

MEMORANDUM

From:	Gordon Adam/Alan Lewis, Highway Development Management		
Service	WBC Highways	App No:	250735
Address:	Land to the north of School Road, Arborfield Cross.		
Proposal:	Outline application for the proposed residential development of up to 70 dwellings together with associated access, landscaping, open space and associated works. (All matters reserved except for means of access.)		
Type of Development:	Major Dwellings (10+)		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/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

Proposals & Principal of Development

General

1. Highways understands that this is an outline application for 70 dwellings with all matters reserved apart from access.
2. A previous application for up to 95 dwellings (242421) was refused, for amongst other reasons as an 'unsustainable location'. Whilst the reduction in development scale does not change this recommendation, it is understood that the planning authority wish to contemplate the 'tilted balance' taking account of recent appeal decisions in WBC.
3. The loss of our colleague may mean there are some differences of opinion to any previous/pre-application or scoping advice provided to the applicant/consultants. Where I agree with my college, I have retained or modified comments and/or expanded on them to help inform any decision.
4. The application is supported by a Transport Assessment and supplemented with a Technical Note, along with other pieces of additional information responding to specific matters.
5. The NPPF states *"Development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety"*

or the residual cumulative impacts... would be severe..." [116]. Respecting the representations and objections from others, this policy test sets a high bar that should be considered carefully.

6. The NPPF does however state that development should ensure "...sustainable transport modes are **prioritised**..." [115], "...give **priority first** to pedestrian and cycle movements, both **within the scheme and neighbouring areas**; and... – so far as possible – to ...encourage public transport use" [117] and asks development to exploit "...**any** opportunities to make a location more sustainable..." [89, my emphasis]. As there are opportunities that were not fully explored in the application, these have been the basis of negotiations in recent weeks to inform this consultation response.

Accessibility & Sustainability

7. The Design & Access Statement outlines the Movement Framework, identifying some of the local facilities and services available nearby and principal corridors of movement.
8. A sustainability assessment has been carried out which is welcome.
9. Highways previously commented that actual walk distances to local services from a mid-point of the site would need to be submitted. These have been provided in the latest Technical Note, which is welcome.
10. When considering accessibility to local facilities, Highways expect these to be considered in quantitative (distance) and qualitative (attractiveness) terms, explored further below.
11. As part of the assessment, a walking audit to local services has been carried out which is also welcome. Whilst highways would have expected this to consider severance (of mainly B & C-Class roads) to paint a full picture of how attractive some of these route options might be, I have considered these both in terms of existing and emerging plans/proposals.
12. Amongst other things, some of the distances to facilities are considered via the pedestrian/cycle access via Cole Lane, identified as a pedestrian/cycle access to the site.

Public Transport Accessibility

13. Section 2 of the Transport Assessment considers most of the public transport options already available. It devotes some effort to report accessibility to Wokingham railway station ("*circa 5km*") and the facilities and services available.
14. Winnersh Station is slightly closer (*circa 4km*), and more likely to be used for services to (or via) Reading and Oxford. However potential connections by sustainable modes is much less attractive.
15. The bus service is set out in Table 2.2 of the Transport Assessment which is welcome. However, the bus service has recently been improved as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan ([BSIP](#)).
16. The enhanced bus service has been achieved through development contributions on/near the corridor, but the committed funding is unlikely to be sufficient to secure the service as viable in the medium-term, as such it will require further funding.

17. Opportunities to improve access to bus stops in the village have been identified and, it has been agreed in principle, that these will be pursued. These should be delivered as improvements within the highway to make buses more attractive for existing and future residents.
18. The introduction of refuge island crossings will also reduce severance and have a positive effect on vehicle speeds on Eversley Road.
19. As this site would benefit from Bus Route 3 which is being delivered through the Arborfield Bus Strategy, a contribution of £914 (indexed linked) for each dwelling will be sought. This has been agreed.

Accessibility on foot/bicycle

20. Cole Lane (immediately north) and Wood Lane (further south) form part of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network. Both are defined as Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT), which permits equestrians to use the route, adding some conflict to route quality during busier periods.
21. Whilst the PROW offer (highway) rights of way on foot, horseback or cycle, they do not form part of the adopted public highway (maintained at public expense).
22. Highways is therefore content if PROW are considered relative to the walk/cycle accessibility, accepting that surface quality, lighting and personal safety may weigh *against* the route quality, at least for some times of day and year.
23. My former colleague identified a Walking and Cycling Planning Condition, contemplating obligations could be addressed at alongside the reserved matters application. Whilst I agree this approach can be acceptable for an outline application, when applying the 'tilted balance' I believe it is necessary to clarify the access arrangements and heads of terms, so that any planning decision can be made against the salient material considerations.
24. Based on the National Travel Survey the majority of walk trips are undertaken to shops and primary schools, with secondary schools and employment forming a greater proportion of trips by bike.
25. For Cole Lane to provide an attractive walk/cycle connection into the village for all, some surface improvements have been identified and provisionally agreed with the developers.
26. Cole Lane also forms part of in the PROW Improvement Plan ([PROWIP](#)) as a potential greenway. The PROWIP contemplates the delivery of a greenway via Highlands Avenue (Route B, to Woosehill).
27. Whilst the PROW is a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT), which permits equestrians to use the route, there is insufficient space at the to deliver a Pegasus crossing adjacent the Coombes Lane/Sandy Lane junction with Bearwood Road.
28. As the potential to deliver a footway/cycleway or BOAT connection to Highlands Avenue is also constrained, alternative Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan ([LCWIP](#)) are being considered.



29. It is considered that a crossing of Bearwood Road however, connecting Coombes Lane/Sandy Lane, could still enhance the LCWIP network and offer onward connections to Wokingham station and employment areas at Molly Millar's Lane.
30. With other potential connections (to Route D, with future crossings of Barkham Road), it is considered that this improvement would offer a proportionate improvement to the cycle network.
31. The developers have therefore agreed to deliver a Toucan (pedestrian/cycle) crossing. These proposals will incorporate mounting blocks on the approach so equestrians can (dis)mount adjacent the crossing to preserve the option to deliver the consulted PROWIP scheme at a later date.

Access & Layout

Means of Access

32. It is proposed that School Road would be re-aligned effectively creating a sweeping bend into the site around 160m from the existing road closure which is welcome. The remaining stub of School Road down to the road closure would become the minor arm.
33. It is also proposed that there would be a 3m pedestrian and cycle access onto Cole Lane some 65m southwest of where it was previously proposed. This is welcome and would need to include bollards as part of the detailed design.

34. Before School Road was closed, it accommodated higher traffic flows, making the existing traffic calming features more effective. Following the closures, traffic flows are much lower, thus reductions in opposing flows have made these less effective.

35. The development proposals incorporate some changes to traffic management, ensuring these will improve speed management and thus preserve safety outside and routes to school.



36. Together with the permanent closure (16/6/25), School Road should remain a low traffic environment suitable for on road cycling (<2,500 vehicles per day, LTN1/20 though maybe not as low as the target for a Quiet Lane¹).

37. Whilst the net residual effect on School Road can be considered broadly neutral, emerging proposals identified north and south of the site will add to the cycle network traffic. Alongside committed and emerging development and associated infrastructure proposals there could help assemble a network of sustainable alternatives in the future.

Internal Streets & Spaces

38. Information on whether or not the site roads would be offered for adoption or not would need to be supplied. Whatever the case the road would need to be built to highway standards.

39. If the site roads are to be adopted, these would need to be delivered through S38 agreement with the Borough. The Borough would also require agreement on inspection fees and commuted sums. The adoption plans, fees and commuted sums would need to be included in the s106 agreement.

40. If the site roads are to remain private, this would also need to be included in a s106 agreement, including details of the management company set up to look after the maintenance of the roads, the Borough's inspection fee and the APC Bond. Information on this can be found on the above website.

41. Manual for Streets (MfS) retains typical carriageway widths set decades earlier (as 4.1-5.5m) on the basis that the design speed of streets are typically 20mph. Highways consider the illustrative layout creates an environment that will support speeds below 20mph.

42. A 2m footway or service margin is generally required on both sides of the street, even where the dwelling is set back from the road.

Internal Pedestrian and Cycling network

43. It is proposed that there would be continuation of the footway on the south side of School Road into the realigned site, with an uncontrolled crossing point linking 2m footways on both sides of the access road.

¹ Quiet Lane [Explanatory Memorandum](#) & [\(CPRE\)](#) Guidance

44. It is also proposed to provide a 3m pedestrian/cycling route via Coles Lane which is welcome. The walking audit has recommended some improvements to Coles Lane which will need to be discussed with PROW team.

Cycle Parking

45. It is welcome that cycle parking will be in line with Borough standards which are in operation at the time of the reserve matters application.
46. If flats are proposed, the cycle parking would need to be in communal cycle stores.
47. Highways is content for cycle parking to be included as a reserved matter.

Car Parking

48. Even though this is an outline planning application the Borough's Parking Calculator has been used based on an illustrative masterplan and housing mix. As the housing mix is reserved for later determination, no information has been provided to back up the proposed illustrative housing mix.
49. That being said, highways have assessed the parking calculator, and it is in line with Borough Standards.
50. Based on the illustrative masterplan and indicative housing mix there would be 118 allocated spaces, 14 visitor spaces and 11 unallocated spaces.
51. If garages are proposed these would have to have a minimum internal dimension of 6m x 3m or 7m x 3m if cycle storage is included.
52. The minimum width of a driveway would need to be at least 3.1m. As part of any reserve matters, a scale drawing would need to be provided to show that with an average sized car parked a cycle and a wheelie bin can easily pass.
53. All parking spaces would need to be 5m x 2.5m and 6m x 2.5m if parallel spaces.
54. There would need to be at least 6m behind the parking spaces in parking courts.
55. Based on the submitted information, highways is content for parking to be a reserved matter.

Electric Vehicle Charging

56. It is proposed that electric vehicle charging points will be provided in line with Building Control Standards Approved Document S which is welcome.
57. For medium-large developments highway do support some visitor (EV) parking/charging provision and welcome exploring the level of need for 1-2 spaces at the reserved matters stage.
58. Highways is therefore content with electric vehicle charging points be included as a reserved matter.

Swept Paths

59. Swept paths of a refuse vehicle and fire tender with acceptable dimensions have been submitted (Appendix F, TA) which is welcome.
60. These have been reviewed and are acceptable as these are based on an illustrative masterplan.

61. However, it also appears the swept paths of a smaller refuse lorry have also been included in the transport assessment. These are superfluous to the assessment.
62. A swept path of a tractor and trailer has also been submitted for access and egress from the retained field access for the land to the east.

Lighting

63. Highways accept street lighting is not provided consistently throughout the village. Therefore, we would expect proposals to be support with a lighting strategy, to ensure this forms part of the application material considerations.
64. However, highways is content to secure lighting via a planning condition so it can be design sensitively as part of the reserved matters application.

Visibility Splays

65. Visibility splays form an integral part of the design and use of all streets, to ensure all highway users can move safely through streets and spaces.
66. The new access design includes Stopping Sight Distance (SSD) around the bend and access junction visibility splays.
67. As requested, pedestrian visibility splays have now been added to the access design to ensure crossing movements are also safe. Highways is content that the access could be incorporated into a S38/278 Agreement.

Development Affects

Traffic Impact

68. The TRICS data base was used to determine the proposed trip generation for this site which is an acceptable methodology. It would be desirable to establish local travel demands within the village but accept that the existing community might not be representative of proposed development demands.
69. In addition, a sensitivity test was carried out using the Borough's approved trip rates which gave a slightly higher result of 8 and 6 two-way trips in the AM and PM peak hour respectively.
70. Appendix H of the TA consider the trip distribution of trips and identifies some would be to local destinations but accepts that many would be to adjacent Boroughs/Districts increasing the likelihood of car travel.
71. Based on forecast travel demands the development is likely to generate around 40 two-way vehicular trips during the peak hours.
72. The TA considers and compares conditions prior to the closure of School Road, and whilst development traffic will reduce the benefits to this safety outside school improvement, the residual effect on School Road remains positive.

Road Safety Audit

73. An updated road safety audit and designer comments have been submitted which is welcome.

74. The audit focuses on the proposed works on School Road and agrees with the designer's responses, relative to the revised traffic calming including the chicane.
75. Whilst Highways dispute one of the designer's responses (2.4) this has now been addressed in the approved access drawing.

Framework Travel Plan

76. A framework Travel Plan has been submitted which is welcome.
77. The initial mode share can be taken from the 2011 Census data as the 2021 census data is not as accurate as 2011.
78. It is proposed that the first surveys be undertaken either once 50% occupancy has occurred or 6 months after occupancy whichever is earlier. This is welcome.
79. It is welcome that a Travel Plan Co-ordinator would be appointed before occupancy which is welcome. This person would need to have sufficient resources in terms of time and money to deliver a travel plan.
80. It is welcome that Car Clubs have been mentioned in the Travel Plan. It is also stated that the applicant would consider car clubs as part of the reserve matters application. However, any decision on car clubs will need to be taken as part of this application as any contribution would need to be included in the S106 agreement.
81. The Council offers a consolidated approach to Travel Plans for smaller sites, through the 'My Journey' programme, combining education, monitoring and promotion of sustainable travel.
82. Whilst My Journey has proven to be a positive cost-effective means to influence sustainable travel, in some locations this has proven harder to achieve mode shift targets.
83. The updated Travel Plan identifies a mode shift target to reduce SOV (Single occupancy car) by 8%.
84. Even with the package of infrastructure measures proposed, if the developer were to opt for 'My Journey' alone, it is accepted that the achievement of the mode shift target will be challenging. For this reason, it has been agreed in principle that either a full travel plan or hybrid version of 'My Journey' is included in the S106 Agreement. This would enable the development to enjoy the efficiencies of 'My Journey' but commit to a few additional travel plan incentives, which could include:
- a. Vouchers for E-Bikes/Buses (for residents)
 - b. Vouchers/Bus taster tickets (for residents)
 - c. Provision of a Car Club (with free membership for residents)

Framework Construction Management Plan

85. A framework construction method statement has been submitted which is welcome.
86. It is welcome that any deliveries would follow mainly A & B-class roads and avoid school drop off and pick up times.
87. It is welcome that deliveries will be managed, and that construction traffic will be managed by banksmen.

88. It is welcome that wheel washing will be adopted, highways also recommends that School Road will be monitored and if required street sweepers will be employed.
89. All construction parking would need to be on site and there would be no parking on neighbouring streets.
90. Highways is content with this framework document and the full document will be secured by a planning condition, prior to commencement.

Planning Obligations & S106 Contributions

91. A suite of planning obligations have been explored and provisionally agreed with the developers, these would include a mix of planning conditions, highway improvements and contributions. The works will include.
 - a. School Road Highway Works
 - b. Eversley Road, Highway works, incorporating central/refuge islands & Bus Stop improvements
 - c. Toucan Crossing on Bearwood Road.
92. A contribution of £914 per dwelling indexed linked towards the Arborfield Bus Strategy.
93. Taking account of the site accessibility it is agreed that the Travel Plan will exceed those normally agreed through 'My Journey' and would be delivered either in full, or a hybrid version relying on WBC to deliver the education, monitoring and promotion of the travel plan but with the developer being required to offer additional incentives for residents would include:
 - a. Vouchers for E-Bikes/Buses (for residents)
 - b. Vouchers/Bus taster tickets (for residents)
 - c. Provision of a Car Club (with free membership for residents)

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Date:	30 th June 2025	Signed:	Alan Lewis
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