

PLANNING REF : 252498
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 3 Strand Way
: Earley, Berkshire
: RG6 4BU
SUBMITTED BY : Cllr David Hare
DATE SUBMITTED : 30/01/2026

COMMENTS:

I am writing regarding the potential development of Loddon Garden Village. Partnering with our community of local Churches, we are asking WBC to consider a church building as part of the proposed development.

New communities need a heart. We think churches play a key role in connecting people within communities and helping them flourish. Regarding the impact of her local church, Nicky Lauchlan, Headteacher of Shinfield Infant School wrote that it:

"...supports all families within the community, irrespective of faith is a positive force within the community [and] has strengthened the community as it has grown from a small to a very large village.
[Shinfield] is a very special place to live and work because of the organisations such as the church who go out of their way to care and proactively make a positive difference to people's lives every day.'

Churches enable people to make friends and connections nearby. They also draw people together from diverse backgrounds - my own church has around 20 nationalities represented in our congregation. One of the concerns of the new development is traffic. Enabling people to participate in a church locally will have the environmental benefit of reducing traffic in and out of LG Village (and across the area) throughout the week.

You may be surprised to know that currently 12% of people in England and Wales are involved in a local church! This is a growing figure, with the fastest growth in the youngest sector of the population(400% increase in six years - figures from YouGov 2025). This means that in a development of 10,000 people (the proposed upper number for LG Village) 1,200 will be looking for a church!

While we understand that planning for LG Village is not yet approved and there are many objections against it, we feel that IF it was to go ahead then a church would greatly enhance it. Churches just in our Baptist group provide the following:

8/10 churches run toddler group
7/10 offer social activity e.g. 50+ sports group, men's breakfast, group for parents,

7/10 run social outreach e.g. recovery programme, Bed 4 Night, foodbank support
5/10 have midweek children's group
4/10 run youth groups - run or host
5/10 offer community coffee mornings
(figures May 25)

And almost all of the above provision is financed by the churches themselves - even local Christian charities operating across denominations, for example Share, which helps feed 2000 people

weekly and avoids 40 tonnes of food going to waste.

Local churches also provide key spiritual activities. As well as regular services churches organise Christmas and Easter events that the local Community love to support. Many will also play a leading role in their local Remembrance Service too.

This is not a bid by us Baptists for exclusivity! We would be happy to explore working with other church denominations as we already do in so many areas. Nor are we seeking to exclude other religions - we welcome the freedom of each group to make a submission in this consultation period should they choose to do so.

Bruce Winton, Clerk of Shinfield Parish, which has expanded so much recently, commented on his local church that "churches bring [benefits] to their local community whether residents are active worshippers or not [The church's] outreach is so important to the unity and cohesion for a community that has grown rapidly over the last 15 years."