

Date: 27 January 2025
Application: 243226



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Paul Watson
Kingsbrook House
7 Kingsway
Bedford
Bedfordshire
MK42 9BA

Development Management &
Compliance

P.O. Box 157

Shute End, Wokingham

Berkshire, RG40 1BN

Tel: (0118) 974 6000

Minicom No: (0118) 974 6991

Screening Response Letter

Application Number: 243226

Site Address: Land west of Stanbury House, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood,
Reading, RG7 1AJ

Expiry Date: 4 February 2025

Proposal: Screening Opinion application for an Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed development of up to 63 dwellings with associated access and landscaping.

Dear Paul Watson

Thank you for your Screening Opinion received on for Land west of Stanbury House, Basingstoke Road. The application has been screened in accordance with Regulation 6 (2) of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations 2017 (Town and Country Planning Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017) and the supporting Planning Practice Guidance.

Site Description:

The site relates to land on the western side of Basingstoke Road. Formerly, the site was occupied by a two-storey dwelling facing Basingstoke Road, with large rear amenity space. Following the granting of planning permission O/2014/2101, 57 dwellings are currently under construction on part of the wider site (that closest to Basingstoke Road). At the rear most part of the site is designated SANG.

In the wider area are residential dwellings with some scattered commercial uses. Basingstoke Road is a classified 'B' road.

Proposal Description:

The screening opinion and proposed development consists of up to 63 dwellings with associated access and landscaping.

Planning History:

The planning history for notable developments in proximity to the site are in Appendix 1. The applicant is urged to independently also review planning history of the site and surroundings.

Screening Opinion

Before submitting an application, developers who are in doubt as to whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required, may request a screening opinion from the Local Planning Authority in accordance with Regulations 6 (1) and 15 (1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations) 2017 (the '2017 Regulations'). The request seeks to determine whether or not the proposal is for a form of development that is covered by Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations and whether or not EIA is required.

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 set out that Environmental Impact Assessment's (EIA's) are needed for certain developments whereby the proposal is to have likely significant effects on the environment. The application seeks a Screening Opinion to be considered in accordance with Regulation 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Regulations 2017). The key issues for consideration are:

- whether the proposed development would comprise a Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 development for the purposes of the Regulations; and if so,
- whether the development is EIA development requiring any future planning application to be accompanied by a full Environmental Statement being mindful of factors such as the nature of the development, size and location and the requirements of Schedule 3 of the Regulations.

In undertaking the assessment, the applicant is obliged to provide enough information about the proposed development for the Council to make an adequate assessment, such as providing a description of the development and a plan of the site location. Such information has been received for this submission against these requirements.

Schedule 1 Development

It is considered that the proposed development does not fall within any of the categories of development listed in Schedule 1 of the Regulations, which comprise potentially the most significantly harmful forms of development in terms of environmental risk. As such an assessment of the proposal is required to determine whether it falls within the remit of Schedule 2 of the Regulations.

Schedule 2 Development

Schedule 2 development is deemed to be those forms of development listed within Schedule 2 of the Regulations which:

- i) has any part of the development located wholly or partly in a 'sensitive area' as defined in Regulation 2(1) or
- ii) meets one of the relevant criteria or exceeds one of the relevant thresholds listed in Schedule 2.

In having regard to criteria i) above, the site is not located 'wholly or partly' within any defined 'sensitive area' which are Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The site is also not within a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or World Heritage Site as defined as 'sensitive' areas within Regulation 2(1).

In addressing criteria ii), the Local Planning Authority are not of the view that the development meets the thresholds within any subcategory.

The subcategory which would be most relevant to the development is subcategory 10(b) (Urban Development Projects). The exclusion thresholds for this subcategory are:

- (i) The development includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwellinghouse development; or*
- (ii) the development includes more than 150 dwellings; or*
- (iii) the overall area of the development exceeds 5 hectares*

The proposed development does not meet or exceed any of the above and is therefore not Schedule 2 development.

However, the NPPG (018 Reference ID: 4-018-20170728) states that it should not be presumed that developments above the indicative thresholds should always be subject to assessment, or those falling below these thresholds could never give rise to significant effects, especially where the development is in an environmentally sensitive location. Each development will need to be considered on its merits.

As discussed earlier, the site is not located within a 'sensitive area' as defined in Regulation 2(1) although an 'environmentally sensitive location' is not limited to those areas defined in Regulation 2(1). To help assess whether the site would be an environmentally sensitive location, a screening exercise was conducted and this can be found in Appendix 2.

Based on this exercise, the development would not have such significant environmental effects or in an environmentally sensitive location to warrant the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Accordingly, in exercise of the powers conferred by Regulation 6 (6) (b) of the EIA Regulations 2017, the Council hereby considers that the proposed development described in your request and the documents submitted with it is not 'EIA development', within the meaning of the EIA Regulations 2017, and hence a negative screening opinion is hereby adopted. This is subject to Secretary of State's power to make directions.

Comments from the Council's internal departments and external consultees have helped formed the matrix in Appendix 2. However, these comments from consultees are available on the Council's website and you are encouraged to read these in full.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Connie Davis
Development Management



p.p.

Appendix 1 – Notable applications near the application site

Site	Description
Stanbury House (143279)	Outline application for the development of up to 57 new dwellings to include access from Basingstoke Road and provision of SANG to be considered
Stanbury House (212914)	Application for the approval of reserved matters pursuant to outline planning consent O/2014/2101 (143279) determined by appeal reference APP/X0360/W/15/3097721 for the erection of up to 57 new dwellings, to include new access from Basingstoke Road and provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) (appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale to be considered)
Land at Kingfisher Grove (201002)	Outline application from the proposed erection of 49 dwelling, including 22 units of affordable housing, with new publicly accessible open space and access (Access to be considered)

Appendix 2 – EIA Screening Matrix

LPA Reference no.	243226	Site and Proposed Development	Land west of Stanbury House, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood, Reading, RG7 1AJ Screening Opinion application for an Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed development of up to 63 dwellings with associated access and landscaping.
1. EIA Details			
Is the project Schedule 1 development according to Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations?		No	
If YES, which description of development (THEN GO TO Q4)		N/A	
Is the project Schedule 2 development under the EIA Regulations?		No	
If YES, under which description of development in Column 1 and Column 2?		N/A	
Is the development within, partly within, or near a 'sensitive area' as defined by Regulation 2 of the EIA Regulations?		No	
If YES, which area?		N/A	
Are the applicable thresholds/criteria in Column 2 exceeded/met?		No	
If yes, which applicable threshold/criteria?		N/A	
2. LPA/SOS SCREENING			
Has the LPA or SoS issued a Screening Opinion (SO) or Screening Direction (SD)? (In the case of Enforcement appeals, has a Regulation 37 notice been issued)		No	
If yes, is a copy of the SO/SD on the file?		N/A	
If yes, is the SO/SD positive?		N/A	
3. Environmental Statement			
Has the appellant supplied an ES for the current or previous (if reserved matters or conditions) application?		N/A	

A Screening Criteria Question		B Response to the Screening Criteria Question in Column A (Yes/No and explanation of reasons)		C Is a Significant Effect Likely? (Yes/No and explanation of reasons (nb if the answer in Column B is 'No', Column C is not applicable))	
		Briefly explain reasons and, if applicable and/or known, include name of feature(s) and proximity to site(s)		Is a significant effect likely, having regard particularly to the magnitude and spatial extent (including population size affected), nature, intensity and complexity, probability, expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact and the possibility to effectively reduce the impact?	
4. Natural resources					
4.1 Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the topography of the area?		Unknown	Unknown at this stage if re-modelling of the land will be required. As the development would be permanent, the only decommissioning would be of construction apparatus.	?	
4.2 Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources above or below ground such as land, soil, water, materials/minerals or energy which are non-renewable or in short supply?		Yes	Land, water, materials and energy will be used during and post-construction.	No	Likely able to be managed. The construction phase can be controlled by the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). All buildings would be expected to adhere to building regulations and would need to meet the sustainability objectives of the current and emerging development plan. These could be secured by condition and / or factored into the detailed design.
4.3 Are there any areas on/around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project, e.g. forestry, agriculture, water/coastal, fisheries, minerals?		Yes	According to the Natural England and Council mapping systems, the site is, in part Grade 3a and part Grade 3b agricultural land. Grade 3 agricultural land is classified as good to moderate quality agricultural land. The site is part located in an area for search for sand and gravel and within a Mineral Safeguarding Area.	No	High quality/ scarce resources would be permanently lost and sterilised. An agricultural and minerals report would be required as part of any future planning application.

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5. Waste		
5.1 Will the project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Yes The construction and post occupation of the buildings would generate waste but this is not anticipated to be significant and would be comparable to an urban development project.	No Likely to be managed. A site waste management plan and CEMP will reduce waste levels and could be secured via planning conditions. Full consultation would be undertaken with the Council's Cleaner & Greener team regarding waste provision and waste management details could be provided under a planning application.
6. POLLUTION AND NUISANCES		
6.1 Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	Yes The construction phase and post occupational phase will generate vehicle movements that emit gases. Dust will be generated by the construction phase in particular. The residential end use should not generate a need for a significant amount of storage of onsite hazardous materials other than those normally stored within residential dwellings.	No Likely to be managed. An CEMP will control dust and HGV movements together with best practice for the operation of machinery. Post occupation, travel planning measures will be expected to reduce vehicle trips.
6.2 Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes The construction phase will produce noise associated with domestic life. During operational phases, the development will result in additional noise and light pollution.	No Likely to be able to be managed. In the construction phase, this could be managed via a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Construction Method Statement (CMS). During the operational phases, noise can be assessed through the submission of noise assessments that will be reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health team. Impacts from light could have the potential to be mitigated through conditions (ie. street lighting). Lighting contained within individual residential dwellings is likely to not be significant or dissimilar to other developments in Spencers Wood.

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6.3 Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	No	According to the Council's mapping system, other than part of the access road, it is not recorded that the site is within an area of potentially contaminated land. However, owing to the scale of the proposal, this may be worth further investigation in any case.		
6.4 Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage, e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the project?	Not aware of any at the time of writing			
7. Population and human health				
7.1 Will there be any risk of major accidents (including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge) during construction, operation or decommissioning?	Yes	The site is located within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for Atomic Weapon Establishment (AWE) Burghfield (AWE B). The proposed development would trigger a consultation with the Office for Nuclear Responsibility. The construction process would increase the population within the DEPZ as would post occupation for the development. This would increase the population within the DEPZ which could have an impact on the 'blue light' response in the unlikely event that there was an incident at Burghfield. AWE operates at as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP), so the risk of a radiation emergency is very low. However, the consequences of a radiation emergency are significant.	No	Information will be required (such as floor plans, population increase) would be required as part of any future planning application to assess the proposal in respect of the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone. The WBC Emergency Planning Officer did not specify that this information is required in the form of an EIA. In EIA terms, the overall resultant population increase would not be such that this would constitute EIA development. However, a full assessment of the proposal's impact on the Council's ability to implement the Off-Site Emergency Plan will be required as part of any future planning application. This assessment will be carried out by the Council's Emergency Planning Officer in consultation with West Berkshire Council and the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR). Please also see general comments from AWE.

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7.2 Will the project present a risk to the population (having regard to population density) and their human health during construction, operation or decommissioning? (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)	Yes	See 7.1	See 7.1
8. Water resources			
8.1 Are there any water resources including surface waters, e.g. rivers, lakes/ponds, coastal or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected by the project, particularly in terms of their volume and flood risk?	Yes	The site is located within Flood zone 1 which has a low probability of surface water flooding.	No Likely to be able to be managed through the submission of a flood risk assessment accompanying any forthcoming planning application. This is required on Flood Zone 1 and the site area being greater than 1ha. Based on the above, WBC Drainage would anticipate seeing a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) that demonstrates how all forms of flood risk will be managed, to ensure that the development does not increase flood risk on or off site. <i>The FRA should address issues such as:</i> <i>1. Calculations indicating the Greenfield runoff rate from the site.</i> <i>2. BRE 365 test results demonstrating whether infiltration is achievable or not.</i> <i>3. Use of SuDS following the SuDS hierarchy, preferably infiltration.</i> <i>4. Full calculations demonstrating the performance of soakaways or capacity of attenuation features to cater for 1 in 100-year flood event with a 40% allowance for climate change and runoff controlled at Greenfield rates, or preferably better.</i> <i>5. If connection to an existing surface water sewer is proposed, we need to understand why other methods of the SuDS hierarchy cannot</i>

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			<i>be implemented and see confirmation from the utilities supplier that their system has got capacity and the connection is acceptable.</i> <i>6. Separate drainage systems for any proposed adopted highways and residential dwellings.</i> <i>7. A demonstration of how surface water runoff is going to be catered for, given that parts of the development site already suffer from surface water flooding.</i> <i>8. A description of how the proposed development will deal with surface water overland flows.</i> <i>9. Groundwater monitoring confirming seasonal high groundwater levels in the area.</i> <i>10.A drainage strategy plan indicating the location and sizing of SuDS features, with the base of any SuDS features located at least 1m above the seasonal high water table level.</i> <i>11.Details demonstrating how any SuDS for this development would be managed throughout the lifespan of the development and who will be responsible for maintenance.</i> Owing to the site area, the Environmental Agency would be consulted on any future planning application.

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9. Biodiversity (Species and Habitats)		
9.1 Are there any protected areas which are designated or classified for their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, or any non-designated / non-classified areas which are important or sensitive for reasons of their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, located on or around the location and which could be affected by the project? (e.g. wetlands, watercourses or other water-bodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, undesignated nature reserves or parks. (Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local))).	Yes The site is located within the 5km zone of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.	No Likely able to be managed. The site is within the standard linear mitigation zone for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA) that means that likely significant effects, alone or in combination, are expected from a net residential increase via the recreational pathway, unless otherwise mitigated. However, the process to consider such likely significant effects and the validity of any mitigation proposals is by Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) and not EIA.
9.2 Could any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna which use areas on or around the site, e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over-wintering, or migration, be affected by the project?	Yes The site is within an Amber and Green zone for Great Crested Newts. Impact risk zones have been derived through advanced modelling to create a species distribution map which predicts likely presence. There is some indication of bat roosting suitability outside, but near to the boundary of the site. There are 3 veteran trees recorded on the site, as well as a single and group TPO on site/ on the boarder with the Phase 1 scheme. There are also some veteran trees recorded near the western site boundary (but outside of the site). Veteran trees are classified as irreplaceable habitat would already need to be considered	No Likely able to be managed. Wildlife is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and no works will be undertaken prior to the submission of an updated ecology report. Surveys will be undertaken prior and during construction and mitigation for habitats can be provided within the built form or within suitable areas of the grounds. An Ecological appraisal will need to accompany the application which will be reviewed by the Council's Ecologist. Arboricultural information (such as tree surveys and protection) will also be required to be submitted alongside any planning application.

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	within a standard Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) and the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) process. The WBC Ecologist has not advised of any protected species on site at this stage.	
10. Landscape and visual		
10.1 Are there any areas or features on or around the location which are protected for their landscape and scenic value, and/or any non-designated / non-classified areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected by the project?¹ Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).	Yes - Countryside – <i>Local designation</i> - The site is included in the 'Valued Landscape' 'Spencers Wood Southern Ridge' which includes the A2 'Loddon River Valley' and J3 'Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay' Landscape Character Areas. (see updated 'Valued Landscape Topic Paper' 2024 VLTP). Valued Landscape – <i>Local designation</i> - Area of Special Character – The Square (in close proximity)	No The proposed development would be an extension to the Spencers Wood settlement. A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment is required that takes into consideration the key sensitive issues as recognised in the WBLCA and within the Valued Landscape Topic Paper 2024 for 'Spencers Wood Southern Ridge' Valued Landscape. It is expected this to be part of the LVIA, and to also take into consideration the nearby built environment such as 'Area of Special Character' known as 'The Square' Spencers Wood. In EIA terms, the limited size of the site, extent of development and given the site is not within a 'sensitive area', mean that this is not considered to be EIA development. The 'significant likely effect' refers to the development in respect of EIA Regulations only and not in respect of whether there may be harm in Planning terms. As mentioned, an LVIA will be required to support any application to fully assess the impacts in planning terms.

¹ See question 8.1 for consideration of impacts on heritage designations and receptors, including on views to, within and from designated areas.

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10.2 Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people? (If so, from where, what direction, and what distance?)	Yes	The proposal would be visible from the SANG which located to the west of the site. The proposal would have more limited view from Basingstoke Road. Some views of the development may also be seen from SHIN25 which is a Byway. The development will see an intense urban development on a presently open field/ grazing land which will be visible from a number of receptors.	No	It is expected that the design of the development and building heights will be informed by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to assess the impact of the proposed built form on sensitive receptors.
11. Cultural Heritage/ Archaeology				
11.1 Are there any areas or features which are protected for their cultural heritage or archaeological value, or any non-designated / classified areas and/or features of cultural heritage or archaeological importance on or around the location which could be affected by the project (including potential impacts on setting, and views to, from and within)? Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).	Yes	The following heritage assets closest to the site (to the east): - Library, The School House (Grade II Listed) - The Square – Area of Special Character	No	Likely to be able to be managed. From a heritage stance it is considered given the separation distance of the site to the nearest designated heritage and the presence of intervening buildings, that the setting of the designated heritage assets are not likely to be affected by the proposals for the site. However, please take into account the Area of Special Character when preparing the LVIA, as discussed earlier.
12. Transport and Access				
12.1 Are there any routes on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the project?	Yes	The proposed development would put extra vehicle trips on the existing highway network, but WBC Highways have advised that it would unlikely have an impact based on the information at this stage.	No	Likely to be able to be managed through a CEMP which could be secured via planning condition. WBC Highways have advised that a framework version of this plan would need to be submitted in support of any planning application. The assessment of pedestrian and cycle routes to local services would need to be included in the

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				transport assessment and any improvements recommended. A Transport Assessment will also be required under any future planning application.
12.2 Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?	Yes	There is localised congestion in the area around key minor and major junctions.	No	Likely to be able to be managed as WBC Highways do not consider the proposal would have a harmful impact on the wider highway network at this stage.
13. Land use				
13.1 Are there existing land uses or community facilities on or around the location which could be affected by the project? E.g. housing, densely populated areas, industry / commerce, farm/agricultural holdings, forestry, tourism, mining, quarrying, facilities relating to health, education, places of worship, leisure /sports / recreation.	Yes	Surrounding housing, commercial/ retail facilities on Basingstoke Road.	No	Likely could be managed. Pressure (and mitigation, if required) on community facilities would be assessed as part of any future planning application. The proposal's relationship with neighbouring properties will need to be assessed but could be done so under any planning application.
13.2 Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	Not aware at the time of writing	Phase 1 of the development on the wider site is well advanced, if not completed?	No	
14. Land stability and climate				
14.1 Is the location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme /adverse climatic conditions, e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	No		No	

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15. Cumulative effects		
15.1 Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulation of impacts together during the construction/operation phase?	Not aware of any at the time of writing	No
16. Transboundary effects		
16.1 Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects? ²	No	No

² The Regulations require consideration of the transboundary nature of the impact. Due to the England's geographical location the vast majority of TCPA cases are unlikely to result in transboundary impacts.