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Travel
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Date: 04 April 2025

Active Travel England Planning Response Detailed Response to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Planning & Development Division, Active Travel England

To: Wokingham Borough Council

Application Ref: 250517

Site Address: Land Off Basingstoke Road To the south and west of Spencers Wood, Padworth, Reading

Description of development: 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.

Notice is hereby given that Active Travel England's formal recommendation is as follows:

- a. ~~**No Objection:** ATE has undertaken a detailed assessment of this application and is content with the submission.~~
- b. ~~**Conditional approval:** ATE recommends approval of the application, subject to the agreement and implementation of planning conditions and/or obligations as set out in this response.~~
- c. **Deferral:** ATE is not currently in a position to support this application and requests further assessment, evidence, revisions and/or dialogue as set out in this response.
- d. ~~**Refusal:** ATE recommends that the application be refused for the reasons set out in this response.~~

1.0 Background

Active Travel England (ATE) welcomes the opportunity to comment on this application.

It is understood that the site is not allocated in the existing or emerging Local Plan; however, it has been promoted as a housing site.

To date, ATE has not been involved in any pre-planning or planning applications related to this site.

2.0 Summary

ATE has reviewed the application against the criteria outlined in our updated planning assessment toolkit, national planning policy, and active travel design guidance.

Following our review, the following key issues require further consideration. Consequently, ATE is issuing a deferral response pending further analysis, as detailed below.

3.0 Areas of Concern

1. Trip Generation Analysis and Travel Plan Targets

Trip Generation:

It has not been possible to identify data for active travel trips as part of the reported trip generation, or indeed for public transport. To better understand the potential for active travel trips within these proposals, it would be beneficial for the applicant to provide forecasts for walking and cycling trips. This should ideally be presented as all-day trips as well as peak-hour data to ensure transparency regarding the expected number of walking and cycling trips generated by the proposals across the day.

Travel Plan:

It has not been possible to identify modal split targets within the Framework Travel Plan. The plan states: 'The precise targets and measures will be finalised following occupation of each unit within the development and the results of the initial travel surveys.' ATE has concerns with this approach and would welcome the provision of baseline modal splits and targets for all modes, including walking and cycling, over a minimum five-year monitoring period. This baseline can be revisited following occupation and the completion of initial travel surveys.

It is noted that Wokingham Borough Council operates the 'My Journey Wokingham' initiative, which addresses travel planning measures within the borough. The applicant should confirm whether the absence of mode share targets relates to this programme and whether the Highway Authority has agreed to this approach.

Ideally, both trip generation and travel plan targets should take a vision-led approach to establish robust and forward-looking targets for sustainable transport, as outlined in the updated NPPF.

2. Accessibility

The Transport Assessment (TA) references the Institute of Highways and Transportation guidelines for assessing suggested walking distances to key services. The Manual for Streets (MfS) and the National Design Guide (2021) are also referenced, considering 2km as the maximum acceptable walking distance.

Table 8 lists local facilities. Generally, there is considered to be a reasonable number of facilities within the aforementioned guideline distances. It is also noted that the proposals will include on-site facilities such as a primary school and a convenience store, which will improve accessibility.

The applicant has also provided information on bus accessibility, confirming that bus stops are within the recommended 400m distance from parts of the site. However, the applicant should confirm that all residential dwellings will be within 400m walking distance of a bus stop, not just those points referenced.

Although some services are within a manageable walking distance, cycling can be a viable alternative for short trips. However, assessing the attractiveness of both walking and cycling requires an evaluation of the quality of anticipated routes, as outlined below.

3. Active Travel Route Audit

It is noted and welcomed that the applicant has undertaken an 'LTN 1/20 Route Audit' as well as completing the Cycle Level of Service Tool (CLOs). This is considered a thorough assessment and useful for evaluating both walking and cycling routes. However, the assessment could be strengthened with supporting maps showing the assessed routes and photographs of identified deficiencies. It would also be beneficial for the applicant to clarify why these particular routes have been selected, for example, in relation to the amenities they provide access to and their accessibility from the site.

Ideally, this assessment should take into account Inclusive Mobility guidance, particularly regarding pavement widths. It is noted that a short pedestrian accessibility assessment has been provided, which notes footway widths of 1.8m in some areas. This does not comply with Inclusive Mobility's 2.0m requirement.

4. Off-Site Transport Infrastructure

Main Site Access T23591 001 A:

Paragraph 10.7.1 of LTN 1/20 states that roundabouts account for around 20% of all reported cyclist killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties, with standard UK geometry often proving hazardous, particularly due to flared entries and exits.

The proposed roundabout junction has been designed to DMRB standards and lacks dedicated cycle facilities. LTN 1/20 highlights that roundabouts with flared geometry and no cycle facilities are unsuitable for most cyclists and pose significant risks even for experienced riders.

It is unclear whether the Highway Authority has raised specific concerns regarding this arrangement. However, the applicant should consider revised geometry aligned with LTN 1/20 principles. This could include:

- Grass verges with a domed apex on all arms instead of recessed easy-exit arrangements, which encourage higher vehicle speeds and less steering correction.
- A central overrun area to narrow lanes while still accommodating HGV trailer overrun (as per CD 116 of DMRB).

Three nearby roundabouts have been identified as providing a better level of service for pedestrians and cyclists on Nine Mile Ride. See links:

[Roundabout 1](#)

[Roundabout 2](#)

[Roundabout 3](#)

Further enhancements could include:

- A reduction of the speed limit to 30mph (currently understood to be 40mph).
- Zebra crossings on all arms to aid pedestrian priority.
- Surface treatment improvements to address stopping distances and enhance the quality of place.

Examples of side road zebras:

Example 1: [Bristol](#)

Example 2: [Islington](#)

Proposed Site Access – Priority Junction A (T23591 004 A)

It is not entirely clear why this additional vehicular access is required, and further clarification on this matter would be appreciated.

Nonetheless, the proposed junction lacks adequate side road treatment and should be reconsidered to include a raised table in accordance with LTN 1/20, Manual for Streets, and Inclusive Mobility guidance. This would enhance pedestrian safety and provide greater priority at the junction.

Proposed Shared Pedestrian and Cycle Access (North)

The inclusion of this access is welcomed. However, there is no detail on how cyclists will safely transition to and from this route when traveling both northbound and southbound on the B3349 or when exiting the site. Examples of how this could be managed are provided in Roundabout 1.

Figure 5.9: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan indicates an access point south of Benham Drive, but detailed drawings for this access have not been identified.

Generally, the red line plan extends into and along the B3349, but it offers only limited improvements for pedestrians and cyclists. Additionally, it leaves a section unconnected.

Further steps should be taken to enhance pedestrian and cycling infrastructure along the entire site frontage with the B3349. Ideally, dedicated cycle tracks should be secured on both sides of the highway, given the deficiencies identified in the LTN 1/20 Route Audit. If constraints exist, the applicant should consider shared-use facilities designed to LTN 1/20 standards.

LTN 1/20 Route Audit

This assessment is thorough and has identified multiple deficiencies, with all routes scoring poorly. The recommended improvements are fully supported. However, it remains unclear how the applicant intends to implement these improvements—whether they will be delivered directly or as part of a financial contribution toward sustainable travel enhancements. This should be clarified.

Additionally, the assessment includes a helpful review of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Further information on how this application will contribute to these enhancements would be beneficial.

Green Route

It is understood that the B3349 is identified as a Green Route within both the existing (Policy CC03: Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping) and emerging Local Plan (Policy C4: Green and Blue Infrastructure and Public Rights of Way, and Policy C3: Active Travel). The applicant should set out how improvements to walking and cycling links along the B3349 align with the requirements of these policies for walking, wheeling, and cycling.

6. Placemaking and Permeability

As the proposals are in outline, it is not possible to comment on the full detail of the design approach; however, the following observations have been made:

Site Frontage and Speed:

The proposed development is, in parts, set back from the B3349, missing an opportunity to create an active frontage. A strong frontage is necessary to:

- Remind drivers they are in a residential area where pedestrian and cyclist activity is expected, including crossing the B3349.
- Help integrate the development into the built environment.
- Improve natural surveillance and enhance safety.

Permeability:

Several pedestrian and cycle links are proposed along the northern boundary. ATE considers these connections essential for ensuring adequate connectivity. However, these links are only shown as 'Connection Points' on Figure 5.9: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan and as 'potential connections' within the Development Framework Plan and Design and Access Statement (DAS). ATE has concerns that these connections are not currently secured and would not support the proposals unless all these links are guaranteed as.

Without these connections, journey times will significantly increase, and the safety and attractiveness of walking and cycling to and from the site would decrease, while permeability would be seriously undermined.

Failing to deliver these links due to land ownership constraints will not be acceptable, as the development will fail to meet the tests for creating cohesive and joined-up communities, as set out within NPPF 96a, which expects street layouts to allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods. Moreover, much of the assessment within the TA would be undermined, particularly the LTN 1/20 Route Audit

It is also considered that a further connection to Blackwater Close should be provided. ATE would welcome clarity on whether this could be achieved.

7. Cycle Parking

Detailed plans for cycle storage facilities should be provided in accordance with LTN 1/20 and local guidance at an appropriate time. Cycle parking should be as convenient as car parking, with unobstructed access to secure facilities provided by the developer.

4.0 Next Steps

ATE requests that the local planning authority shares this response with the applicant's agent. We would welcome additional details and amendments in line with the above comments, with a view to providing a further response/appropriate wording for conditions as required.