

PLANNING REF : 250517
PROPERTY ADDRESS : School Green Centre
: School, Shinfield, Berkshire
: RG2 9EH
SUBMITTED BY : Shinfield Parish Council Shinfield Parish Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 13/03/2026

COMMENTS:

SHINFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 250517

Land off Basingstoke Road, Shinfield - Proposed Development of up to 420 Dwellings

Shinfield Parish Council strongly objects to planning application 250517 for the development of up to 420 dwellings on land off Basingstoke Road.

The Parish Council considers that the proposal conflicts with the statutory Development Plan, fails to satisfy key provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), would significantly increase the population within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) associated with the nuclear installation at Burghfield, and would materially worsen existing transport congestion affecting the Shinfield and M4 Junction 11 corridor.

The Council also notes that a recent planning appeal decision relating to development proposals in the same locality (APP/X0360/W/24/3354607) considered many of these issues in detail and provides a highly relevant material consideration. For the reasons set out below, Shinfield Parish Council respectfully submits that planning permission should be refused.

1. Statutory Development Plan Conflict

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The proposal conflicts with a number of policies within the development plan for the area administered by Wokingham Borough Council, including the Core Strategy, the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, and the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan. Core Strategy Policy CP1 - Sustainable Development

Policy CP1 requires development to contribute to sustainable communities while protecting environmental assets and ensuring that infrastructure capacity is available to support development. The Parish Council considers that the proposal would place significant additional pressure on transport infrastructure, local services, and emergency planning arrangements in an area that has already experienced substantial housing growth.

Core Strategy Policy CP3 - General Principles for Development Policy CP3 requires development to be appropriate in scale, character and impact, and to avoid unacceptable impacts on neighbouring uses and infrastructure.

The scale of the proposed development would extend built form significantly beyond the existing settlement edge and would introduce a large residential population into an area where infrastructure and safety constraints are already significant.

Core Strategy Policy CP6 - Managing Travel Demand

Policy CP6 requires development to minimise reliance on private vehicles and encourage sustainable travel.

Given the location of the site and the existing congestion on the surrounding road network, the Parish Council considers that the

majority of journeys generated by the development would be made by private car.

Core Strategy Policy CP11 - Proposals Affecting the Transport Network Policy CP11 requires development proposals to demonstrate that the transport network can safely accommodate the additional demand generated.

The Parish Council considers that the surrounding road network is already under significant pressure and that the proposed development would materially worsen existing congestion.

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy TB21 - Transport Assessments

Policy TB21 requires development proposals to demonstrate that the transport impacts of development are acceptable and that mitigation measures are sufficient.

The Parish Council does not consider that the application adequately demonstrates that the impacts of a development of this scale can be satisfactorily mitigated.

2. Conflict with the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan

The Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory Development Plan.

Policy SNP1 - Managing Growth

This policy seeks to ensure that development is delivered in a coordinated and sustainable manner with appropriate infrastructure provision.

The proposed development represents additional large-scale housing beyond the planned framework for growth in Shinfield.

Policy SNP2 - Settlement Character and Identity

The proposal would extend built development further into open land and would erode the existing rural transition between Shinfield and the surrounding countryside.

Policy SNP6 - Transport and Movement

This policy seeks to ensure that development does not worsen traffic congestion or compromise highway safety.

The Parish Council considers that the proposal fails to demonstrate that the local transport network can accommodate the scale of development proposed.

3. Landscape and Countryside Harm

The application site lies outside the defined settlement boundary and currently forms part of the open countryside that contributes to the rural setting of Shinfield.

The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the importance of recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The open land south of Shinfield performs an important role in maintaining the visual separation between settlements and providing a rural setting to the village.

Development of the scale proposed would result in:

- significant encroachment into open countryside
- erosion of the existing settlement edge

- urbanisation of currently undeveloped land

- loss of the rural transition between settlement and countryside

Planning inspectors consistently attach significant weight to the protection of the countryside where development would extend built form beyond established settlement boundaries.

The Parish Council considers that the development would represent a substantial urban extension into the countryside and would therefore

cause clear harm to the character and appearance of the area.

This harm weighs significantly against the proposal in the overall planning balance.

4. National Planning Policy Framework

The proposal conflicts with key provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Paragraph 8 - Sustainable Development

Sustainable development requires the integration of economic, social and environmental objectives.

The Parish Council considers that the proposal fails to achieve this balance, particularly in relation to environmental protection, infrastructure capacity, and safety considerations.

Paragraph 109 - Transport Impacts

Development should only be refused on highways grounds where the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Given the existing congestion affecting the Basingstoke Road corridor and M4 Junction 11, the Parish Council considers that the cumulative impacts of this development would be severe.

Paragraph 174 - Recognising the Intrinsic Character of the Countryside

Planning decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The proposed development would result in the loss of open countryside and would undermine the rural setting of Shinfield.

5. Detailed Emergency Planning Zone - Precautionary Principle

The site lies within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone associated with the nuclear installation operated by the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield.

The purpose of the DEPZ is to ensure that emergency planning arrangements can protect the public in the unlikely event of a major incident.

Increasing residential populations within the DEPZ is therefore a matter that must be approached with particular caution.

Development proposals that significantly increase population within nuclear consultation zones are typically assessed using a precautionary approach in order to ensure that emergency response capability is not compromised.

Increasing residential populations within the DEPZ increases the number of people who could potentially be affected in the event of a major incident and increases the complexity of evacuation and emergency response planning.

The Parish Council considers that the proposed development would introduce a substantial additional population into the DEPZ and therefore increase the potential consequences of a major incident.

6. Transport Impacts - Basingstoke Road and M4 Junction 11 Corridor

Traffic congestion is already a major issue affecting residents of Shinfield and the surrounding area.

The Basingstoke Road corridor provides a key connection between Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Reading and links to the strategic road network at M4 Junction 11.

The area has already experienced substantial housing growth through the South of the M4 Strategic Development Location.

Existing congestion affects:

- Basingstoke Road

- Shinfield Road
- Church Lane
- Hyde End Road
- the Mere oak interchange
- approaches to M4 Junction 11

Residents frequently experience significant delays during peak periods, and the corridor already operates close to capacity. A development of up to 420 dwellings would generate a substantial number of additional vehicle movements and would place further pressure on this already constrained network.

The Parish Council considers that the cumulative impacts of the proposal would therefore be severe in NPPF terms.

7. Relevance of the Secretary of State Appeal Decision

APP/X0360/W/24/3354607

Shinfield Parish Council considers the appeal decision relating to land east of Hayes Drive and north of Church Lane, Three Mile Cross (APP/X0360/W/24/3354607) to be a highly significant material consideration in the determination of the current application.

That appeal concerned a proposal for up to 148 dwellings within the same general locality and within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone associated with the nuclear facility operated by the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield.

The appeal was determined following a full public inquiry and was subsequently dismissed by the Secretary of State.

The Inspector's report examined in detail the implications of increasing residential populations within the DEPZ.

The report recognised that every resident within the DEPZ would be considered an "affected person" in the event that the Off-Site Emergency Plan were activated.

Consequently, increasing the residential population within the zone directly increases the number of people who may require protection measures or evacuation during an emergency.

The Inspector further concluded that population increases would inevitably increase the demands placed upon emergency response arrangements and public services.

Evidence presented at the inquiry also indicated that testing exercises had identified population-sensitive weaknesses within the Off-Site Emergency Plan.

The Inspector therefore concluded that additional development within the consultation zone would add to existing pressures on emergency planning arrangements.

The appeal decision also recognised the cumulative nature of residential development within the DEPZ and the importance of considering how successive housing developments increase the population within the zone.

These conclusions are directly relevant to the current application.

The appeal proposal involved up to 148 dwellings, whereas the present application proposes up to 420 dwellings.

Accordingly, the population increase associated with the current proposal would be substantially greater than that considered in the appeal.

8. Cumulative Population Growth within the DEPZ

Emergency planning arrangements for nuclear installations are based upon assumptions regarding population levels within defined consultation zones.

Each additional housing development within the DEPZ incrementally increases the number of people who may be affected during a radiation emergency.

While individual developments may appear modest in isolation, the cumulative impact of successive developments can result in a substantial increase in the population requiring protection or evacuation.

The proposal for up to 420 dwellings would introduce a very substantial additional population into the DEPZ.

Given the potentially serious consequences associated with a nuclear emergency, planning decisions must adopt a precautionary approach where development could materially increase the population at risk.

9. Consistency in Decision Making

Granting planning permission for the current proposal would also raise serious issues of consistency in planning decision-making. The appeal decision APP/X0360/W/24/3354607 involved a proposal for up to 148 dwellings within the same locality and within the same emergency planning zone.

Following detailed examination at public inquiry, the Secretary of State dismissed the appeal.

The Inspector's conclusions identified the implications of increasing residential populations within the DEPZ and the resulting pressures on emergency planning arrangements.

The current proposal seeks permission for a substantially larger development of up to 420 dwellings.

The planning issues identified in the appeal decision therefore apply with equal or greater force to the current proposal.

Planning decision-makers are expected to exercise consistency in decision-making unless there is a clear and compelling justification for reaching a different conclusion.

No such justification has been demonstrated in this case.

Approving a development of this scale following the dismissal of a materially smaller proposal raising the same safety concerns would represent a clear inconsistency in planning decision-making.

10. Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, Shinfield Parish Council considers that planning application 250517:

- conflicts with Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3, CP6 and CP11
- conflicts with Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy TB21
- conflicts with the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan
- conflicts with key provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework

- would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the countryside

- would substantially increase the population within the AWE

Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zone

- would exacerbate already severe traffic congestion affecting the Basingstoke Road and M4 Junction 11 corridor

- would contribute to unacceptable cumulative development impacts

Shinfield Parish Council therefore strongly objects to the proposed development and respectfully requests that Wokingham Borough Council refuses planning permission.

Submitted by Deputy Clerk to Shinfield Parish Council

