiry Date:	10 September 2025
Site Visit Date:	7 August 2025
Proposal: Full planning application for the proposed partial demolition of existing church and associated buildings and replacement with new church building, upgrade to existing building together with reorganisation of parking area, landscaping and associated site works.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB04 – Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield TB09 – Residential Accommodation for Vulnerable Groups TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM4 - Protection of Designated Landscape DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity DM10 - Flood Risk DM11 - Water Resources DM12 - Sustainable Transport Movements DM14 - Ancillary development DM15 - Site History
Wokingham	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy

Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS7 – Development in the vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishments SS17 – Transport improvements CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development CE4 – Supporting a circular economy C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C3 – Active travel C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH4 – Advertisements and signage HC1 – Promoting healthy communities HC2 – Community infrastructure HC5 – Environmental protection HC6 – Air pollution and air quality HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
07802	Church Hall (outline)	Approved 21/04/1978
36930	Erection of glazed link between church hall and dwelling	Approved 17/01/1991
37237	Change of use of bungalow to partial church related uses	Approved 17/04/1991

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Highways – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Ecology – No objection subject to conditions

External
None

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	Shinfield Parish Council commented in support of this application.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL
Site Description: The application site is located on the corner of Hollow Lane and Fairmead Road and lies within the defined settlement limits of Shinfield, a Modest Development Location. The site extends to approximately 0.13 hectares and comprises the original church building, a neighbouring former bungalow which has been used in conjunction with the church, an associated car park, and a small rear garden to the north of the chapel building. The site occupies a prominent corner position within a predominantly residential area characterised by modest-scale dwellings that are typically two storeys in height. Planning permission 37237 permitted the partial change of use of the former bungalow to church use in 1991. However, in practice, the bungalow has been fully used for church purposes since 1998 and that use continues to the present day. Therefore, even with the bungalow building being demolished, there will not be a loss of residential units on site. Description of Development: This application seeks full planning permission for the partial demolition of the existing church and associated buildings, including the former bungalow and link structures, and the erection of a new church building. The proposal also includes the retention and upgrading of the existing chapel building, together with the provision of a new link between buildings. In addition, the development proposes the reorganisation of the parking area, the introduction of new landscaping, and associated site works to facilitate the improved use and function of the site. Principle of Development: The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the Local Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case, the Development Plan consists of the Core Strategy (CS) 2010 and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan 2014. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) must also be considered as it

constitutes guidance which the Local Planning Authority must pay regard to, however it does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making. However, the NPPF is a material consideration in any determination and must be read alongside the Development Plan.

Policy CC02 of the MDD Local Plan sets out the development limits for each settlement as defined on the policies map. The site is located within a modest development location and as such the principle of development should be acceptable subject to other material considerations. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers. Policy CP2 broadly promotes the provision of community facilities through the planning process.

Design & Character of the Area:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF (2023) notes that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. The Borough Design Guide SPD further requires that development responds to the key characteristics of the site (Principle NR1), contributes positively to the quality and character of the area (NR2), and ensures that building height relates well to the local context (NR5).

The proposed development comprises a new rectangular church building measuring approximately 24.5m x 10.2m, which would be connected to the existing chapel building via a new single-storey link. The new building would be largely contained within the footprint of the existing structures to be demolished, including the garage, bungalow and link buildings. Whilst the footprint of the proposed building (approximately 245m²) represents an increase compared to the existing buildings (approximately 183m²), this reflects a more efficient and rationalised use of the site, replacing a fragmented and ad hoc arrangement of structures with a coherent built form.

The ridge height of the proposed building would be approximately 7.8 metres, representing an increase of around 1 metre compared to the existing bungalow. This would result in a building that is only modestly taller than neighbouring properties at nos. 8 Hollow Lane and 3 Fairmead Road, which have ridge heights of approximately 7 metres and 7.6 metres respectively. As such, the height of the proposed development is considered to relate well to the local context and would not appear unduly prominent or out of scale within the street scene.

In terms of design and materials, the scheme adopts a contemporary but domestic-scaled approach, incorporating masonry-clad structural elements, warm-toned brick infill panels, and a chic anthracite grey profiled metal roof. The design seeks to avoid an industrial appearance while providing a distinct and high-quality building appropriate for its use. A key architectural feature is the vertical glazed element on the Fairmead Road elevation, which provides visual interest and references traditional ecclesiastical design in a modern form. Overall, the proposed materials are considered to be

appropriate for the proposed use, and the building would be of a high-quality design, thus showing compliance with Policy CP3.

The site occupies a prominent corner plot, and the development has been designed to respond positively to both frontages. In accordance with Principle R8 of the Borough Design Guide SPD, the building incorporates active and welcoming elevations on both street-facing sides, including covered entrance features, thereby enhancing the overall appearance of the site and improving its contribution to the public realm.

Overall, the proposal would replace a series of poorly arranged and visually limited existing buildings with a cohesive and well-designed development that would enhance the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area. The scheme is therefore considered to comply with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy, the relevant principles of the Borough Design Guide SPD, and the design objectives of the NPPF.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity and NR6 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that where there are significant differences in height between and/or bulk between neighbouring buildings, that the design approach must moderate any impact.

Overbearing:

The existing garage, which is sited to the north of the bungalow, sits right on the boundary with the neighbouring property no. 8 Hollow Lane. The proposed new church building would be set approximately 1.7 metres from the boundary with no. 8. An increase in the separation distance to the boundary is positive, however, the new church building will have a ridge height of 7.8 metres, compared to the garage's ridge height of 3.2 metres. But, given that the new church building will not be set beyond the rear building line of no. 8, and as the garage of no. 8 is between the new church building and the boundary, it is not deemed that there would be a detrimental overbearing impact on no. 8. Additionally, the new church building is approximately 13.2 metres from the boundary with no. 3 Fairmead Road, and therefore it is deemed there would be no overbearing impacts on this property.

Overlooking:

R15 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires the retention of reasonable levels of visual privacy to habitable rooms, and R23 notes that the side walls must not contain windows, especially at first floor level. The two proposed first floor windows on the north-west elevation that serve the office would have a slight potential to overlook the rear garden of no. 8 Hollow Lane, and additionally these windows would be opposite what is understood to be a bathroom window of no. 8. To avoid any overlooking concerns, a condition is recommended to ensure that these windows remain obscure glazed and non-opening below a height of 1.7 metres above the finished floor level in order to maintain a sense of privacy for the neighbouring property.

Loss of Light:

R18 of the Borough Design Guide SPD aims to protect sunlight and daylight to existing properties, with no material impact on levels of daylight in the habitable rooms of adjoining properties. The proposed new church building is set 1.7 metres from the boundary with no. 8 Hollow Lane, but given that the garage of no. 8 would be between

the new church building and the dwelling of no. 8, it is not deemed that the proposal would cause any significant loss of light to the neighbouring property. Additionally, the new church building is approximately 13.2 metres from the boundary of no. 3 Fairmead Road, and therefore it is deemed there would be no loss of light impacts on this property.

Noise, Light and Odour Spill:

Given the established lawful use of the site for church purposes and the absence of any material intensification in operational characteristics, it is not anticipated that the new church building would introduce any greater noise, light or odour impacts. As such, no concerns are raised with regards to these points.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The proposal includes the reconfiguration of the existing access and parking layout, which has been revised during the application process to address officer comments. The Council's Highways Officer is satisfied that, subject to appropriate controls, the development would not result in a severe impact on the local highway network and would provide a safe and suitable access arrangement.

The Council's Highways Officer has therefore confirmed that they have no objection to the proposal subject to conditions which include:

- Provision and retention of parking and turning areas in accordance with the approved plans;
- Provision of cycle parking facilities;
- Implementation of visibility splays;
- Details relating to the surfacing of the access and ensuring the access is completed prior to first occupation;
- Restriction preventing the installation of gates opening onto the highway;
- Submission and implementation of details for the dropped kerb and access widening/narrowing, including reinstatement of verge/footway areas and extension of boundary treatments;
- Submission and approval of a Construction Method Statement; and
- Submission and implementation of a Parking Management Strategy, including details of monitoring, allocation of spaces, and any off-site parking arrangements.

Accordingly, these conditions are recommended to maintain highway safety, and to minimise the potential impacts during both the construction and operational phases of the development.

Flooding and Drainage:

Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan requires consideration of flood risk from historic flooding and Policy CC10 requires sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow.

The Council's Drainage Officer was consulted on this application, and they have identified that the site is located within flood zone 1 and is therefore at a low risk of fluvial flooding. The proposal incorporates measures to manage surface water drainage, and it is considered that, subject to appropriate controls, the development would not increase flood risk either on the site or elsewhere. The Drainage Officer

therefore has no objection to the proposal subject to a condition ensuring works are carried out in accordance with the approved Drainage Strategy, and another condition requiring detailed design of the attenuation system, flow control device, and SuDS features to be submitted and approved prior to construction. Accordingly, these conditions are recommended.

Landscape and Trees:

The site lies adjacent to Hollow Lane, which is designated as a Green Route. The proposed landscaping scheme includes the planting of new trees along the site boundary, which is welcomed and would contribute positively to the character of the Green Route in accordance with Policy CC03 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan.

The Council's Landscape and Trees Officer was consulted on this application, and they have advised that further detail is required in respect of tree planting, including species selection and the provision of appropriately sized tree pits to ensure the successful establishment and long-term growth of trees. In particular, it is noted that trees located adjacent to hard surfacing may require enhanced planting solutions, such as underground soil cells, to ensure adequate rooting conditions.

Whilst the Landscape Officer has no objection to the proposal, they have suggested a condition requiring the approval and implementation of a detailed landscaping scheme that includes tree pit specifications. This will ensure that the development delivers appropriate and sustainable landscaping in accordance with Policy CC03. Accordingly, this condition is recommended.

Ecology:

Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network. In addition, Policy CP7 of the Core Strategy requires development to conserve and enhance biodiversity and secure measurable net gains.

The Ecology Officer has reviewed the submitted plans and ecological information and identified some inconsistencies between the proposed layout, hard surfacing and landscaping arrangements, and the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment. In particular, concerns were initially raised regarding the potential removal of hedgerows, impacts on habitat corridors (including the northern boundary), and whether the proposed landscaping would adequately achieve the claimed biodiversity net gain.

Notwithstanding these concerns, the Ecology Officer is satisfied that, subject to appropriate conditions, the development can secure compliance with relevant policy requirements. The suggested conditions include:

- Compliance with the statutory BNG condition, requiring the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan;
- Submission of hard and soft landscaping proposals;
- Protection and retention of existing trees, hedgerows and habitat features;
- Provision for replacement planting and long-term maintenance.

The BNG condition will form part of the Decision Notice, hence, an informative is attached to the Decision Notice reminding the applicant of their requirement to comply with this. Accordingly, the other conditions suggested by the Ecology Officer are recommended.

A condition is also recommended to ensure that works are carried out in full accordance with the recommendations and mitigation measures set out within Section 4 of the submitted Ecological Assessment. Additionally, in line with GSE advice, if works to implement the development haven't commenced on site by May 2027, an updated bat survey must be undertaken to determine if the status of the site has changed, an informative is attached to remind the applicant of this.

Whilst inconsistencies were identified at initial stages, it is considered that these relate to detail rather than the principle of deliverability. The statutory biodiversity gain condition, together with landscaping and protection conditions, provides a robust mechanism to secure policy compliance.

Planning Balance:

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case, the Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy (2010), the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014), and the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan, with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) representing a material consideration.

In undertaking the planning balance, greatest weight is afforded to Development Plan policies relating to design (CP3), community infrastructure (CP2), and accessibility/highways (CP6), with supporting weight given to policies relating to biodiversity, drainage and environmental quality. The proposal is assessed primarily against these policies.

The proposed development comprises the replacement and upgrade of an existing community facility within the defined settlement limits of Shinfield. The principle of development is considered acceptable, having regard to Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy, which supports the provision and enhancement of community infrastructure, and Policy CC02 of the MDD Local Plan.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out that achieving sustainable development means that development should satisfy three overarching objectives in relation to economic, social and environmental benefits.

The assessment has identified limited harm in relation to the increased scale and height of built form and potential intensification of use, which carry limited weight. These impacts are, however, mitigated through design, separation distances and planning conditions.

Economically the proposed development would enable job creation during the construction period, although this would be very limited given the scale of the development. This would likely hold limited weight in the overall planning balance.

Regarding the social role, the replacement and enhancement of an established worship facility would benefit those in the community who are Christians. Additionally, churches are not only places of worship, but they can also act as anchor points for the community as they are capable of providing activities and services, including those aimed at families, elderly residents and vulnerable groups. This is considered to attract a moderate positive weight in the planning balance.

For the environmental role, the site lies within a sustainable location within settlement limits, and the proposal represents a redevelopment of previously developed land. The scheme includes enhancements to the built form, landscaping and biodiversity provisions. Whilst some concerns were raised by internal consultees at initial stages, these have been addressed and can be appropriately managed through planning conditions. Overall, the environmental impacts are considered to be neutral to moderately positive and carry moderate weight in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion:

Taking all material considerations into account, the limited identified harm carries modest weight and is outweighed by the benefits of replacing and enhancing an established community facility in a sustainable location, together with design, landscaping and biodiversity improvements. The proposal therefore accords with the Development Plan when read as a whole and there are no material considerations that indicate otherwise.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

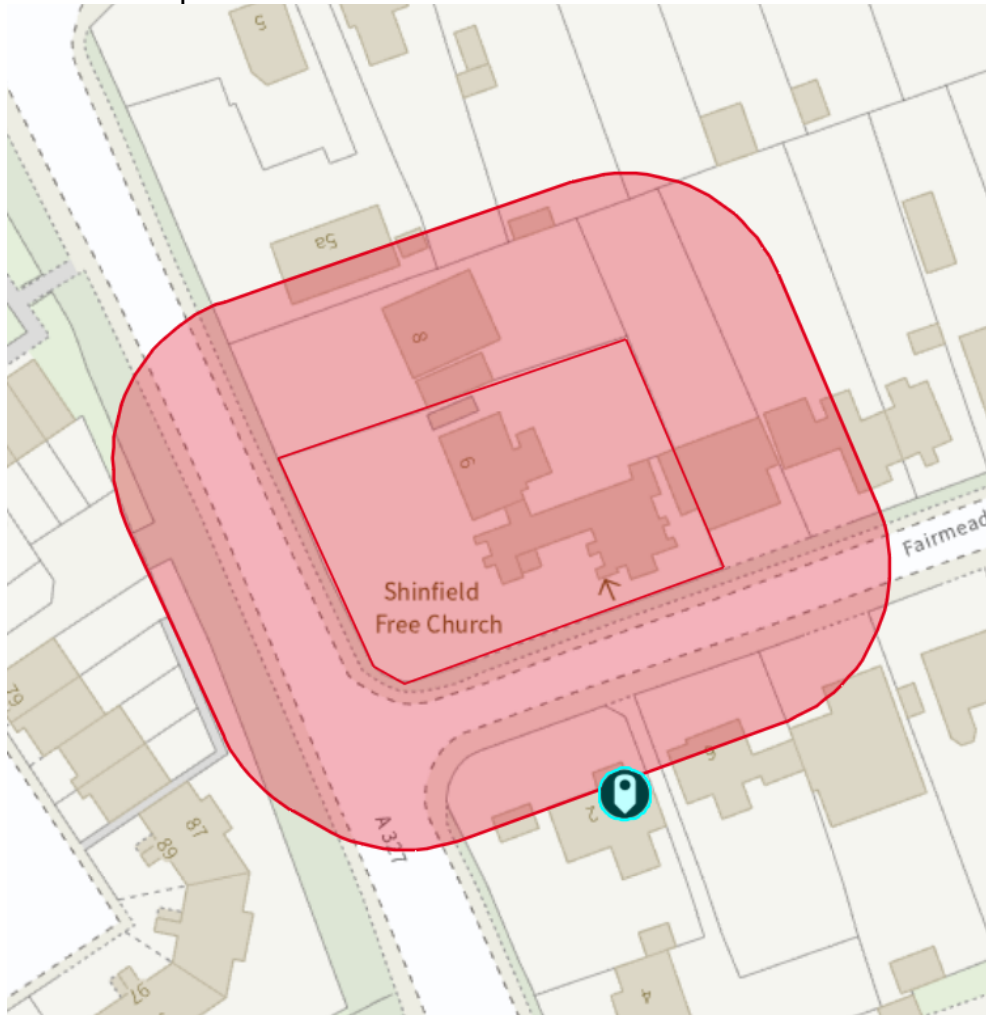
When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	16 July 2026
Earliest date for decision:	7 August 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	16/07/26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

This report is designed to be printed on A4 Portrait (8.27" X 11.69") Paper
Near Me Report



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Affordable Housing Thresholds | Total count: 3

#	NAME
1	Within Modest or Limited Development Locations
2	Within Modest or Limited Development Locations
3	Within All Development Locations

Scale and Location of Development Proposals | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	NAME
1	Modest Development Locations	Shinfield

Thames Basin Heath SPA Mitigation Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME
1	Special Protection Area Linear Mitigation Zone	7km Linear Mitigation Zone

Green Infrastructure Routes Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE
1	Green Route Enhancement Areas

Major Nuclear Sites Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	PLANNING_NOTE
1	Consultation Zone - Major Nuclear Site	AWE Burghfield: Outer Zone	This is the OCZ.

Aerodrome Safeguarding: Heathrow Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	Height Band	Wind Turbine	Aviation
1	All works exceeding 150 metres (492.1 feet)	NO	YES

Wokingham Borough Council Owned Land | Total count: 3

#	Address	Tenure	Title_no
1	on the east side of Hollow Lane, Shinfield	Absolute Freehold Estate in Land	BK92060
2	Denchworth, Hollow Lane, Shinfield	Absolute Freehold Estate in Land	BK81705
3	land on the east side of Hollow Lane, Shinfield	Absolute Freehold Estate in Land	BK106056

Risk of Flooding from Surface Water | Total count: 2

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME
1	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk extent
2	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk extent

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability | Total count: 3

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
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1	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	JJ898	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
2	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	JK898	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
3	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	JL898	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team

Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Green	Consult NatureSpace for Major developments only

Landfill Gas Consultation Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	OBJECTID
1	Landfill Gas Consultation Zone	1

SSSI Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	IRZURL
1	https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0300000530000-es=11404&location=475984,168857%20(IRZ%20polygon%20centre)

Landscape Character Assessment 2019 | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	Name
1	Landscape Character Assessment 2019	Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay

Wards | Total count: 1

#	NAME	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Shinfield Ward	0 m

Parishes | Total count: 1

#	NAME	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Shinfield CP	0 m