PLANNING REF : 262477
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Shinfield Parish Council
: School Green, Shinfield, Berkshire
: RG2 9EH
SUBMITTED BY : Mara Kalsi-Spiller
DATE SUBMITTED : 18/11/2026

COMMENTS:
Shinfield Parish Council objects to this application. The Council recognises the importance of supporting appropriate employment opportunities within the Borough. However, the proposed development would introduce a substantial open storage facility on approximately 1.83 hectares of predominantly open land within the countryside and within the AWE Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ). The Council considers that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of thearea, biodiversity, heritage assets and residential amenity and that an overriding justification for locating this form of development on this site has not been
demonstrated.

The site lies adjacent to Mereoak Park and Ride and outside the established built-up area. Mereoak Park and Ride itself is identified by Wokingham Borough Council as being within Shinfield parish and is an important transport facility serving Reading and the surrounding area. The Council does not consider that the presence of this
ransport infrastructure provides justification for the introduction of an extensive B8 open storage use into the adjoining countryside.

Whilst the applicant argues that the site forms part of the wider South of M4 Strategic Development Location, the Council is not persuaded that this establishes the principle of an unrestricted B8 open storage facility in this location. The strategic development of the area does not remove the need to assess the particular character, environmental impacts and appropriateness of the proposed use on this site.

The proposal would introduce extensive hardstanding, storage compounds, fencing, gates, lighting and associated operational infrastructure onto land which presently contributes to the relatively open character of this part of Mereoak Lane. The Council considers that this would result in a significant urbanisation of the site and would introduce a distinctly commercial and industrial character into an important southern approach to Shinfield parish.

The Council is particularly concerned about the proposed security infrastructure. The extent of perimeter fencing, gates and associated security measures required for an open storage facility would
reinforce the industrial appearance of the development. This would be especially apparent from Mereoak Lane, the surrounding countryside and any nearby public vantage points. Landscaping may soften views over time but would not remove the fundamental change in character resulting from extensive hardstanding, storage compoundsand security infrastructure.

The Council also has concerns regarding external lighting. An open storage facility of this nature is likely to require lighting for operational, safety and security purposes. Unless carefully

controlled, this has the potential to introduce additional light spill and glare into an area which forms part of the transition between the built-up area and the surrounding countryside. This could adversely affect landscape character, residential amenity and nocturnal wildlife. The Council therefore considers that the Local Planning Authority should be satisfied that the proposed lighting scheme
demonstrates appropriate limits on illumination, operating hours and light spill.

Taken together, the extensive hardstanding, outside storage, security fencing, gates, lighting columns and associated infrastructure would result in an urban and industrial form of development which the Council considers out of character with its countryside setting.

The Council is also concerned about the ecological impacts of the proposal. The application documentation acknowledges habitat loss and reliance upon off-site Biodiversity Net Gain measures. The proposal would also involve the removal of existing vegetation and 22 trees. While off-site Biodiversity Net Gain can form part of the statutory biodiversity framework, it does not in itself remove the need to consider the ecological and landscape consequences of losing established habitats and vegetation from the application site. The Council considers that the mitigation hierarchy should be rigorously applied, with avoidance and on-site retention considered before reliance is placed upon off-site compensation.

The Council further notes that the application would affect a surviving Second World War pillbox identified by the applicant as a non-designated heritage asset. This feature contributes to the historic significance of the area and forms part of the remaining wartime defensive landscape associated with the wider Reading and Berkshire area. The Council considers that the retention of this heritage asset should be a priority and that its historic significance should be afforded substantial weight in the determination of the application.

The Council is not persuaded that sufficient justification has been provided to demonstrate that the loss of the pillbox is necessary to facilitate the proposed development or that all reasonable alternatives have been fully explored. Given the nature of the proposal as an open storage facility, the Council considersthat opportunities should exist to retain and incorporate the pillbox within the site layout and landscaping scheme.

Accordingly, should the Local Planning Authority be minded to approve the application, Shinfield Parish Council strongly requests that the pillbox be retained in situ and protected through appropriately
worded planning conditions, including measures to safeguard its setting, secure its long-term conservation and management, and prevent damage arising from construction works or subsequent site operations.

The Council considers this particularly relevant to National Planning Policy Framework Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment), which requires decision makers to take account of the significance of non-designated heritage assets and,

where an
application would directly or indirectly affect such an asset, to make a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

The proposal also raises concerns regarding residential amenity. Of particular concern is the potential for vehicle movements, deliveries and collections, loading and unloading, forklift or other plant movements, security activity and external lighting during evenings, nights and weekends.

Giventhe proximity of residential properties on Mereoak Lane and Great Lea, the Council considers that the Local Planning Authority should be satisfied that the submitted assessments address the realistic
maximum operating characteristics of a B8 use and not simply the activities of a particular prospective occupier. If permission were nevertheless granted, the Council considers that enforceable conditions controlling operating hours, deliveries, external operations, lighting and noise would be essential to protect neighbouring residential amenity.

The site also lies wholly within the AWE Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zone. The Council considers that the site's location within the DEPZ should be afforded significant weight and that the Local Planning Authority should rigorously apply the relevant emergency planning policy and take account of the nature of the proposed use, anticipated workforce, visitors and vehicle movements, together with the practicality of implementing appropriate emergency arrangements.

The Council is additionally concerned about the cumulative implications of allowing further storage and industrial-style development in the countryside south of Reading. Although every planning application must be determined on its own merits, permitting a substantial open B8 storage use in this location would contribute to the progressive urbanisation of land between existing developed areas and the open countryside and could make the remaining rural
character of this part of the parish increasingly difficult to maintain.

The proposal is therefore considered contrary to:

National Planning Policy Framework Section 12 (Achieving Well-Designed Places), which seeks development that is visually attractive,
sympathetic to local character and contributes positively to its surroundings.
National Planning Policy Framework Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment), which seeks to protect and enhance valued landscapes, biodiversity and the natural environment.
National Planning Policy Framework Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment), which requires decision makers to take account of the significance of non-designated heritage assets and to make a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP3 (General Principles for

Development), which requires development to maintain and enhance the quality and character of the environment.
Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP7 (Biodiversity), which seeks the protection and enhancement of biodiversity assets.
Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP11 (Amenity), which seeks to safeguard the amenities of existing and future occupiers and protect the countryside frominappropriate development.

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy TB04 (Development in the Vicinity of AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield).
Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy TB21 (Design and the Quality of the Environment), which requires development to respond positively to local character.
Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy TB23 (Biodiversity and Development Management), which seeks to avoid harm to biodiversity and ecological networks.
Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC06 (Noise and Vibration), which seeks to protect neighbouring uses from unacceptable noise impacts.
For the reasons set out above, Shinfield Parish Council recommends that planning permission be refused.