

Date: 18th March 2025

Application: 250517



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

SDL Growth and Delivery (Planning
Policy)

Development Management &
Compliance

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Dear SDL Growth and Delivery (Planning Policy),

Outline Planning Approval Consultation

Application Number: 250517

Applicant: Mr Marc Wilson

Site Address: Land Off Basingstoke Road to the south and west of Spencers Wood

Parish: Shinfield

Type of Development: Major Dwellings (10+)

Proposal: Outline planning permission is sought with all matters reserved for future determination, save for the means of access via Basingstoke Road, for: up to 420 dwellings (Use Class C3), an 80 bed care home (Use Class C2), 1ha of employment land (Use Class E(g), primary school (Use Class F1), local centre (Use Classes E(a), (b), (c), (f)), GP Surgery (Use Class E(e), sports pitch and changing facility, public open space, SANG provision and associated infrastructure.

Case Officer: Helen Maynard

Development Management has received the above application and we require your comments on the proposal using the recommended memorandum below. The documents associated with this are available to view in NEC DM using the application number 233038. Alternatively, public documents are available to view on the Council's planning application search page: [Wokingham Borough Council Online Planning](#).

Please index your response into NEC DM against the application. If you are recommending conditions, you should give a reason with reference to relevant policies. A list of standard conditions can be found on the Z Drive at: [Z:\Standard Planning Conditions](#).

Your observations are required in respect of this application within **10 working days** of the above date or **15 working days** if the development type is classed as a major development.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	Heather Read Senior Planning Policy Officer		
Service	SDL Growth and Delivery (Planning Policy)	App No:	250517
Address:	Land Off Basingstoke Road to the south and west of Spencer's Wood		
Proposal:	Outline planning permission is sought with all matters reserved for future determination, save for the means of access via Basingstoke Road, for: up to 420 dwellings (Use Class C3), an 80 bed care home (Use Class C2), 1ha of employment land (Use Class E(g), primary school (Use Class F1), local centre (Use Classes E(a), (b), (c), (f)), GP Surgery (Use Class E(e), sports pitch and changing facility, public open space, SANG provision and associated infrastructure.		
Type of Development:	Major Dwellings (10+)		
Site Visit Made:	No		

Summary Of Recommendations
☐ No comment ☐ No objection ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) stated below ☐ Request further information before determination as stated below ☒ Objection due to the reason(s) stated below
Comments On Proposal
<i>Please use this section to detail any positive, satisfactory or negative aspects of the proposals relating to planning matters. Any additional information or negotiations required can also be detailed in this section.</i> This is an outline application seeking permission for: up to 420 dwellings (Use Class C3), an 80 bed care home (Use Class C2), 1ha of employment land (Use Class E(g)), primary school (Use Class F1), local centre (Use Classes E(a), (b), (c), (f)), GP Surgery (Use Class E(e), sports pitch and changing facility, public open space, SANG provision and associated infrastructure.

Principle of development under the development plan

Policy CP9 (Scale and location of development proposals) of the Core Strategy (2010) directs development to within development limits and states that *“the scale of development proposals in Wokingham borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility.”*

The site is located to the south and east of the Modest Development Location of Spencers Wood. The site's boundary runs adjacent to the settlement boundary, such that the site is positioned wholly within designated countryside. The site lies outside of the designated South of the M4 Strategic Development Location.

Spencers Wood is defined as a modest development location; however this proposal would see a large new housing estate outside of development limits, which would substantially extend the settlement of Spencers Wood and result in the significant encroachment of the countryside, contrary to CP9.

Development proposals in the designated countryside, should be assessed against Core Strategy Policy CP11 (Proposals outside Development Limits). CP11 states:

“In order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where:

- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and*
- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and*
- 3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or*
- 4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;*
- 5) In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:*
 - i) Bring about environmental improvements; or*
 - ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.*
- 6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;*
- 7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9”.*

The application proposal does not meet any of these specified exceptions and is therefore contrary to Policy CP11.

Policy CC02 (Development Limits) of the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) local plan (2014) supports development proposals on the edge of settlements, provided it can be demonstrated that the development is *“within development limits and respects the transition between the built-up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape”*. This policy reinforces that development plan policy seeks to guide development to locations within defined development limits.

In summary, the development proposal is considered to be contrary to policies CP9, CP11 and CC02 of the Core Strategy and MDDD.

AWE Burghfield

The site is located within the extent of the Detailed Emergency Plan Zone (DEPZ) around the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield. MDD Policy TB04 relates to development in the vicinity of AWE.

Policy TB04 states that *“Development will only be permitted where the applicant demonstrates that the increase in the number of people living, working, shopping and/or visiting the proposal (including at different times of the day) can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of “Blue light” services and the emergency off-site plan for the Atomic Weapons Establishment site at Burghfield.”*

The case officer should seek the views of Emergency Planners on the current proposals and the impacts on emergency planning arrangements. The case officer should also seek the views of the Office of Nuclear Regulation in accordance with consultation requirements.

For transparency, the DEPZ was extended in late 2020/early 2021 to incorporate a larger area of land than previously defined. Policy TB04 references the extent at the time the policy was adopted, before the subsequent review and extension. Notwithstanding, Policy TB04 should be applied to the current context.

Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan

The site is located within the parish of Shinfield and therefore the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (made February 2017) forms part of the development plan.

Policy 1: Location of Development states that:

“In Shinfield Parish, development within the Development limits (as illustrated in Fig 2), will be supported; development adjacent to the Development Limits will only be supported where the benefits of the development outweigh its adverse impacts.”

Policy 1 lends support to considering proposals adjacent to development limits where the benefits of the scheme outweigh its adverse impacts, subject to compliance with other development plan policies. Other policies of potential relevance include: Policy 3: Sustainable Development; Policy 4: Accessibility and Highways Safety; Policy 6: Trees, hedgerows and Woodland; Policy 7: Biodiversity; Policy 8: Flooding; and Policy 11: Commercial Development.

Principle of development under the emerging Local Plan Update

The Local Plan Update (LPU) will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and MDD local plans. The LPU sets out the long-term development strategy for the borough to 2040, including proposed site allocations and planning policies. The LPU was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination on 28th February 2025.

The application site corresponds with promoted site 5SH013. The site was assessed through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) (2024) published alongside the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Plan. Due to the site's location within the DEPZ, the site was considered unsuitable for potential development and excluded from further detailed assessment. The site has not therefore been proposed for allocation in the Regulation 19 Submission Plan, nor any earlier consultation version of the local plan.

The Proposed Submission Plan currently has limited weight in determining planning applications, but it does set out the council's approach to the long-term development of the borough. In addition, the assessment of land in the HELAA is high level with the purpose of informing options within plan-making. It is not comparable to a planning application.

Housing land supply position and the 'tilted balance'

The latest published assessment of housing land supply concluded a deliverable supply of 1.7 years at 31st March 2024. This supply position takes into account the increase in Local Housing Need (LHN) following the changes to standard method introduced by the government in December 2024. The LHN for Wokingham Borough set out in the Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement is 1,336 dwellings per annum.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) states under paragraph 11d. that where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the

policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date (including where a local authority is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites) planning permission for housing development should be granted. It continues to advise that unless there are specific policies in the NPPF protecting the land in question, permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF as a whole. This presumption in favour of sustainable development outlined in paragraph 11 of the NPPF is commonly referred to as the 'tilted balance'.

It should be noted that the application of paragraph 11 of the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. This is clearly set out in paragraph 12 of the NPPF and is a matter of law.

Material to decisions on planning applications involving housing is the underlying reasons for the shortfall in deliverable housing sites. The shortfall is not as a result of non-delivery of housing but due to the significant over delivery in recent years reducing the bank of land with extant planning permissions, and the very recent increase in LHN. The council's record of housing delivery been recognised by Inspectors in recent appeal decisions, including:

- Land east of Lodge Road (application ref 220458, appeal ref APP/X0360/W/22/3309202)
- Land off Watmore Lane / Maidensfield (application ref 230208, appeal ref APP/X0360/W/22/3309202)

Other proposed land uses

Paragraph 4.2.3 of the Planning Statement outline the various stakeholders the applicants have consulted with in regard to this development. The applicants state that discussions with stakeholders informed the shaping of the development.

A consultation was held with the Integrated Care Board and Swallowfield GP Surgery to discuss the need for a GP Surgery in Spencers Wood. The proposed GP surgery would be expected to serve as a branch of the existing Swallowfield Medical Practice. It is not clear if there is a formal agreement in place for the operation of the surgery.

The applicants state they have consulted the Local Education Authority (WBC) in respect of the need for a primary school and secondary school capacity. The proposed development would include a new Two-Form Entry primary school, allowing for the expansion and relocation of the existing Lambs Lane Primary School.

New sports facilities are proposed including a potential 3G football pitch, multi-functional open space, informal 'kick about' space and changing facilities in response to consultation with Shinfield Parish Council and sports bodies. Sport England and the Sports Officer at the WBC were consulted in respect of the need for 3G football and grass pitches for cricket and football.

The proposed development would provide 1ha of commercial land that could host several small business units, increasing local employment opportunities in proximity to Lambs Farm Business Park, which the applicant states there is an evidenced need for within the area. The applicants also state that potential occupiers for the retail units within the Local Centre have also been approached.

The application includes a proposal for an 80-bed care home, the Council commissioned Opinion Research Services to produce a Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) (November 2023). The LHNA considers specific types, sizes and tenures of accommodation over the period 2018-2040, and the housing needs for different groups, including older people / vulnerable people

The applicants do not appear to provide any further evidence to justify the need for a care home in this location. It is recommended that officers in the Council's Adult Services Commissioning Team are consulted over this element of the proposal, to ascertain if further information needs to be provided for assessment.

Conclusion

The site is located outside of settlement boundaries, within designated countryside. The proposed development does not satisfy any of the exceptions set out in Policy CP11 concerning development beyond development limits in countryside locations.

The proposed development is contrary to the overall aim of Policies CP11, CP9 and CC02 to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment.

The site is situated within the DEPZ around AWE Burghfield. Policy TB04 requires it to be demonstrated that the number of people arising from a proposal can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of "Blue light" services and the off-site emergency plan for the Atomic Weapons Establishment site at Burghfield.

By virtue of the Council's acknowledged housing land supply position, the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF at paragraph 11 is engaged in the decision-making process. Accordingly, an assessment will need to be made of whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. The context of the housing land supply shortfall being within a bigger picture of housing delivery acts to maintain the significance of development plan policy.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Please use this section to detail any conditions that are required to make this development acceptable in planning terms. All conditions should be accompanied by reasons.

N/a			
Date:	07/04/2025	Signed:	<i>H. Read</i>