

ARBORLEIGH ANGLING CLUB
CHURCH LANE
ARBORFIELD
READING
BERKSHIRE
RG2 9EA

15th December 2025

Dear Development Management & Compliance

Ref: Outline Planning Approval Consultation

Application Reference Number 252498

Arborleigh Angling Club (the Club) evolved from the National Institute for Research in Dairying (N.I.R.D.) Fishing Club in the mid 1980's, after the N.I.R.D. ceased operations in Shinfield and at Hall Farm. The running of Hall Farm was taken over by the University of Reading (UoR), and the Club has since leased the fishing rights from the UoR. We are currently in the process of finalising our new five-year lease with the UoR. In total, the club has held the fishing rights for the section of the River Loddon running through Hall Farm from the A327 road bridge downstream to Carters Hill for more than 70 years. Bankside access immediately downstream from the A327 is controlled by Thames Water, who permit the club (for a small annual fee) to gain entry to fish, via the secure, locked gates at the top and bottom ends of that section. The Club also leases the fishing rights for the stretch of the Loddon (approximately 800m) upstream (south) of the A327 road bridge.

The club normally operates with between 80 and 100 members and is a member of the Angling Trust, Fish Legal and the Loddon Fisheries & Conservation Consultative (LFCC). This past season, membership has been adversely impacted by the news of the proposed plans for the development of the land at Hall Farm and has dropped to around 65, with many of the members who have not rejoined citing their concerns regarding potential adverse impacts on the environment, quality of fishing and pollution potential from the housing and infrastructure building activities that will occur over the next 10 to 15 years, if the development goes ahead.

Our primary concerns and observations regarding the planning application have been collated and are as follows:

1. Accessibility to the River Loddon

The Club has its own club house, with its own power and water supplies, and a secure, gated car park opposite the Mill House, at the bottom of the lane leading down from the ancient church ruins. Access to the club house, car park and river must be maintained at all times during any works associated with the proposed Hall Farm Development. Access to the river from the A327 is currently via the main entrance to Hall Farm, located next to the Arborfield road bridge.

Car parking for anglers fishing the section of the river upstream (south) of the A327 road bridge is currently just inside the sliding gate, located at the main entrance to Hall Farm.

The Club notes that a new pedestrian, cycle and vehicular bridge is proposed in the middle of the wooded section of river downstream from the club house. The Shinfield side of the river at that point is subject to significant flooding problems for many months of the year so access for the public would be potentially hazardous. The works associated with building the bridge and associated access routes/footpaths would destroy the woodland edge to the river at that point and seriously disturb the wildlife living in the rest of "woods." It would also cause the club significant problems in accessing the lower section of its leased section of the river. If it is to be built, consideration should be given to relocating the bridge and access routes/footpaths further downstream in the field at Carters Hill, i.e. below the wooded section.

2. Environmental and Biodiversity Impacts

Hall Farm is an extensive area of agricultural land (both arable and pasture), either side of the main river Loddon, that includes numerous side streams, pools, backwaters and ditches. The various natural habitats on the farm include river bankside vegetation, woodland edges, hedgerows and other wildlife corridors. The site supports a wide range of species, including otters, many species of bat, deer, badgers, kingfishers, barn owls, and other protected farmland bird populations that over-winter on the fields. The planned demolition and clearance of some buildings and structures at the Centre for Dairy Research (CEDAR) could have a serious adverse impact the local bat and barn owl populations.

The River Loddon is officially classified as an EU salmonid river, requiring special protection for its chalk stream habitat which supports unique fish and biodiversity. One of the only known, highly sensitive spawning areas for native Loddon Barbel lies within this part of Loddon catchment area and must not be adversely impacted by the development. The LFCC and Environment Agency (EA) recognise that the Barbel is arguably the one non-migratory fish species that is under the most pressure in the Loddon Catchment area. Poor water conditions (pollution), gravel quality (lack of cleanliness), predation and the Barbel' relatively low fertility are some of the challenges in sustaining recruitment in any rivers where they occur. These appear to be prime factors restricting the population size and possibly even the perpetuation of the species in the river Loddon, hence the importance of preserving and protecting this known spawning site.

Endangered lampreys (a rare and protected species) have been seen on occasions in shallow scrapes on the gravels in the mill stream, downstream from the club house.

The proposed Hall Farm development risks significant habitat and species loss and fragmentation. Biodiversity net gain claims in the proposal are inadequately evidenced, particularly regarding long-term ecological management and off-site compensation.

3. Flood Risk, Pollution and Drainage Concerns

Parts of the Hall Farm site and surrounding areas are already prone to major surface-water flooding. The development would dramatically increase impermeable surfaces and place further pressure on the River Loddon and other local watercourses. The proposed drainage strategy is insufficiently detailed and does not convincingly demonstrate that the downstream flood risk will not be increased. The risk of pollution of downstream stretches of the Loddon and other waterways (e.g. river Thames) from the vast increase in sewage volumes and lack of sufficient local sewage treatment capability is of particular concern. The risk for pollution of the river from contaminants in the surface water run-off from the new roads and impermeable surfaces, will be also raised significantly.

4. Landscape and Settlement Pattern Harm

Hall Farm currently forms an important stretch of open countryside separating existing small villages and settlements in the Loddon Valley. Large-scale development here would erode this landscape, further blur settlement boundaries, and undermine the rural setting that characterises the Loddon Valley. This proposal fails to respect the local landscape character and would create further urban sprawl from Reading, south of the M4 motorway.

5. Climate and Sustainability Deficits

The proposal does not set out credible measures to reduce car dependence, cut emissions, or incorporate meaningful renewable energy or sustainable building standards. It therefore fails to align with the climate commitments of the local authority or national policy.

6. Traffic Impact and Highway Safety

The surrounding road network, including the A327, B3349, and other routes into Reading, are already operating at or beyond capacity during peak times. The development would introduce thousands of additional vehicle movements per day, worsening congestion at key junctions and increasing rat-running through nearby villages such as Shinfield, Arborfield, Barkham, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross.

The proposal does not provide sufficient evidence that the local highway network can safely absorb this demand or address how it will minimise the impact on the adjoining areas around Sindlesham, Winnersh and Lower Earley.

7. Inadequate Public Transport

The area of the proposed development is inadequately served by existing public transport. Without significant and guaranteed improvements in the availability of public transport and further infrastructure investment, residents will rely almost entirely on private cars. This contradicts local and national policy aimed at reducing car dependence and emissions.

8. Pressure on Health, Education, and Community Services

Local GP surgeries, dental practices, and schools are already under strain. The application provides no clear, funded, or timely mechanism to ensure new places or facilities will be delivered in step with population growth. This will result in service shortfalls and reduced quality of provision.

9. Conflict with Planning Policy and Prematurity

The Hall Farm development is not clearly supported by the adopted Local Plan, and key policy requirements - particularly regarding transport infrastructure, sustainability, and service provision - are not met. Proceeding with a scheme of this scale before strategic planning frameworks are updated would be premature and undermine plan-led development principles.

For the reasons above, we hope the council will reject or at least seriously reconsider this application. The Hall Farm development will damage the existing environment, is unsustainable, infrastructure-deficient, and inconsistent with responsible, plan-led growth.

If these plans do proceed, the club would wish to engage actively with the developer at an early stage, using our members (and LFCC) detailed practical knowledge of the local environment to assist in avoidance or mitigation of the potentially severe impacts we have identified, both during construction and afterwards.

Yours Sincerely,

K. Jarrett (Secretary, Arborleigh Angling Club)