

PLANNING REF : 241567
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 2 Burnmoor Meadow
: Finchampstead
: RG40 3TX
SUBMITTED BY : Prof Christopher Green
DATE SUBMITTED : 31/07/2024

COMMENTS:

I would like to object to this planning application which in a similar form has previously already been denied/withdrawn. Reasoning for the original rejection or application withdrawal remain valid and since we have now lost all local post offices, shops and local services as well as finalising the Finchampstead Neighbourhood plan which was adopted both by the community, Parish Council and WBC in September 2023 and includes designated land use maps/zones for the future which this application completely ignores.

I object on the grounds:

1. The included building of house /housing estate of 40 dwellings is located on the northern edge of the flood plain of the Blackwater River and on the edge of the recognised and officially designated by the Environmental Agency as "Zones 2 to 3 "flood plain". The site as presented is problematical to naturally support adequate surface water run off as well as having the potential for flooding. The documentation acknowledges there are issues in this respect by keeping the housing development "to the north" of the application site on slightly higher elevations but, as we who live in the area are well versed, the actuality is for totally sodden ground and extremely high-water tables well beyond this EA theoretical boundary for many months each year.

The EA Flood Alert Maps issued for this acreage, when needed, indicate the chances of flooding right up to the southern field boundary, e.g., the flood warning and associated maps issued for the area in February 2020. This line is drawn as a straight line along the southern side of the application field boundary which does not take cognisance of the present-day topography and the underlying geology.

Examining elevations of the Blackwater and the elevation of the proposed development site on available GIS mapping (satellite imagery apparently taken during the end period of extraction) it indicates little or no increases in elevation over the southern part of the

development site, at circa 51m which is the same as the land at the adjacent Blackwater River. Where there is a differential, it is only in the far north of the site where it reaches a differential of 3.5 - 4 metres. This substrate going north over the site stratigraphically is overlying Clay and Sandy Clay-based Quaternary River Terrace

Deposits overlying the Upper Eocene Bagshot Beds.

This substrate covers the proposed development site and the actual and relative positioning of the proposed properties in the plans. Water will naturally be absorbed into this substrate, saturate and then

depending on the severity of the event saturate the subsurface and

surface levels as well as ultimately resulting in flooding the land and any included properties.

In the same context the land is located within a short distance from a river and its flood plain and lakes which will require applicant declaration and resultant declined insurance quotations or higher rated premiums including, if quoted, policy conditions that will exclude flood cover.

The geological studies themselves, partly desk studies and trial pits/shallow borehole point to the stratigraphic CLAYEY nature of the substrate over part of the site whether in the form of Clay, Sandy Clay, or Clayey Sand and groundwater runoff problems as highlighted in the third-party report where the trial pit groundwater soakaway tests FAILED to reach the 75% criteria level in all test sites with one pit failing to reach 25% effectiveness showing this method of disposing of surface water to be unacceptable. Surface run off risk is designated as High.

The report indicates also approximately 2/3rds or more of the site to be HIGH risk for Groundwater Vulnerability (the ease with which hydro-geological factors at the site determine the ease of contamination of groundwater and near substrate waters) and the rest medium risk. As all groundwater is hydro-geologically connected and the risk designated as high this means there is a high vulnerability to contamination over the site and the pathways limited to attenuating any contaminants.

The general very high nature of the water table over the whole area is also noted in the report with risk for flooding over the site. The general nature of the substrate points to its potential for lateral and through layer water take up which could induce small substrate thickness/movement changes, repeatedly over time, according to seasonal changes in substrate saturation and concomitant drying. This can affect longer term any housing stability. Existing properties in the adjacent Moorfield enclave have been reported to have cracking and other problems by other objectors.

In summary, considering the site and adjacent land as a 3D hydro-geological block and combining the natural high water table, hydro-geological conditional interaction and all that entails with limited elevation change, potential flood risk, geological groundwater vulnerability, potential surface run off and soakaway limitations all linked integrally together within a repeated seasonal change environment, long term foundation stability considerations, including alternating "wet and dry", the foul water discharge and disposal issues and then all considered together over the longer term this site is not at all a sensible/suitable location for development.

2. Encroachment into designated buffer zone between Finchampstead and Eversley which will significantly contribute to changing the semi-rural and rural nature of the Finchampstead Village and adjacent Eversley area

3. Located right next to the proposed/designated and developing

wildlife/ nature site viz. the proposed Moor Lane/Longwater Nature Reserve/Bird sanctuary which is being established since Cemex extraction finished. This development would thus significantly reduce any buffer between housing and the wildlife/nature sanctuary with housing right to its border complete with lighting. The planning application does not properly acknowledge any effects on this important reserve and any affect a nearby development would make on all types of habitats and overall animal populations/ecology and at one point notes there is little of ecological interest in this general area.

4. Increased road traffic with likely 60-80 plus automobiles. Traffic volume, noise, and safety concern. Local pavements in the area are incomplete and of those available many are narrow and dangerous in the autumn and winter due to lack of clearance with autumn leaf fall. It is impossible to walk to the north to both Crowthorne and California without having to walk along narrow pavements which are dangerously narrow and close to the road and in winter covered with leaves and there are significantly long stretches with no pavements at all. Similarly, to the South the existing pavement is generally narrow, poorly upkept and road traffic very close to pedestrians.

5. Modification to public footpaths/right of way, specifically 13, and the views landscape attached to it will be lost and effectively with it a corridor between housing and no view and effects on wildlife. It will also change the character from countryside to semi urban.

6. Sustainability- Total lack of any public transport to serve the community within 1.5-3 miles in ANY direction possibly save for one bus once a week. Nearest public transport being California Roundabout or Yateley Waitrose/ Greggs Roundabout. Nearest rail is Crowthorne some 2.5-3 miles away with relatively early last train times.

Local primary and secondary school limitation to take potential increase in pupil numbers and the same for secondary education without significant travel distances which would need vehicular transportation. Secondary school capacity for Finchampstead is already taken. Children are travelling to Embrook and the Forest due to lack of any local option.

7. Sustainability- Since the previous rejected planning application, the post offices and shop in Finchampstead Village and Eversley have both closed as well as the fuel filling station in Finchampstead village. There are now no local shops, post offices, retail outlets etc apart from a very small facility on the side of the Greyhound public house selling a very restricted range of higher priced mainly specialist goods.

8. Exit directly onto 60 mph limit which if extended to 30mph still results in increased safety risk. The exiting entrance to the allotment opposite is already a safety concern. Personally, I have had to break very hard more than once with vehicles exiting this allotment track exit. The development would involve adding street

lighting with an extended 30mph limit and in doing so again add another detrimental effect to wildlife and the general community, further changing the character from rural to semi-urban.

9. Inability of the existing local foul water infrastructure to support this development and its actual "hub" and main infrastructure location is outwith WBC and within another Borough. Its capacity is at limit and allegedly not in the best state of repair. Foul Water escape is noted by residents and very recently an associated E. coli infection has been noted from fishing /fisherman in the Blackwater exactly south of this site. It is not unusual to see tankers taking excess waste to avoid overflow.

10. At variance to the agreed and adopted Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan produced and approved and adopted by both the parish and Wokingham Borough Councils September 2023 and within it the designated zones for land use and housing development and use for this particular parcel of land. This comprehensive document was developed and produced to form the backbone for planning for the Finchampstead area going forward.

11. Local NHS Primary Care: The NHS primary care network which includes Finchampstead, Aborfield and Swallowfield is currently full. This is without the 1000 plus houses still to come at Aborfield.

12. Does not fit /agree/comply with existing CORE Wokingham Local Plan Policies including, but not limited to, Sustainable Development, General Principles, Managing Travel Demand, and Infrastructure requirements as a minimum.