

PLANNING REF : 250517
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 14
: Hunters Way, Spencers Wood, Berkshire
: RG7 1HW
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Alex Marsh
DATE SUBMITTED : 11/04/2025

COMMENTS:

On behalf of my family and myself, I would like to formally register our objections to planning application 250517 for the building of up to 420 dwellings and associated other developments on the land off Basingstoke Road, abutting Barracks Lane and Hyde End Road, next to Body's Farm. Whilst I fully understand the need for additional housing in the area, and recognise that this is a national and pressing priority, there are fundamental practical problems with a development of this scale in this location that do not seem to be convincingly solved by the proposals within this application.

1. Vehicle Infrastructure: Simply, there is insufficient road infrastructure in the area to deal with the existing demand, before additional development takes place in the area. At present, between 7.45am and 9am every weekday morning, the B3349 from Lambs Lane Primary School all the way to the A33 junction at Three Mile Cross is a solid traffic jam. The same is true of the A33 from the White House Lane exit all the way to and round the main Junction 11 M4 roundabout. These roads are not built to take any more volume of traffic, and associated single-lane back roads in the area such as Cross Lane and Grazeley Road are already used as a rat run, and are poorly maintained and dangerous even in good weather. In poor weather many of these back roads flood, leading to stranded vehicles and a total blockage of these routes, often for days at a time. References are made in section 5.6 of the planning statement about bus services and the Mere oak Park & Ride (5.6.3). Unfortunately there is a simple practical problem here: most commuters need to get to work between 7.45am and 9am, and between these hours residents of Spencers Wood must endure extremely long traffic jams all the way through the village to get anywhere near the park & ride. There are no dedicated bus lanes so the buses endure the same problems. Additional businesses and homes in this area would stretch this past breaking point. These points are clarified effectively in the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan, where point 13.3 mentions resident concerns over traffic congestion and highlights the likelihood that this will increase. Point 13.5 of the Shinfield Neighbourhood plan is also pertinent, where it points out that: "Many of our local primary routes were constructed many years ago when the parish was a more rural collection of villages. They were not built to a size fit to cope with the volumes or size of modern vehicles. For example, Hyde End Road, a key access road connecting Shinfield village to Spencers Wood, has barely sufficient width for two commercial vehicles to pass at key bends."

2. Cycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure: The planning statement also refers to including pedestrian and cycle routes as part of the development. However, these provide movement solely within the development. At present there is a total lack of cycle paths in the area, and severe congestion at peak times makes cycling through the village subject to frequent hazards. Similarly there is a lack of pedestrian access in the area, in particular there is no pedestrian bridge over the A33 dual carriageway that would link up the

communities of Spencer's Wood and Grazeley village, which could help in a variety of ways including access to Grazeley Primary School. Again, I refer to point 13.5 of the Shinfield Development Plan which makes this point: "Many key roads lack the infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling; stretches of Church Lane, Hyde End Road and Arborfield Road, all of which form walking routes to local schools, lack suitable pedestrian footpaths."

3. Impact on Wildlife: The local Shinfield Development Plan highlights in section 15.2 and 15.6 that the area is home to a number of diverse animal types, and that 'corridors of natural features are vital for the survival of the flora and fauna off the native environment'.

Living where we do on Hunter's Way, I have personally observed the following species in the field that are being proposed for development: - Birds: including green and red woodpeckers, yellowhammers and a variety of other buntings, pied wagtails, fieldfares, cuckoos, starlings, jays, goldfinches, red kites, buzzards, doves, mistle thrushes and many more common species. - Other animals including: Roe deer, badgers, bats, hedgehogs and a wide variety of frogs, toads and butterflies. The fields that would be destroyed for this development are wonderfully rich in diverse wildlife, and not just in the trees and hedgerows that surround it. Whilst these fields have been farmed, the wildlife springs back each season, which would simply not happen once developed. The countryside officer of Wokingham Borough Council has advised the following: "Hedgerows - Best practice (as established elsewhere in Wokingham) in planning terms suggests ordinarily that hedgerow buffer zones are 15 metres from the centre line of the hedge on each side, in order to allow for minimum 2-4 metre wide hedgerow plus 5 metre wide rough grassland habitat strip and 5 metre strip suitable to allow vehicular access for maintenance; Veteran/near veteran trees - 15 times the stem diameter is the buffer zone/root protection zone recommended by the Ancient tree Forum in their Ancient Tree Guides No.3: 'Trees and development'." The proposed development includes residential dwellings far closer to veteran trees and established hedgerows than these buffer zones should permit: I would request that these recommendations be properly incorporated into any revised plans in order to provide the minimum necessary protections for the established wildlife in this area, and that proper wildlife corridors connecting Back Lane, Barracks Lane and Hyde End Road be left undisturbed.

4. Risk of Flooding: The proposed development abuts an existing identified flooding zone, and the Shinfield Plan in section 15.7 identifies that 'The topography and geology of the Parish is such that drainage and flooding from surface water is a serious issue and has been fully recorded. Existing open water courses such as field and roadside ditches form an extensive network for essential water drainage'. Transport links in the area are already put at risk whenever there is heavy rainfall by flooding in multiple locations. Recent floods on Beech Hill Road, Cross Lane, Grazeley Road and the Street (leading to Mortimer) all highlight this: when these roads are blocked by the regular flooding, it places even greater strain on an already beleaguered set of insufficient roads. The fields, ditches, trees and hedges in the proposed development area form a vital protection and buffer zone protecting existing residences in Spencers Wood from the impact of flooding. Removing these would introduce a new and unacceptable flooding risk to the existing

community.

5. Education Provision: Having discussed these plans with the governors of local schools there is a view locally, borne out by the Wokingham Borough schools allocation leader, that there is predicted to be a surplus of Primary school places in the area, which may result in the closure of existing primary schools, but that there is a significant demand for secondary, sixth form and SEND provision in the area. I find it worrying that this application seems to directly contradict this. I am also concerned that in the planning documents for this application reference is made to collaboration with Lambs Lane Primary school, but the governors there have had no communication with the developers at all and describe this as a 'complete fabrication'. This immediately gives concern about the reliability and trustworthiness of the developer proposing this project.

These are just a few points relating to the application: there have been numerous other objections raised by local residents with which I agree, detailing the concerns over infrastructure, increased HGV traffic, safety concerns, access issues and raising concerns regarding the inaccuracy of statements made in the application. As I say at the start, I understand the need for more houses in the area, but I would stress that such residential development should not even be considered without a truly effective and funded proposal for proper infrastructure in the area, which should include proper connections for car drivers, cyclists and pedestrians with high volume routes taken away from residential areas to mitigate air pollution, plus the provision for proper healthcare provision and local community spaces. All of this needs to be conducted in a way which is properly understanding of the existing community, wildlife and history of the area. If this can be presented first, then I believe we can have sensible discussions about what additional mixed-use developments look like.