

PLANNING REF : 250517
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 9 Fir Tree Lane
: Newbury, Berkshire
: RG14 2QX
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Katie Sutherland
DATE SUBMITTED : 07/04/2025

COMMENTS:
Objection:

I write to formally object to the above planning application on the basis of the following material planning considerations:

1. Premature in Advance of a Local Plan Review

The proposal is premature in relation to the emerging Local Plan. Large-scale development of this nature should be considered strategically through a plan-led approach, ensuring proper consultation and coordinated infrastructure delivery. Approving such a major application ahead of the Local Plan review undermines the democratic planning process and may pre-empt proper site allocation.

2. Highway Safety and Traffic Impact

The proposed access from Basingstoke Road will significantly increase traffic volumes on a route that is already congested during peak times. This is a rural road network not designed for the traffic generated by 420 homes, a care home, school, commercial units, and a GP surgery. There is a substantial risk to highway safety, especially at junctions and pinch points in and around Spencers Wood.

- The Transport Assessment lacks adequate modelling of cumulative impacts from nearby developments.
- There is insufficient provision for sustainable transport options (e.g., safe walking and cycling routes, public transport improvements).

3. Insufficient Infrastructure Capacity

While the proposal includes some infrastructure elements (a school, GP surgery), there is no evidence that these will be delivered early enough or to a sufficient standard to support the new population.

Spencers Wood and the wider area already face pressure on:

- Primary and secondary school places
- GP and healthcare services
- Local road and public transport infrastructure

Without clear, enforceable phasing and funding commitments, the proposal risks exacerbating existing deficiencies.

4. Harm to the Character of the Countryside and Settlement Pattern

The development would result in the urbanisation of open countryside and a loss of rural character. It would represent a significant and unsympathetic expansion beyond the defined settlement boundary of Spencers Wood, contrary to both local and national planning policy.

- It would harm the visual amenity and landscape quality of the area, especially from public viewpoints.
- It threatens the distinct identity of Spencers Wood, risking coalescence with nearby settlements.

5. Environmental Impact and Loss of Biodiversity

Despite the provision of a SANG, the scale of the development will result in substantial habitat loss and disturbance to local wildlife. The biodiversity net gain measures are not clearly defined or enforceable.

- The site includes hedgerows, mature trees, and species-rich grassland that are ecologically valuable.
- Insufficient detail is provided regarding long-term habitat management and mitigation measures.

6. Flood Risk and Drainage

Parts of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding. The proposed drainage strategy is vague and lacks robust detail on how increased surface runoff from extensive hard landscaping will be managed sustainably. There is a real risk of worsening flood risk downstream.

7. Lack of Affordable Housing Clarity

While the application references housing, it lacks a clear commitment to a policy-compliant level of affordable housing or how tenure mix and delivery will be secured. In an area with a high need for genuinely affordable homes, this is unacceptable.

Conclusion:

This proposal represents speculative development on greenfield land in advance of a robust, democratic planning process. It will place unmanageable pressure on existing infrastructure, harm local character, and bring substantial environmental risks. On these grounds, the application should be refused.