

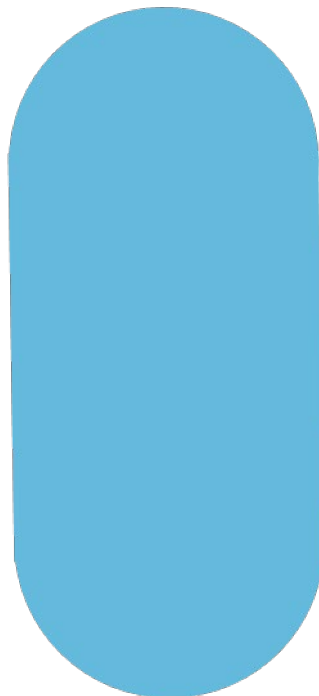


**OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT:
LAND OFF BASINGSTOKE ROAD, SPENCERS WOOD**

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

MARCH 2025



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Richborough is applying for outline planning permission for a residential led mixed-use development at Land off Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood.
- 1.1.2 The Site is located to the south and west of Spencers Wood and is bound by residential development to the north, residential/commercial development and Basingstoke Road (B3349) to the south and west, and agricultural land and a solar farm to the east. The Site adjoins the existing settlement boundary of Spencers Wood and is within walking distance of its existing services and facilities.
- 1.1.3 The Site is formed of an irregular shape of agricultural land that extends to circa 39.26ha. It is comprised of a series of fields, established hedgerow boundaries and a gently undulating terrain. There are no particular features of interest within the site boundary. The Application Site is edged in red on the Site Location Plan at *Appendix 1*.

1.2 The Planning Application

- 1.2.1 The planning application has been submitted to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) as the Local Planning Authority for the area. The proposed description of development for the planning application is as follows:

“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.”
- 1.2.2 In accordance with planning law, the Council must decide the planning application having regard to the development plan first and material considerations. The planning application demonstrates how the proposal relates to the relevant planning policies and sets out why planning permission should be granted.



1.3 Background to EIA

- 1.3.1 EIA feeds into the decision making process. The aim of EIA is to protect the environment by ensuring the likely significant environmental effects of a Proposed Development are considered when planning applications are decided.
- 1.3.2 The requirement for EIA derives from European Union Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by 2014/52/EU), which is enacted into English legislation through the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.
- 1.3.3 The EIA for the proposed development has been carried out in accordance with the Regulations, as amended by The Environmental Assessments and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018.
- 1.3.4 The submitted planning application submission therefore includes an Environmental Statement (ES), which documents the potentially significant environmental effects identified during the EIA process. The topics to be included in the EIA have been discussed with the Council as part of a 'scoping exercise'.

1.4 Purpose of this Document

- 1.4.1 The EIA Regulations require that an ES has three parts, as follows:
- Volume 1 – Main Text
 - Volume 2 – Figures
 - Volume 3 – Technical Appendices
- 1.4.2 The Regulations also require that a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) be produced for the information presented in Volume 1 (Main Text) of the ES.
- 1.4.3 This document fulfils that requirement and aims to summarise the EIA findings in a way that can be easily understood.



2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

2.1 EIA Scoping

2.1.1 The 2017 Regulations include Schedule 1 developments, identifying those developments for which EIA is mandatory. The proposed development does not fall within Schedule 1 and instead falls under Schedule 2. The selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development are set out in Schedule 3 of the Regulations. EIA is required for Schedule 2 developments above certain threshold criteria where it is likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.

2.1.2 Given the scale and nature of the proposed development, it was anticipated that an EIA would be required. As such both a formal EIA Screening Request and an EIA Scoping Request was submitted to the Council on 14th June 2024. This confirmed both the requirement for the EIA and helped determine the extent of issues to be considered in the EIA and reported in the ES. A copy of the Applicant's Screening Request and Scoping Opinion request can be found at Appendix 1.1.

2.1.3 WBC adopted its formal Scoping Opinion on 16th July 2024, a copy of which can be found at Appendix 1.2. The Scoping Opinion confirmed that a focused EIA was appropriate in this instance. The Scoping Opinion has informed the EIA process and the production of this ES.

2.1.4 As a result of the scoping process, the following topics have been included in the EIA. The assessment results are reported in the ES:

- Landscape and Visual
- Human Health Effects arising from location within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ)

2.1.5 The EIA covers both the construction and occupation phases of the Proposed Development for the various topic areas included.

2.2 Assessment Process

2.2.1 Each technical assessment begins by establishing the existing ('baseline')



conditions before assessing the impacts of the Proposed Development.

- 2.2.2 The impact assessment has regard to mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or compensate for potential adverse impacts, or to enhance beneficial impacts, as appropriate.
- 2.2.3 There are various types of mitigation, including that designed into the Proposed Development, informed by technical assessment work. There are also standard construction measures, or measures that can be secured by another method, such as planning conditions or through a legal agreement.
- 2.2.4 The assessments for each topic generally distinguish between short, medium and long-term effects and define these based on the nature of the effect and the receptor. The significance of the effects is typically described in terms of "Substantial", "Moderate", "Minor", or "Negligible".
- 2.2.5 The following terms can also be used to aid the description of a particular effect, and were used in the EIA as appropriate:
- **Beneficial** – positive effects
 - **Adverse** – negative effects
 - Short / Medium / Long Term – length of the effect
 - **Permanent** – effect cannot be reversed
 - **Temporary** – effect can be reversed (e.g., construction impacts)
 - **Direct** – effects that are a direct result of the Proposed Development
 - **Indirect** – effects that may be a 'knock-on' result of direct effects
- 2.2.6 The ES chapters have had regard to other committed developments (allocated sites and planning permissions granted) locally.



3.0 THE SITE AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The Site

- 3.1.1 The Site comprises land off Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood.
- 3.1.2 The Site is located to the south and west of Spencers Wood and is bound by residential development to the north, residential/commercial development and Basingstoke Road (B3349) to the south and west, and agricultural land and a solar farm to the east. The Site adjoins the existing settlement boundary of Spencers Wood and is within walking distance of its existing services and facilities.
- 3.1.3 The Site is formed of an irregular shape of agricultural land that extends to circa 39.26ha. It is comprised of a series of fields, established hedgerow boundaries and a gently undulating terrain. There are no particular features of interest within the site boundary.
- 3.1.4 There are a series of mature trees located throughout the Site, none of which are subject to Tree Protection Orders. Indeed, the Site is not currently designated for its ecological or landscape value and it is well screened by the established hedgerow boundaries.
- 3.1.5 The Site is situated within the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) 5km Linear Mitigation Zone, and the Stanford End Mill and River Loddon Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone.
- 3.1.6 The Site is within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield set by West Berkshire Council. However, the Site is located outside of the Urgent Protection Action Zone (UPAZ) determined by the Burghfield site operator (AWE plc).
- 3.1.7 An Exolum Pipeline, running east to west, is located within and across the northern part of the Site. There are no existing Public Right of Ways (PROW) located within the Site.
- 3.1.8 The site is a sustainable location for residential development with local shops and services within reasonable walking and cycling distance, including two convenience stores, a bakery, public house, restaurant, veterinary clinic, and a



post office. Further local amenities include Lambs Lane Primary School, Oakbank Secondary School, Spencers Wood Library, Spencers Wood Village Hall, Spencers Wood Pavilion and Recreation Ground, and employment opportunities at Lambs Farm Business Park.

- 3.1.9 The Site is well served by further employment and leisure opportunities within its immediate vicinity given its proximity to Shinfield, Wokingham and Reading. Indeed, the Site is located within walking distance of five bus stops, located on both Basingstoke Road and Hyde End Road, offering an approximately hourly service to Shinfield and Reading.

3.2 The Proposed Development

- 3.2.1 The Applicant seeks outline planning permission to establish the principle of residential mixed-use development and the future means of access to the Site at this stage. Accordingly, the EIA has been based on the following assumptions:
- 3.2.2 The proposed development will contribute up to 420 dwellings towards the Council's housing supply to meet the newly established local housing need, up to 40% of which will be affordable homes. The development will provide a range of housing types and sizes, with the exact housing mix to be agreed at the reserved matters stage.
- 3.2.3 The proposed development will provide 1ha of commercial land which can host several small business units and provide further local employment opportunities adjacent to Lambs Farm Business Park for which there is an evidenced need within the area.
- 3.2.4 An 80-bed care home will be included in the proposals to accommodate for a greater range of the local demographic and satisfy a demand for care provision in the Borough.
- 3.2.5 The proposed development includes a new Two-Form Entry primary school, allowing for the expansion and relocation of the existing Lambs Lane Primary School, which is currently operating at capacity and unable to expand. The modern school buildings can be designed with the intention of it operating as a dual-purpose facility, where it will have the capability to be used as a Rest Centre in the event of an incident at AWE (Burghfield). It can also include the permanent storage



of emergency monitoring/mitigation equipment.

- 3.2.6 The proposal includes the provision of a local centre, which can incorporate a GP surgery for Spencers Wood, which is expected to serve as a branch of the existing Swallowfield Medical Practice in the nearby settlement.
- 3.2.7 In addition, the local centre for Spencers Wood is proposed to provide potential community spaces and several small retail units.
- 3.2.8 New sports facilities are also proposed including a potential 3G football pitch, multi-functional open space, informal 'kick about' space and changing facilities.
- 3.2.9 A key aspect of the proposed development is the provision of new areas of public green space. This includes the provision of 8.13ha of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) with a 2.3km circular pedestrian route for recreation. This is an asset which does not currently exist within Spencers Wood. This is supplemented by new tree planting, biodiversity enhancements, structural landscaping and a Sustainable Urban Drainage System.
- 3.2.10 The primary vehicular access will be provided off Basingstoke Road, along with several opportunities for safe pedestrian and cycle routes into and out of the Site to the surrounding residential areas. All access points are designed to ensure the safety of users.
- 3.2.11 Although a reserved matter, all homes will be constructed to meet Building Regulations, the Future Homes Standard, and the DEPZ mitigation design measures indicated in the submitted On-Site Emergency Plan. Sufficient parking space will be provided for all uses, along with appropriate waste collection, and private amenity space.
- 3.2.12 Other detailed matters (including the appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of the Proposed Development) are reserved for the time being and will be agreed as part of future submissions to the Council.
- 3.2.13 The EIA has been based on two parameter plans submitted for approval as part of the outline planning application. These are:
- Land Use Parameter Plan (Drawing Number P23-2449_DE_012-1)



- Building Heights Parameter Plan (Drawing Number P23-2449_DE_015-1)

- 3.2.14 The plans have been informed by the technical surveys undertaken. They detail the land uses within the Site (the proposed residential development, open space and access works) and indicative building heights for the Proposed Development.
- 3.2.15 A Development Framework Plan has also been prepared that shows one way in which the Proposed Development might be delivered (extract below, also see *Appendix 2*). The Development Framework Plan reflects the various constraints and are consistent with the parameter plans.

3.3 Reasonable Alternatives

- 3.3.1 Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations states that an ES should include a description of the reasonable alternatives considered by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics. An indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of environmental effects, should be given.
- 3.3.2 Whilst layout is a reserved matter, the Parameter Plan establishes the broad location of the development parcels, main roads and areas of green space within the Proposed Development.
- 3.3.3 The main alternatives considered have related to proposed uses and the design of the SANG. During this iterative design process, the Development Framework Plan has evolved to include more uses to meet the need for specific uses, such as the proposed GP Surgery.
- 3.3.4 On implementing these additional uses, it has required continuous alterations to the Development Framework Plan insofar as reducing the proposed number of residential dwellings and altering their configuration.
- 3.3.5 Additionally, the discovery of the Exolum Pipeline located across the northern part of the Site and running east to west necessitated amendments to avoid provide appropriate separation between the pipeline and built development.
- 3.3.6 The Development Framework Plan also sought to improve the design of the SANG greenspace proposed following consultation and feedback from Natural England.



The Proposed Development has been amended to include circa 8.13ha of SANG, supplemented by new tree planting, biodiversity enhancements, structural landscaping and a sustainable urban drainage system.

4.0 SUMMARY OF EFFECTS

4.1 Landscape and Visual

- 4.1.1 The ES has considered the effects of the Proposed Development on the landscape character and features of the Site, as well as local and wider landscape character (local, regional, national). Visual impacts have also been assessed, including the views for local residents and visitors, motorists and walkers.
- 4.1.2 Overall, the proposed development would result in limited effects on landscape character and visual amenity, restricted to the site and its immediate environs. The proposed development would be seen in the context of the existing settlement edge of Spencers Wood, with existing development to the north, west and south of the site. The proposed development would not result in the expansion of Spencers Wood into the base of the Loddon valley, or the convergence of settlements.
- 4.1.3 A range of landscape and visual receptors have been assessed and impacts have been identified for both landscape character and for visual receptors. This is part of an iterative process whereby potential impacts have informed the design of the proposed development and the associated landscape strategy. Mitigation has therefore been made integral to the proposed development, including limiting the development envelope to the northern and western parts of the site.
- 4.1.4 The residual impacts identified through this process highlight that the greatest effects would relate to the site and to a very localised area immediately adjacent to the site. The effect on potential receptor groups in the wider landscape context, including users of the wider PRow network, would be generally very limited. Topography, existing development, and the existing tree cover and hedgerows within the site and the surrounding landscape would limit visibility of the proposed development. Boundary vegetation and the proposed extensive new planting would also help to soften the appearance of new built form where it is visible.



4.1.5 Overall, the design of the proposed development, the context provided by the existing settlement edge of Spencers Wood, and the combined screening effects of topography, existing vegetation and built form mean that effects on landscape character and local visual amenity would be very limited in scale. Therefore, on balance, the proposed development is considered acceptable in landscape and visual terms.

4.2 Human Health Effects Arising From Location Within The Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ)

4.2.1 The concern is that a radiation emergency at AWE Burghfield will lead to inhalation radiation dose to any person downwind of the release.

4.2.2 However, the radiation emergency has a very low likelihood and the radiation doses that could be received are in the range considered to be “minor” in UK legislation (REPPIR-19).

4.2.3 The proposed mitigations include supporting the Local Authority Off-Site Emergency Plan through the submitted On-Site Emergency Plan by:

- Placing information posters in public places and buildings;
- Providing landlines in all households;
- Designing community buildings and the care home to support community resilience efforts and to perform better than average as radiation emergency shelters.

4.2.4 The proposed development will also offer to assist the Local Authority through several mitigation measures, including the provision of briefings to the community on the (lack of) risks of living near AWE Burghfield, how to respond to the alert and the potential consequences of the expected range of doses and contamination. This will be supported by offering radiation protection briefings and training to the staff at the proposed GP surgery and care home.

4.2.5 Other measures include the provision of a weather station to give real time information, the provision for the installation and maintenance of two alpha particulate-in-air monitors, a local PA system to ensure that the alert can be



promulgated more effectively, and the maintenance of stocks of PPE, RPE and food that may be useful when providing support to vulnerable people under shelter advice.

- 5.0 The combination of both a low likelihood of event of low consequence, and the protection of the local authority off-site plan means that the impact of AWE Burghfield on the wellbeing of those who live and work in the area will be negligible in effect.

6.0 NEXT STEPS

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 The full Environmental Statement (ES) has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority as part of the outline planning application. The Council will consider it as part of the decision-making process.

6.2 Viewing the Application

- 6.2.1 The outline planning application and the full ES can be viewed electronically via the planning application pages on Wokingham Borough Council's website (<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/>). Comments on the planning application can also be submitted to the Council via this this webpage.

6.3 Copies of the Environmental Statement

- 6.3.1 Copies of the Environmental Statement can be purchased from the Applicant, via:

Marrons

Bridgeway House

Bridgeway

Stratford upon Avon

Warwickshire

CV37 6YX



Tel: 01789 416 416

Email: bodysfarm@marrons.co.uk

- 6.3.2 Hard copies of the full ES can be purchased for £500, or £250 for the Main Statement only. Electronic versions of the full document on CD can be purchased for £25.



APPENDIX 1 – SITE LOCATION PLAN



APPENDIX 2 – PARAMETER PLAN



APPENDIX 3 – DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN