

Agenda Item 20.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
223458	16/08/2023	Sonning	Sonning

Applicant	Sonning Golf Club Ltd, Duffield Road, Sonning RG4 6GJ
Site Address	Land at Sonning Golf Club, Duffield Road, Sonning RG4 6GJ
Proposal	Outline planning permission for the proposed erection of up to 50 no. dwellings with public open space and revised access off Duffield Road, plus associated modifications to Sonning Golf Club including reconfiguration of golf club car parking areas and relocation of the 18th green, addition of a practice putting green, new driving nets, new short game chipping area and conversion of the west wing of the existing clubhouse to accommodate a new golf simulator practice facility, including removal of external staircase and changes to fenestration. (All matters reserved except for access.)
Type	Outline
Officer	Senjuti Manna
Reason for determination by committee	Major application (> 1 hectare)

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 9 August 2023
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place and Growth
RECOMMENDATION	<p>That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:</p> <p>A. Completion of a legal agreement relating to the following head of terms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On-site Affordable Housing, 2. Employment Skills Plan, 3. My Journey Travel Plan contributions, 4. Estate Road Adoptions, 5. Open Space Delivery and Management, 6. Off-site Sports and Recreation Contributions in accordance with TB08 <p>B. Conditions and informatives as set out in Appendix 1 (subject to any additions and updates agreed with the Assistant Director – Place and Growth between the date of the resolution and the issue of the decision).</p> <p>C. Alternative recommendation: That the Planning Committee authorise the Head of Development Management to refuse planning permission in the event of a S106 legal agreement not being completed within three months of the date of the committee resolution (unless a longer period is agreed by officers on</p>

behalf of the Assistant Director – Place and Growth and confirmed in writing by the Local Planning Authority).

SUMMARY

The application relates to Land at Sonning Golf Club, Duffield Road, Sonning and located within designated countryside. The proposal seeks outline permission for up to 50 dwellings, including 20 affordable homes, with public open space and revised access off Duffield Road, plus associated improvements to Sonning Golf Club including reconfigured and extended golf club car parking areas and relocation of the 18th green, addition of an extended practice putting green, new driving nets, new short game chipping area and conversion of the west wing of the existing clubhouse to accommodate a new golf simulator practice facility, including removal of external staircase and changes to fenestration. The application is submitted in outline form with only access to be considered at this stage.

Whilst the site is located outside of the settlement limits of Sonning, and in this regard contrary to CP9 and CP11, it will directly abut the settlement boundary to the north and a permitted housing development for 13 dwellings to the west. As such, the harm arising from policy conflict in terms of location of the development will be limited. The site is physically contained by existing mature vegetation on northern and southern boundaries as well as the extant permission on western side and the proposed parameter plan includes public open space to the east meaning the development will not result in detrimental urban sprawl beyond this site into the open countryside. Whilst the proposal is not in accordance with the spatial strategy and countryside policies of the current development plan, the site is located between the settlement limits of Sonning, which is a limited development location and that of Woodley, a major development location and as such, the development will have access to facilities and services.

Given the location, part of the site has been included for residential allocation in the Revised Growth Strategy for which Regulation 18 consultation was undertaken between November 2021 – January 2022. The Local Plan Update is at an early stage and, at the time of writing, has limited weight in the decision-making process. Additionally, the Inspector for appeal APP/X0360/W/17/3167142 for 13 dwellings on the land adjoining to the west of the current application site commented that when taken as a whole, the site will be reasonably near and be reasonably accessible to local shops, services, employment and facilities by alternative means of transport to the private car. Overall, no objection is raised on the location sustainability grounds.

The quantum of development and the indicative layout are considered appropriate in terms of the nature and grain of development of the surrounding area. The parameter plan indicates the development would be contained within the land parallel to the existing village boundary and remaining land to the east would be used as public open space. Reviewing the development surrounding the site, it is considered that the proposals could easily be accommodated without resulting in any significant harmful impacts to the wider area.

The proposed relocation of the existing access off Duffield Road is considered appropriate and the indicative layout plan suggests that appropriate level of parking can be accommodated within the proposed development. Additional conditions have been included securing details of, inter alia, pedestrian connections including upgrading of existing routes; and construction environment management plan. Subject to these and a legal agreement

securing contributions to My Journey, which is a borough-wide active and sustainable travel campaign, there is no objection to the proposal on highways safety and parking grounds.

The development would provide 40% (20 units) of on-site affordable housing, open space and play area. Additionally, the proposal includes rearrangements of the Golf Club parking areas and changes to the golf course layout to accommodate relocation of the 18th green, and addition of an extended practice putting green. It has been demonstrated that the proposal would not impact the viability of the golf club and is acceptable in this regard.

The proposal would not result in any significant loss of trees and negative impact on biodiversity. Whilst some tree removal is proposed, it is possible to secure enhancement of the existing woodland using appropriate conditions. The proposed development would be set within an attractive landscaped setting, offering a low-density village edge character. Additionally, enhancement of the existing vegetation along the southern boundary will improve the transition between the golf course and the residential development as well as provide adequate buffer between the two different land uses.

The WBC Ecology officer considers that the suitability of the area for foraging bats will not have additional negative impact from the proposed development. The current proposal will not have any additional negative impact on the foraging habitat. Appropriate lighting condition is included to minimise the additional impact on biodiversity. The ecology officer has not raised any concern relating to the impact on biodiversity and considers that a net gain can be achieved on-site. Whilst objections have been received on negative impact on two protected bat species, it is considered that due to the remaining open areas of the golf course, the proposal would not result in any significant habitat loss for foraging bats that will negatively impact on their local population.

The Council currently cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land and in accordance with paragraph 11d(ii), tilted balance will apply. When applying the tilted balance, the limited and localised harm caused by the conflict with development plan in terms of location of development outside any defined settlement limits and associated impact on the character of the area is considered to not significantly and adversely outweigh those identified benefits associated with provision of up to 50 additional dwellings within an accessible location. The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions listed in this report and successful completion of a s106 legal agreement to secure highway contributions, employment skills plan, and affordable housing.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Application Number	Proposal	Decision & Date
31930	Outline application for 36 flats	Refused 23 November 1988
35489	Extensions and alterations to clubhouse to provide 3 flats	Approved 11 April 1990
37383	Outline application for 24 flats to be erected within 2 no. two storey buildings	Refused 01 May 1991; Appeal dismissed 23 September 1991

Planning History for the land to the West of the Application Site
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150098	17 dwellings with highway works, public open space and landscaping (outline with access and layout to be considered)	Refused 13 October 2015
161529	13 dwellings with highway works, public open space and landscaping (outline with access to be considered)	Refused 11 November 2016
W/17/3167142	Appeal against refusal of 161529	Allowed 2 July 2018 following quashing of original decision
190557	Variation of Condition 1 of 161529 to facilitate access works prior to a reserved matters application	Application withdrawn 21 June 2019
191164	Full application for the construction of vehicular access and off-site pedestrian footway improvements (associated with planning reference 161529 and appeal reference APP/X0360/W/17/3167142	Approved 21 June 2019
200951	Application for the approval of reserved matters pursuant to outline planning consent 161529 for the erection of 13 dwellings with associated highway works, public open space and landscaping. Details of Layout, Appearance, Landscaping and Scale to be determined.	Approved 16 December 2020
214173	Full application for the proposed development of a specialist dementia residential care home (Use Class C2) with the creation of new pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access, plus landscaping and associated works.	Refused 30 June 2022
223732	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for commencement of reserved matters 200951 before the expiry date.	Approved 07 February 2023

DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION	
RESIDENTIAL	
Proposed units	50
Proposed density - dwellings/hectare	15.6 dph
Number of affordable units proposed	20 (40%)
Previous land use	Recreational open space (golf course)
Existing parking spaces	N/A
Proposed parking spaces	94 (including visitors)
GOLF CLUB	
Proposed units	N/A
Proposed density - dwellings/hectare	N/A
Number of affordable units proposed	N/A
Existing parking spaces	158
Proposed parking spaces	146
CONSTRAINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated Countryside • Groundwater Consultation Zone

- Groundwater Nitrate Vulnerable Zone
- Risk of Flooding from Surface Water
- Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
- Tree Preservation Order 1912-2022 (Woodland TPO on trees of all species located on the northern boundary)
- Landscape Character Assessment Area J4: Woodley – Earley Settled and Farmed Clay
- SSSI Impact Risk Zone
- Within the Setting of Grade 2 Listed Keepers Cottage
- LPU Submitted Site (Part of the Site is included for Housing Allocation in LPU; site identification 5SO008).
- Mineral Site Consultation Area
- Replacement Minerals Local Plan
- Radon Affected Area

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

INTERNAL

WBC Property Services	No comments received
WBC Sports Development	No comments received
WBC Environmental Health	No objections subject to conditions.
WBC Drainage	No objections subject to conditions
WBC Highways	No objections subject to condition and legal agreement securing highways contributions.
WBC Planning Policy	No objections
WBC Community Infrastructure (Affordable Housing)	No objection subject to legal agreement securing 40% affordable housing.
WBC Green Infrastructure	The development will have to provide on-site and off-site public open space in line with policy TB08.
WBC Landscape and Trees	No objections subject to conditions.
WBC Ecology	No objections subject to conditions.
WBC Health and Wellbeing	No comments received
WBC Ecology Newts	No objections
WBC Education (School Place Planning)	No comments received
WBC Cleaner and Greener	No comments received

EXTERNAL

National Grid	No comments received
Natural England	No objections
Southern Gas Networks	No objections
SSE Power Distribution	No objections
Thames Water Utilities Ltd	No objections based on foul water sewerage network infrastructure capacity. There is capacity within the current water network to serve additional dwellings, but additional off-

Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust	site water infrastructure will have to be delivered by the developer.
Crime Prevention Design Advisor Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue	The applicant has commented that surface water runoff will not be discharged to the public network. This is acceptable.
NHS Wokingham CCG Berkshire Archaeology Sports England	Objected to the application on lack of bird surveys; lack of BNG evidence.
	No comments received
	The proposals should comply with B5 of ADB Volume 1 2019.
	No comments received
	No objections subject to condition
	The site is considered not to constitute playing field, or land last used as playing field, as defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (Statutory Instrument 2015 No. 595). However, a Ball Strike Assessment should be carried out to ensure the development and users outside the golf course is not subject to damage and injury which in turn could prejudice the use of the golf course.

REPRESENTATIONS

Town/Parish Council:

Sonning Parish Council:

Objected to the proposal on following grounds:

Principle of Development:

- The site is located within countryside outside of Sonning’s settlement limits and the proposal will be contrary to Policy CP11 of the current development plan.
- Proposal includes larger area than the proposed LPU allocation and has more dwellings than suggested 24. The proposal would extend beyond the current village boundary. This will threaten the essential function of the green gap and wedges, which maintain the physical and visual separation of settlements that are close together, contrary to Sonning Village Design Statement.
- The proposal will negatively impact the separation between settlements.
- Building an additional 50 dwellings will add significantly to the increasing number of new dwellings in this part of Sonning. Recent planning permissions include 57 flats off Old Bath Road, 13 dwellings on part of Sonning Golf Club and there are a further 25 dwellings proposed at Sonning Farm. Adding another 50 dwelling will bring the total to 145 in this part of Sonning and will increase the pressure on already oversubscribed facilities in surrounding areas, such as oversubscribed medical facilities, local schools and infrastructure. The proposal is therefore contrary to CP9.
- In the Core Strategy it is stated that a total of 100 new dwellings are expected to be built out of a total of 13,280 over the period of 2006-2026, in all the limited Development Areas, which includes Sonning. 50 of the 100 dwellings were expected

to be built in the period 2021-2026 and that 'Limited Development Areas should not generally exceed 25 dwellings.' There is an existing permission for 13 dwellings on the Golf Club, which are about to be built, and an existing permission for 57 flats in Old Bath Road. Sonning has already seen accelerated housing growth and the current proposal cannot be justified.

Character of the area:

- The proposal will result in large intrusion into the countryside.
- The proposal is not in keeping with the surrounding area which is characterised by large, detached dwellings in large spacious grounds.

Public Open Space:

- How can the permission stop the developer from build more houses on the area identified as public open space?

(Officer's note: The application is determined based on submitted information. The application is submitted in outline form with only access to be considered, which means the layout is a matter reserved for later approval).

- Sports facilities, particularly open-air facilities, are important for the health and wellbeing of communities. This application proposes to develop existing open-air facilities for housing and to replace them with 3 indoor simulators and a few practice nets, which are not of similar or improved quality.

Highways:

- The highways plans rely heavily on the implementation of revisions to the road layout not in their ownership or under their control.

(Officer's note: It is possible secure off-site highways works by s278 legal agreement).

- The proposed access is substandard and insufficient to allow an unhindered exit from the dwellings and Golf Club car park at peak times.
- The travel plan illustrates the site is not well served by bus routes, especially to Maidenhead.
- The access to two schools from the site is along a dangerous part of Duffield Road with no pedestrian footpath.
- Duffield Road joins Pound Lane on a bend with reduced visibility and at a point shortly before traffic emerges from West Drive. The current proposal will create traffic chaos at this location.

Locational Sustainability:

- There is no good bus service in this area.

Ecology:

- The Ecological Assessment has identified the Golf Club as an exceptionally important habitat corridor for nationally rare Barbastelle Bats. Additional survey efforts will be required to ensure that the protected species are not harmfully impacted.
- The presence of Serotine Bats and unidentified Myotis Bats is also of great significance.
- This part of the Golf Club plays a major role in preserving these rare bats. The application has failed to demonstrate acceptable impact on these species.

- The ecology report does not cover all aspects of breeding birds or other mammals. This is contrary to local knowledge which shows that large numbers of deer are frequently seen within the site.
- The ecology assessment failed to identify all ponds in the surrounding area.

Trees and Landscape:

- The proposal will result in residential development being extended close to the line of trees near the northern boundary. Several trees will be removed as part of the proposal.

Other:

- There are objections from Golf Club member and the Parish fully supports these objections.

Woodley Town Council:

Objected to the proposal on following grounds:

- The proposal is likely to increase traffic flow on Duffield Road, increasing congestion and causing highway issues in this area.
- The site is not a sustainable location and the future residents will be heavily dependent on private cars to access facilities and services.

Local Members:

Cllr Michael Firmager

Objected to the proposal on following grounds:

- The proposal would result in overdevelopment of an already congested area. This area has permission for 13 houses and 57 flats with a potential large care home. Cumulatively, these developments will change the character of this section of Sonning.
- The proposal would result in coalescence of Sonning and Charvil.
- The loss of leisure provision is unacceptable.
- The proposal is out of character with the village of Sonning.
- The new access onto Duffield Road would add to the traffic along Pound Lane, which is on a dangerous bend.
- At one end of Duffield Road there are traffic lights controlling traffic over the single lane railway bridge and this would add to traffic congestion.
- The site is located far away from local facilities and services and there are infrequent bus links.

Rt Honourable Mrs Theresa May, MP

Objected both as the local MP as well as a local resident on following grounds:

- The development would have a detrimental impact on the character of the area. The golf course is situated in open countryside which also helps in maintaining buffer between settlements.

- The proposal would increase the number of residents in Sonning by 17% and coupled with other developments in this area, Sonning population will grow by 25%. Such an increase in population will place pressure on GPs, local amenities and transport network.
- There are limited public transport alternatives from this area.
- Traffic at peak times would be disproportionately impacted due to additional trips from this site.
- The significant increase in the number of vehicles accessing the local roads would raise concerns relating to road safety. Pound Lane has a limited sight line at its junction with Mustard Lane. Increasing the number of vehicles entering Pound Lane from Duffield Road would add to the pressure.
- The ecological surveys submitted with the application lack adequate and complete information, specifically in the case of rare bats, lack of sufficient surveying of reptile presence on the site and absence of any breeding bird survey data.
- Golf courses are very valuable for biodiversity and in this particular case, rare species such as the Hobby, Red Kite, Buzzard, Barn Owl and the now very rare, lesser spotted Woodpecker have all bred, or at the very least foraged, on Sonning Golf Course. The proposal will have negative impact on these species by reducing the foraging habitat.
- The ecological surveys despite determining the presence of Barbastelle bats, had not successfully ascertained the status of this species. As such, further surveys are needed to determine the status, and any potential risk, development on this site may cause prior to the determination of the application.
- The presence of Serotine Bats, Barbastelle and unidentified Myotis bats not previously known from Sonning is of great significance and again highlights the importance of the protection of parts of the golf course as a crucial corridor of habitat connectivity through the Berkshire landscape.
- The original surveys were conducted during extreme heat which raises questions about their validity. The absence of reptiles during the time of investigation does not provide reliable evidence for reptiles not using the site for habitat.
- It is palpable from previous records that Adder, Grass Snake and Slow Worm are all present in and around the Sonning Railway cutting area and highly likely that they are present on Sonning Golf Course.
- Pound Lane experiences regular flooding when it rains. The proposed development would made the flooding situation worse.

Neighbours:

Representations have been received from 66 properties, as listed below.

27 Winchcombe Road RG10 0AS; 9 Copse Mead RG5 4RP; 16 Copse Mead, RG5 4RP; 18c Copse Mead RG5 4RP; 20 Copse Mead RG5 4RP; 26 Copse Mead RG5 4RP; 38 Copse Mead RG5 4RP; 8 Highcliffe Close, RG5 4RE; 10 Highcliffe Close RG5 4RE; 12 Highcliffe Close RG5 4RE; 14 Highcliffe Close RG5 4RE; 15 Highcliffe Close RG5 4RE; Little Shire, Mustard Lane RG4 6GH; Peppers, Mustard Lane RG4 6GH; Chestnut House, Mustard Lane RG4 6GH; Sonning and Sonning Eye Society; Steering Group for the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan; 54 Butts Hill Road RG5 4NH; 6 Gingells Farm Road RG10 9DJ; 1 Vulcan Close RG5 4XB; 26 Pound Lane RG4 6XE; 42 Pound Lane RG4 6GG; 44 Pound Lane RG4 6GG; 101 Pound Lane RG4 6GG; 10 Sonning Meadows RG4 6XB; 28 Sonning

Meadows RG4 6XB; 10 Broad Hinton RG10 0LQ; 2 West Drive RG4 6GD; 30 West Drive RG4 6GD; 6 Duffield Road RG5 4RN; 131b Nine Mile Ride ; 2 Garde Road RG4 6XJ; 52 Hazel Road RG8 8HR; 28 Colemansmoor Lane RG5 4BT; 31 Strathmore Drive RG10 9QT; 10 Glebe Lane RG4 6XH; 28 Glebe Lane RG4 6XH; 32 Glebe Lane RG4 6XH; Masters, Thames Street RG4 6UR; 3 Old Well Court, Thames Street RG4 6UR; Appletree, Thames Street RG4 6UR; Appletree Cottage RG10 0DH; 58 Pitts Lane RG6 1BU; 3 Sonning Gate RG4 6GQ; 4 Sonning Gate RG4 6GQ; 5 Sonning Gate RG4 6GQ; 4 Warren Road RG5 3AP; 5 Augu Charvil Lane RG4 6AF; The Old Chapel, High Street RG4 6UP; 57 St Patrick's Avenue RG10 9RA; Loudoun House Sonning Lane RG4 6SX; 97 The Hawthorns RG10 9TT; 102 The Hawthorns RG10 9TS; 1 Reeds Avenue RG6 5SP; 16 Martins Drive RG4 1NY; 42 Howard Road, RG4 2BX; 6 Newbury Close RG10 9RT; 42 Wyndham Crescent RG5 3AZ; 15 Harrison Close RG10 0LL; 7 Little Glebe RG4 6XL; The White Lodge, High Street RG4 6UP; 38 Old Bath Road RG10 9QR; 4 Segrave Close RG4 6BB; 56 Shackleton Way RG5 4UT; 9 Holmemoor Drive RG4 6TE; 49 Arundel Road RG5 4JR.

All representations received were objecting to the proposal on following grounds:

Principle of Development:

- This area is part of important Countryside/Open space provision and part of a buffer zone between Sonning and Charvil and should not be built over.
- The proposal is contrary to multiple policies such as CP1, CP3, CP9, CP11, CC01 and CC02 relating to the location of the development.
- The proposal is contrary to policy TB08 which states that land such as this should not be built upon unless it is surplus to requirements. The current practice ground is not surplus to requirements. It's well used by many members and by the teaching staff.
- The policy also says the facility removed should be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality. The replacement of a large (5+ acre) physical practice ground catering for 8+ players at a time by 3 indoor simulators and some practice nets is not equivalent or better.
- Whilst the agent is arguing that the current proposal is similar to the development at Bridge Farm that was recently approved by planning committee. It is to be noted that the principal difference between these two schemes is the current site is in sports and recreational use, unlike the Bridge Farm site, which was an idle farmland. The proposal will severely erode and undermine an existing sporting facility.
- The lack of 5 years housing land supply has already been used to justify several recent applications. This cannot be used to justify further urbanisation of green space by developers.

Character of the area:

- The proposed density is not in keeping with the character of the surrounding area. A high-density development in Sonning would be totally out of character and detrimental to the enjoyment of the village by its residents.
- The proposal would result in urbanisation of the countryside location.
- The proposal would detrimentally impact the existing street scene and public visual amenity from Duffield Road.
- This proposal along with 13 dwellings that have already been permitted on the adjoining land will significantly increase the population of Sonning – possibly by up to 25%.
- The proposal is an excessive development in countryside resulting in loss of valuable green space and amenity area.

Neighbour impact:

- The proposal will result in an increase in noise and light pollution in the area due to increased traffic.
- The proposal would result in overbearing impact on neighbouring properties.

Ecology:

- The proposal does not provide adequate mitigation for foraging and commuting of barbastelle bat.
- The proposal will result in loss of several trees directly impacting and destroying habitat of the bats.
- It is not clear how impact on Great Crested Newts was assessed. The ecology report states the Golf Course does not have any water features. However, on satellite imagery there are a network of ditches present connected to the wider landscape of the Loddon Valley gravel pits and rivers. This has not been covered by the ecology report.
- The ecological report submitted with the application do not provide adequate information on impact on reptiles.
- The surveys were carried out during extreme heat. As such, these surveys cannot be relied upon.
- The proposal will not result in biodiversity net gain.
- The ecological assessment report is inadequate and includes incomplete survey information.
- The report also to mention Ali's Pond Local Nature Reserve which is a protected site only 1km to the NW of the golf club. This calls into question the thoroughness of the report itself.

Trees and Landscape:

- Approximately 20 large trees will be removed to accommodate the proposed development. This will be contrary to the government initiative to tackle climate change.

Highways:

- Access and egress via Duffield Road is unsuitable and dangerous for the proposed volume of houses.
- Additional traffic from this development will have a significant impact on the surrounding roads and main thoroughfares.
- The junctions between Duffield Road and Pound Lane as well as Pound Lane and Mustard Lane are accident prone areas. Traffic from the proposed development will create additional safety concerns.
- There is no traffic plan submitted with the application.
- An appeal to the Secretary of State has been made regarding the building of a care home on the site originally approved for 13 dwellings. If allowed, the cumulative traffic from the current development and the care home would result in dangerous road safety issues.
- A4 Bath Road is already a busy road and traffic through Sonning is getting worse. The existing road infrastructure will have to be improved before any additional housing is permitted in this area.
- Duffield Road is a narrow road with no pavement, used by school children and commuter during busy hours. The proposed access/ egress will be between the

junction with Pound Lane and single file traffic across the railway bridge. It will cause highway safety issues.

- This additional traffic when travelling north will go through Sonning via the single-carriageway bridge with traffic lights, further adding to the chronic congestion in the village.
- A safe crossing facility near the junction between Duffield Road and Pound Lane should be provided.
- There is no adequate street lighting in this area.
- The existing parking at golf course is very tight on big event days. There is no spill over parking available anywhere near.
- The golf course car park can frequently be found to be fully occupied - perhaps even more so in winter when the golfing day is significantly compressed through shortage of daylight hours. The parking utilisation survey has failed to report this. A loss of 12 spaces will cause additional on street parking demand.

Locational sustainability:

- The area lacks appropriate services including GP surgeries and educational facilities. The proposal would add more pressure to the already struggling limited infrastructure.
- There is very limited public transport available in the area. The future residents will be overly reliant on private car for everyday travel.
- It is questionable whether the existing electricity supply will cope with additional 50 electric vehicle charging points and 50 heat pumps.

Flooding:

- There is long standing flooding issue between Pound Lane and A4. This needs to be addressed prior to allowing more dwellings in this area.
- The proposal includes drainage of surface water runoff through soakaways leading to potential contamination of existing aquifer under the golf course.

Loss of Sporting Facilities:

- Sonning Golf Course is a heritage course which is over 100 years old and designed by Harry Colt. This is a positive feature of the local area. The proposal would have a negative impact on its status and attractiveness.
- The proposal would result in loss of practice area in the golf club and there is no satisfactory alternative suggested in the application.
- The practice area is in active and sustained use. The proposed removal of a full practice ground/range represents a retrograde step that neither practice nets nor simulators can effectively replace.
- A golf course with no outdoor teaching or practice facility is not considered a proper golf course.
- A driving bay/simulator does not give the correct feedback that are required when correcting a player's game. Driving bays are for a warmup only they are useless for anything else.
- Sonning Golf Club is the only club in the area for some distance. The proposed changes could make the club less attractive for membership and potentially undermine the club's long-term future.
- There are several other golf clubs in the neighbouring area that have been closed due to development pressure.

- The planning statement inaccurately describes the indoor simulator to be the most effective teaching environment. There is no evidence presented to support this statement.
- The driving range is popular amongst frail members who cannot use the full facilities.
- The proposal as a whole represents a permanently damaging reduction in sporting facilities.
- The proposal extends beyond the boundaries of the driving range and onto the 18th hole, causing a complete redesign/ shortening of the 18th hole. The 18th hole is in constant use and the proposals will negatively impact its use.

Community Engagement:

- Documents submitted under statement of community engagement are misleading and do not represent the true sentiments of the golf club members. There was no meaningful communication or consultation with club members in a reasonable timescale and any suggestion from the planning agent that this took place should be rejected.

Environmental Health:

- Air quality levels are under acceptable European standards already. Adding 50 more houses with associated vehicular traffic will worsen the situation further.
- Thames Water already have a track record of sewage spills/ deliberate dumps into River Thames. Adding 50 plus houses will further strain local sewage and waste water processing systems.

Archaeology:

- The area has archaeological potential.

Officer's note:

All representations received have been given due consideration in the assessment of the proposal – see the Planning Issues section below.

PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework
National Design Guide
National Planning Practice Guidance

Core Strategy (CS)

- CP1 – Sustainable Development
- CP2 – Inclusive Communities
- CP3 – General Principles for Development
- CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements
- CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability
- CP6 – Managing Travel Demand
- CP7 – Biodiversity
- CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits (Inc Countryside)
- CP17 – Housing Delivery

MDD Local Plan (MDD)

CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC02 – Development Limits
CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction
CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks
CC06 – Noise
CC07 – Parking
CC08 – Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure
CC09 – Development and Flood Risk
CC10 – Sustainable Drainage
TB05 – Housing Mix
TB07 – Internal Space Standards
TB08 – Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards
TB12 – Employment Skills Plan
TB21 – Landscape Character
TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
TB25 – Archaeology

Other

Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
CIL Guidance
Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document
Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan

PLANNING ISSUES

Application site and surroundings:

1. The application site adjoins the settlement boundaries of Sonning and extends approximately 4.9 hectares of which approximately 3.2 hectares is proposed for residential development. The proposed residential development site is currently used as Driving Range in association with the golf club and includes associated amenity grassland and sand bunkers. Group of mature trees and shrubs that are protected by a woodland TPO occupy the northern boundary which also marks the current edge of settlement. Beyond the belt of trees is the existing residential neighbourhood of Pound Lane and Old Bath Road comprising of detached properties situated within large plots. The Sonning Gardens Care Home marks the eastern edge of the existing settlement, beyond which lies the Rams Rugby Club. Residential properties Red Lodge and The Range, that are located along the current application site's northern boundary, combined with a third property on Old Bath Road, The Lawns, benefit from an extant permission for 57 retirement apartments (220663). The A4 Bath Road lies further north of the site.
2. The western boundary of the site borders the development land with extant permission for 13 dwellings (planning reference 161529, allowed by appeal APP/X0360/W/17/3167142). To the south and beyond the golf club site is the Reading to London Paddington railway line and its associated cutting and beyond this lies the edge of the built-up area which defines the current boundary of the Major Development Location of Woodley. The site sits in between the development limits of Sonning and Woodley within designated countryside.
3. The east of the site borders the main golf course beyond which lies the village boundary of Charvil. There is currently no vehicular access into the site beyond the golf club's member parking area, which is accessed from Duffield Road. It is proposed to modify this access for the proposed development and rearrange the golf club parking facilities. Open views into the site are limited from both Duffield Road and Pound Lane due to the presence of boundary vegetation and the Club House building which screen the site from public viewpoints. Other groups of broadleaved woodland are located within the site. The remaining application red line area includes the existing club house and associated members and visitors parking areas of the Golf Club.

Development Proposals:

4. The application proposals are for the development of the site to provide up to 50 (20 affordable) dwellings and associated open space with a revised access from Duffield Road. The proposal also includes the associated modifications to the Sonning Golf Club including reconfiguration of the parking areas, relocation of the 18th green, additional putting green, new driving nets, new short game chipping area and conversion of the west wing of the existing clubhouse to accommodate a new golf simulator practice facility, including removal of external staircase and changes to fenestration.
5. The application is submitted in the outline form with only access to be considered at this stage. Matters relating to the detailed design, appearance, layout and landscaping would be reserved for future consideration under a reserved matters

application. Notwithstanding, an illustrative master plan has been submitted with the application to show how development would be accommodated within the site, alongside a parameter plan to inform any future reserved matters application. These indicate that the proposed dwellings forming the development would be located on the west and north sides of the site, leaving the eastern side of the site adjacent to the rugby club and remaining section of the golf course to be provided as an area of public open space. The access into the residential area is proposed along the southern side of the residential area to act as a physical separation between the repositioned 18th green and other parts of the golf course and residential use. This is discussed in more detail later in the report.

Principle of Development:

6. The starting point for decision making is the development plan. Section 70[2] of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 & 38[6] of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case, the Development Plan consists of Core Strategy 2010; MDD Local Plan 2014; and Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Joint Plan) (2023) which are read alongside the NPPF. The MDD Local Plan policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Local Policy Context:

7. Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy and CC02 of the MDD Local Plan states that proposals will be permitted within development limits where the scale of the application reflects the facilities and services within the settlement. The development plan steers most developments to sustainable Major settlements with the best services, facilities and infrastructure. The definition of development limits recognises the consistent approach in planning to identify appropriate and sustainable areas for development. The proposal will be contrary to these policies as it will be located within designated countryside outside of any settlement limits.
8. The site is located outside of any defined settlement limits within designated countryside and Core Strategy policy CP11 is applicable in this instance. Policy CP11 is a restrictive policy designed to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. Policy CP11 states that proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except:
 - 1) *It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and*
 - 2) *It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and*
 - 3) *It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or*
 - 4) *In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;*

- 5) *In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:*
- i) *Bring about environmental improvements; or*
 - ii) *Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.*
- 6) *Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;*
- 7) *Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.*

9. Part of the proposal is for the erection of up to 50 additional dwellings (20 affordable) which does not fall into any of the exceptions identified in policy CP11 and the proposal would fail to comply with this development plan policy. Notwithstanding, whilst the site is not within the settlement limits, it adjoins the settlement boundary of Sonning to the north and is located within accessible distance to the Major development location of Woodley. Consequently, the location is such that in this instance, permitting development on a site beyond the existing settlement boundary is considered to not undermine the Council’s strategic objectives in relation to planned growth in the area.

Emerging Local Plan Update:

10. The Council is currently preparing a Local Plan Update (LPU) and part of the application site was put forward in the ‘call for sites’ within the early stages of the LPU process. Between November 2021 – January 2022, consultation was undertaken on the Local Plan Update: Revised Growth Strategy. The Policy H2 of the Draft Plan proposed to allocate the Land at Sonning Golf Club (beyond the consented appeal scheme for 13 dwellings, part of the current application site), for housing for up to 24 dwellings (Site references: 5SO008, see Figure 1). The proposed density of development, as considered under draft policy H2 is 15 dwellings per hectare. However, the supporting text to draft policy H2 advises that *“The stated capacities are approximate since there will be a need to take into account further detailed evidence on constraints, design considerations and the need to ensure the most efficient use of land, at the planning application stage. It is likely that a number of the proposed allocations are capable of delivering a larger number of dwellings than shown, depending on the design and layout of development and detailed consideration of impacts”*.

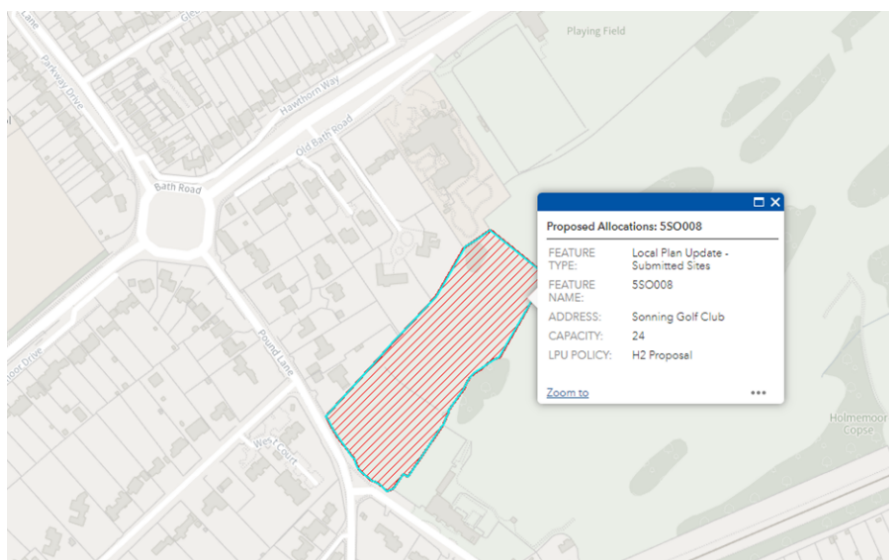


Figure 1: Allocation of site for housing under LPU draft policy H2.

11. The LPU is at a fairly early stage of preparation and at the time of writing remains to have limited weight in the decision-making process and as such, the planning status of the site at present remains unallocated. Notwithstanding, any site assessment as part of LPU is a useful 'early indicator' as to the sites appropriateness for development.

National Planning Policy Framework:

12. The NPPF is a material consideration in the decision-making process. The NPPF outlines the Government's planning policy on a national level and highlights sustainable development as the centre of the decision-making process incorporating economic, social and environmental objectives. These three objectives seek to balance growth and local community needs against the protection of the natural, built and historic environment. It does not however change the status of the development plan as the starting point in the decision-making.

Lack of 5 Years Housing Land Supply and Tilted Balance:

13. The Council cannot currently demonstrate a deliverable five-year housing land supply in respect of its housing targets as required by the NPPF. The Council's most recent published full assessment of the housing land supply position is the 'WBC Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement at 31st March 2022' which concluded a demonstrable deliverable housing land supply of 3.95 years, excluding any consideration of past over delivery. However, it is a matter of fact that housing completions within Wokingham Borough have significantly exceeded all assessments of housing need. The strong performance on housing delivery is a material factor that should be considered alongside the technical shortfall in deliverable housing land supply.
14. In terms of how this affects the consideration of the application proposals, paragraph 11 of the NPPF advises that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and continues by explaining that *for decision taking this means:*
 - c) *approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
 - d) *where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
 - i) *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - ii) *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*
15. Therefore, in respect of Local Plan policies which are relevant to establishing the acceptability of the principle of development on the application site, Core Strategy policies CP9, CP11 and MDD Policy CC02 are considered to be the most important.

However, given that WBC does not currently have a five-year housing land supply, these policies are considered to be out of date in the context of the NPPF and the tilted balance of paragraph 11 (d) referenced above is therefore engaged.

16. In acknowledging the requirements of paragraph 11(d) ii) and the titled balance being engaged, it is necessary to consider the underlying reasons for the shortfall in deliverable sites in order to understand whether there are any circumstances which affect the degree to which the tilted balance is engaged. In a recent appeal decision at Land East of Lodge Road, Hurst for 200 houses (Application ref: 220458, Appeal ref APP/X0360/W/22/3309202), the inspector commented that,

“In view of these points, and even though the Council is currently unable to demonstrate a deliverable 5-year HLS, falling short by some 863 dwellings, I do not consider it reasonable to ignore the bigger picture, which is that there is a very strong likelihood that the Council will achieve a significant oversupply of dwelling completions over the whole CS period. To my mind this does not signify a Council that is failing in terms of housing provision, but rather one which is performing well and managing to boost the supply of housing over that which it planned for.”

[...]

“Turning to consider the CS’s spatial vision, I see nothing in the evidence placed before me to indicate that the Council’s chosen method of distributing new housing throughout the Borough has prevented it from achieving satisfactory housing delivery to date.”

17. Taking the Inspector’s conclusions into consideration, it would indicate that whilst the tilted balance is engaged, this tilt is tempered due to past over delivery. It is however relevant that the Lodge Road Inspector gave substantial weight to the provision of open market and affordable housing.
18. Having established the tilted balance is ‘tempered’, Paragraph 11d(ii) requires the proposal to be considered against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole and the three pillars of sustainable development. These will inform the planning balance exercise carried out at the end of this report.

Character of the area:

19. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high-quality design. R1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area. This includes the way development integrates with its surroundings and the use of appropriate landscaping.
20. This requirement is amplified by MDD Policies CC03 - *Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping* and TB21 - *Landscape Character*, which require proposals to demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council’s Landscape Character Assessment and respond positively to the local landscape context, retaining or enhancing features that contribute to the landscape including

topography, natural features – hedgerows, trees, watercourses etc. - heritage assets, settlement patterns and the network of routes. The Government's *National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places* released in 2019 is also relevant.

21. Whilst the proposals are in outline form with only access to be considered at this stage, an illustrative master plan along with proposed development parameters have been submitted with the application. The proposed access into the site would be off Duffield Road by amending the existing access into the Golf Club's north-western members' car park. The car park will be reconfigured to become visitors' car park and members' parking will be provided at the reconfigured south-eastern car park.
22. Within the site, the illustrative layout indicates a mix of dwelling types and patterns with residential density being maximum at the western side and gradually diminishing towards the eastern end where the main public open space for the development is proposed. The overall residential density would be 15.6 dph, which is similar to the density of 15 dph, as considered in the LPU allocation and no objection is raised. Whilst a higher density is proposed near the western side of the site, more dwellings will be provided within apartment blocks and the higher density will not have any detrimental impact on the general character of the area.
23. The public open space responds to the open nature of the area closer to north-eastern side of the site including the remaining golf course and open playing fields of the rugby club. The illustrative layout also indicate that it is possible to create pedestrian linkages from the site to A4 Bath Road through the consented apartment scheme and rugby club. Whilst this cannot be confirmed at this moment since this would require working with other developers, it is a possibility and is considered a positive feature of the proposed layout.
24. There are other extant permissions on lands surrounding the site and as such, this has influenced the illustrative locations of the dwellings. Surrounding plots include extant permission for 57 retirement apartments on the site bordering the northern boundary. These apartments will be contained in three large three-storey blocks. Consequently, the proposal includes three blocks of apartments in 2.5 storey buildings closer to the northern boundary to respond to the 3 consented blocks. Additionally, the indicative master plan shows back-to-back relationship will be achieved with the consented 13 dwelling scheme which adjoins the western boundary. Moreover, taller buildings such as the apartments blocks are located closer to the western end of the site, which being closer to the settlement boundary can accommodate higher development density and taller buildings.
25. The main access road into the residential area is shown closer to the southern boundary with the Golf Course's relocated 18th green. The road along with existing group of mature woodland trees will provide buffer between the different use areas and will mitigate the risk arising from ball striking by users of the golf club. Additionally, the road will offer protection from encroachment into the root protection area (RPA) of tree line buffer. Providing a suitable buffer between the built form and the boundaries allows space for the provision of an attractive soft edge to the development which is considered appropriate in this location.

26. Dwellings will front onto the main road that would address and provide active frontages to the streets. The only exception being the dwellings closer to the northern boundary where the dwellings will be oriented away from the mature TPO trees. Consideration regarding the relationship between the rear gardens of the proposed dwellings and the trees which line the northern boundary will need to be given at the reserved matter stage, to ensure that the RPAs of these would be protected, Condition is included to secure details of tree protection measures before and during the construction process.
27. The illustrative layout demonstrates possible internal linkage between the smaller public open space in front of the apartment blocks and the main public open space to the east – thus creating a well-connected public realm. Whilst a response from the Crime Prevention Design Advisor has not been received on this application, it is considered that the proposed layout provides natural surveillance over public realm by introducing active frontage. Back-to-back garden will protect private amenity areas. Notwithstanding, the application is in outline form and sighting and layout details will be further considered at the reserved matters stage.
28. Whilst no illustrative Storey Heights Plan has been provided with the application, it is indicated that the site would predominantly provide 2 storey dwellings, with some 2 ½ storey buildings at few locations. The dwellings facing the main access road will have two storey height with taller buildings such as the apartments blocks and other 3-bedroom houses located closer to the settlement boundary. At the reserved matter stage, careful consideration would need to be paid to the scale and bulk of the buildings that will come forward on the site, particularly where these would be highly visible from views within the golf course. Due regard will need to be paid to the prevailing urban form and character of the wider area.
29. Whilst the detailed design of the proposed dwellings would form part of the subsequent reserved matters application, the parameter plan demonstrates appropriate relationship can be achieved with the surrounding area. Finer design details including proposed materials and fenestration details will be finalised at the reserved matter stage.

Affordable Housing, Dwelling Mix and Standard of Accommodation:

30. MDD policy TB05 (Housing Mix) requires that residential development should provide an appropriate density and mix of accommodation reflecting the character of the area, assessed on a site-by-site basis and reflecting the Council's Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing SPD. The MDD LP and Affordable Housing SPD suggest a guide mix, to be considered in conjunction with the latest information from the Housing Register. Core Strategy Policy CP5 requires that development outside the SDLs should secure 40% affordable housing. In this instance, the 40% affordable housing policy requirement would be wholly met on-site. This is considered to be a significant benefit of the proposals that should be afforded great weight in the planning balance.
31. A written Ministerial Statement published on 24 May 2021 introduced 'First Homes', which is a form of discounted market sale housing, and is considered to meet the definition of 'affordable housing' for planning purposes. These 'First Homes' are the government's preferred discounted market tenure and should account for at least

25% of all affordable housing units. As such, and in line with advice provided from WBC Housing officers, the proposed tenure mix for the affordable dwellings on the site would therefore be as follows:

	Social Rent	First Homes	Shared Ownership	Total
Mix (quantum)	14	5	1	20
Mix (%)	70%	25%	5%	100%

Figure 2: The proposed tenure mix of affordable units

32. The indicative schedule of accommodation suggests following affordable housing mix:

25% 1-bedroom flats – 5 units
 50% 2-bedroom flats – 10 units
 15% 3-bedroom houses – 3 units
 10% 4-bedroom houses – 2 units

33. In terms of market housing, the Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) (2020), which formed part of Council's evidence base for the emerging Local Plan Update, provides the most up-to-date information/guidance on market housing mix. Figure 3 below provides a guide to the potential size and tenure mix of dwellings based upon past trends of the sizes of dwellings occupied by different household types across the borough:

	Affordable Housing	Market Housing	All Dwellings
1 bedroom	20-25%	5-10%	10%
2 bedrooms	45-50%	5-10%	10%
3 bedrooms	20-25%	40-50%	45%
4+ bedrooms	5-10%	35-40%	35%

34. The current application is in outline scheme and the market housing mix will be considered at part of the subsequent reserved matters proposals. Notwithstanding, the accompanied schedule of accommodation advises that the intention is to broadly follow the suggested market housing split as cited within the above referenced LHNA 2020.

10% 1-bedroom flats – 3 units
 20% 2-bedroom flats – 6 units
 37% 3-bedroom houses – 11 units
 13% 4-bedroom houses – 4 units
 20% 5-bedroom houses – 6 units

35. Whilst it is noted that the development does not include any 2-bedroom houses, this can be resolved at the reserved matter stage, and it is possible to amend the designs of some of the proposed units to include 2-bedroom houses to improve the mix and tenure of the proposal. The reserved matters proposals will therefore need to demonstrate a good mix, balance and quality of dwelling types and sizes so that a range of housing needs can be met. This will ensure that the development is

sustainable in meeting the housing needs of the community. As such, no objection is raised at this stage.

Neighbouring amenity:

36. Core Strategy policy CP3 requires that new development should be of a high quality of design that does not cause detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users. Separation standards for new residential development are set out in section 4.7 of the Borough Design Guide.
37. The illustrative masterplan submitted with the application demonstrates that all dwellings on the site are capable of meeting all separation distances of the standards set by WBC's Borough Design Guide, however, this will need to be detailed and assessed in full at the reserved matters stage. Objections have been received from local residents on potential overbearing and noise disturbances. The indicative layout suggests that the proposal will likely maintain acceptable separation from all existing residential properties and as such, no overbearing or loss of light impact is anticipated. Impact on loss of privacy will be assessed at the reserved matters stage.
38. A noise assessment report has been submitted with the application which has been assessed by the Environmental Health officers and no objection is raised. However, the EH officers have suggested a Construction Method Statement is secured by condition to restrict the hours of works in association with the development to minimise neighbour impact.

Access and Movement:

39. **Highway safety:** The application is supported by a transport assessment report and a travel plan along with a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit. The WBC highways officers have reviewed the submitted details and commented that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on the wider highway network. In terms of additional trips expected to be generated by the proposed development, highway officers have carried out assessment based on approved WBC trip rates and commented that the trip rates suggested by the applicant is acceptable. The proposed level of additional trips will not have an adverse impact on the existing highway network.
40. **Access:** It is proposed to amend one of the existing accesses into the Golf Club's car park to provide access into the residential development as well as reconfigured Golf Club's visitors' car park. The second access to golf club's existing visitors' parking will be retained and this parking area will be reconfigured to members' car park. This is acceptable.
41. The proposed access has been modelled using acceptable modelling software. Highway officers have reviewed the modelling data and have not raised any objections. Officers consider the proposed access is acceptable in principle subject to detailed design as part of the highway's agreement process and secured by planning condition.

42. It is also proposed that the one of the existing accesses to the Golf Club will be closed off and be reinstated as verge. This will be secured by planning condition and be included in the highway's works.
43. Pedestrian movement is considered in the proposed development as it is proposed to provide a 2m wide pavement along the access road. It is also proposed to provide a 2m pavement on the north side of Duffield Road from its junction with Pound Lane until the southern access to the golf club. At this location the pavement will be sited on the south of the road and connect in with the existing pavement. Dropped kerbs and tactile paving would be required. This is acceptable and would need to be delivered through the appropriate highway's agreement.
44. Swept paths have been submitted using vehicles of acceptable dimensions and no objection is raised. Duffield Road is a 30mph road. A plan has been submitted demonstrating acceptable level of visibility which is secured by a condition and no objection is raised. For internal roads, Where a private driveway crosses the pavement, pedestrian visibility splays (2m x 2m) need to be provided. This would be considered at the reserved matters stage.
45. Objections have been received from local residents on highway safety concerns arising from the proposed access. The Council's highways officers have reviewed the application in detail and concluded that the proposal would not result in highways safety concerns since technical details submitted with the application are acceptable.
46. **Residential Parking:** A schedule of accommodation sets out the indicative level of parking assessment which has been carried out based on illustrative master plan and the supporting illustrative housing mix. The assessment shows that there would be 73 allocated spaces 10 visitor spaces, 7 unallocated spaces and 4 garages. This is acceptable. The illustrative masterplan and housing mix shows 2 allocated spaces for the larger homes which for the outline is acceptable. Additional spaces for the larger homes would need to be looked at as part of the reserve matters.
47. **Golf Club Parking:** It is proposed to reconfigure the parking for the golf club that would result in loss of 12 spaces. A parking utilisation exercise has been carried out which has concluded that there would be sufficient capacity in the golf club car park. WBC highways officers have not raised any objection to the proposed reconfiguration of the golf club parking provision.
48. As the application is in outline form, other details relating to cycle parking, electric vehicles charging, street lighting can be secured at the reserved matters stage.

Locational Sustainability:

49. Policy CP11 refers to preventing development outside of settlement limits as they are generally not well located for facilities & service and to prevent reliance on private motor cars. Paragraph 79 of the NPPF 2021 states that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and section 9 seeks to ensure the growth of sustainable transport in managing development and approval of planning applications. More specifically, paragraph 110 of the NPPF seeks to promote sustainable travel in decisions with consideration of:

- a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;
 - b) safe and suitable access to the site that are achieved for all users;
 - c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code 46; and
 - d) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.
50. This is reinforced in Paragraph 124, which refers to the “*availability and capacity of infrastructure and services...and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use*” (124c).
51. In this instance, the site is considered sustainable since it adjoins a limited development location of Sonning and is also close to a major development location of Woodley. The development will be located within convenient walking distance to bus stops on Butts Hill Road and A4 Bath Road which are served by buses to Woodley and Reading Town Centres. Whilst the frequency of the available bus services fall short of the regularity set out in the supporting text of policy CP6 of the Core Strategy which seeks good public transport services, the presence of bus routes provide a reasonable degree of public transport accessibility and alternative mode of transport.
52. The site is also within walking distance of Willow Bank School and Waingels College, which are the local primary and secondary schools. There are several food stores in Woodley that are within 1.2km of the site and Woodley Town Centre offers more shopping choices. Whilst the walking route to Woodley Town Centre is unlikely to be very desirable and the distance is more than recommended walking distance, it would be accessible by bus, albeit with a restricted frequency, or bicycle, offering a reasonable alternative to the private car. There are a range of sporting facilities available in the surrounding area and there are several bars and pubs including the Sonning Golf Club’s facilities which are open to public.
53. The site has also been assessed as part of the emerging LPU allocation and has been found sustainably located for residential development. Additionally, the Inspector of appeal APP/X0360/W/17/3167142 for 13 dwellings on land bordering the western boundary noted in paragraphs 11 – 14 that,

“11. The site is located within convenient walking distance of local bus stops on Butts Hill Road and Bath Road, providing links to Woodley town centre and other destinations including Reading. The frequency of the available bus services fall short of the regularity set out in the supporting text of policy CP6 of the Core Strategy which seeks good public transport services. In particular, there are no half hourly evening peak services and no late evening or Sunday services, which limits to a degree the accessibility of the site by public transport. However, overall the available bus services provide a reasonable degree of public transport accessibility, though there would be some times of the day/week where public transport would not be available.”

12. *The roads around the site are generally well lit. There is an existing absence of pavement on Duffield Road next to the golf clubhouse, though the appellant has proposed to construct a new stretch of footway, along with associated junction improvements, to improve ease of pedestrian access. This would improve, in particular, pedestrian access from the site to the nearby Willow Bank Junior School. Sonning Primary School is also within walking distance and there is an existing pedestrian crossing across the A4. This crossing is reasonably close to the roundabout and, taking account of the overall distance to be travelled, it would not significantly discourage travel to this school by foot. The local secondary school (Waingels College) is further away though it would still be possible to walk to it from the appeal site and it would be conveniently accessible by bicycle.*

13. *The nearest significant cluster of shops and services is located in Woodley town centre. Access to this by foot would not be attractive to most people given the distance and the need to cross a narrow railway bridge with no pedestrian footway on the otherwise shortest route. However, it would be accessible by bus, albeit with a restricted frequency, or bicycle, offering a reasonable alternative to the private car. There would also be further opportunity to cycle to retail outlets at the London Road roundabout and employment at Thames Valley Park.*

14. *Overall, I acknowledge that at least some journeys would be likely to be undertaken by car and this is not a location that would be particularly attractive to non-car owners. Nevertheless, when taken as a whole, the site would be reasonably near and be reasonably accessible to local shops, services, employment and facilities by alternative means of transport to the private car. It would satisfactorily accord with the accessibility and transport aims of policies CP1 and CP6 of the Core Strategy and those of the National Planning Policy Framework to promote sustainable means of transport”.*

54. The Inspector’s assessment of the adjacent site is a material consideration for the determination of the current application and the proposal would deliver up to 50 dwellings in an area where there would be less day-to-day reliance on car travel. Therefore, enabling further housing on suitable, sustainable sites are likely to further strengthen WBC’s case for the rejection of unsatisfactory, less sustainable sites elsewhere in the Borough.

Landscape and Trees:

55. The site is located at the edge of the Sonning settlement and in designated countryside. The site forms part of the existing golf course and benefits from the maintained golfing landscape of open lawns, and wooded boundaries which provide containment. The existing group of mature trees along the northern boundary is protected by a woodland TPO, and they contribute to the verdant, sylvan character of the area. There are no PROWS near to the site, and there are no landscape or biodiversity designations
56. The landscape character area of the site is J4: Woodley Earley Settled and Farmed Clay which is described as a densely settled area with a strong urban and suburban character. Within this character are pockets of open space remaining including public parks, sports grounds (including the golf course and Old Redingensians).

57. The proposal includes landscape mitigation for the development that retains the boundary woodland to the north and south and will be linked to the POS. Whilst it is proposed to remove 27 tree, 9 groups and partial removal of 2 hedges, it is possible to replace them by appropriate tree planting. A landscape plan is secured by condition and this will be finalised at the reserved matters stage. At the outline stage, it is important to note that most of the major trees will be retained and existing groups of woodlands can be enhanced. For these reasons, no objection is raised on loss of trees ground.
58. A landscape visual impact assessment (LVIA) submitted with the application. The LVIA assesses the landscape value as Moderate-Low and Medium susceptibility to change making landscape sensitivity Medium. The LVIA goes onto to discuss magnitude of change as being Medium at worst, and a Moderate -Major adverse impact at site level and moderate impact at wider countryside level, with a Moderate-Minor significance of impact over time.
59. The LVIA reports the site containment and resulting minor influence on its surroundings with the level of change mostly limited to the site itself, which is over simplistic and it should be noted that the scale of the development will result in increased activity and vehicle use within the site and onto Duffield Road and Pound Lane. The settlement edge will be extended over greenfield site and the landscape gap reduced. The benefits of on-site screening vegetation can be relied upon to a greater degree as a result, but it does not mean any gaps in the boundary have to be filled to completely screen the development – if the development works in terms of layout, design, materials and height it should enhance and be integrated into the view extending the visual envelope of the settlement area and replicating/reducing its density.
60. The existing boundary trees provide containment to adjacent dwellings and are a typical feature of the golf course, they provide visual interest, separation, containment and biodiversity opportunities. The northern woodland also contains at least 3 trees of Veteran or approaching Veteran status which contribute a great deal to biodiversity as a result. The indicative layout suggests that it is possible to accommodate 50 dwellings whilst limiting the harm to the existing landscape. Whilst detailed landscape scheme is a consideration at the reserved matters stage, additional landscaping within the site is secured by a condition. The amended layout suggests additional protection for the existing trees along the southern boundary by separating them from the dwellings by means of the access road. overall, it is considered that the proposal will result in satisfactory relationship with the surrounding landscape and visual character and no objection is raised.

Flooding and Drainage:

61. The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and there is no in-principle objection to the proposed residential development. A Flood Risk Assessment is submitted with the application which states that the main infiltration systems have been designed to manage the 1 in 100 year return storm plus an extra allowance of 40% for the potential predicted increase in peak rainfall up to 2115. The development's micro drainage network calculations will also include a 10% increase in impermeable areas to allow for urban creep from the housing areas. The surface water system

has been tested for the designed extreme storm event of 100 year + 40% climate change. The submitted FRA is acceptable.

62. Objections have been received from local residents on potential flooding impact of the proposed development. Thames Water has confirmed that the existing infrastructure has additional capacity for foul water drainage and water supply. As for the surface water drainage, it will be managed through infiltration, as demonstrated in the FRA. WBC drainage officers have reviewed the application and have not raised any objections.

Environmental Health:

63. **Land Contamination:** Whilst the Council holds no specific information to indicate that the application site may be contaminated, on a precautionary basis the possibility of contamination should be considered when a potentially sensitive development, such as residential, is proposed. This is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2018)) and the principles of sustainable development. As such, a condition is included for a preliminary survey to be carried out relating to land contamination.
64. **Air Quality:** The site is not in an AQMA or near monitoring locations. Concerns have been raised by local residents about a negative impact on noise and air quality due to increased traffic flow, in particular the impact of waiting traffic at the lights to cross the railway line along Duffield Road which is a single-track road. WBC highways have reviewed the submitted information and have concluded that the proposed level of residential trips would not have an adverse impact on the highway. As such, no additional condition is included in relation to air quality.

Ecology:

65. **Reptiles:** The Ecological Assessment provides information on a reptile survey undertaken on the site in 2022. The locations of the refugia are not identified in any plan and there are no photographs showing them in location. There is little discussion in the report as to the limitation that the particularly dry and hot summer of 2022 provided for reptile surveying. As such, there are shortcomings of the survey reports.
66. However, WBC Ecology officers are aware of other reptile surveys that have been conducted locally recently that corroborate the findings of this survey – that it is likely that reptiles are absent from the application site. WBC Ecologists think that development can take place without adversely affect the local conservation status of a widespread reptile species of principal importance.
67. **Bats:** The Ecological Assessment has not reported the findings of the preliminary bat roost assessment of the Golf Club building to the standard set out in survey guidelines. However, the WBC ecology officer considers that the development will not result in harm to a bat roost within the building.
68. The activity surveys for bat use of the site for residential development have not been conducted to the standard set out in bat survey guidelines and there are shortfalls within the survey findings. The survey report identifies Barbastelle bats are using the site along the existing trees on the northern boundary. The proposal

retains majority of this tree belts and additional woodland enhancement, and management are secured by conditions. Additionally, this part of the layout will have private roads which can be served by low impact streetlights, thus minimising the impact on biodiversity. Moreover, remaining of the Golf Course area will remain open and will provide suitable habitat for foraging bats.

69. To the south of the application site there is a railway corridor that is a likely used dark corridor for bats to commute and forage. Along the railway to the south-west is a cutting with high quality woodland habitat blending into garden woodland. To the west of the site is existing residential/care home development with gardens. It is likely that Barbastelle bat is using the golf course side of this tree-lined belt because it is not so encroached by development.
70. Regarding the significance of the site for Serotine bat, despite the poor standard of the Ecological Assessment submitted, it is possible to assess the impact. Sample calls have been submitted to aid confirmation of the species. The WBC Ecology officer considers it possible that the site is used for commuting and foraging by this species at a very low level. Within the context of the usual foraging range of this species, the WBC Ecology officer considers the scale of the development will not significantly deplete the foraging resource to be a concern for this species. As such, subject to Species Enhancements and Ecological Permeability conditions, there is no objection to the proposal on ecology grounds.
71. Objections have been received by local residents for potential detrimental impact on the habitat and local population of the protected species. Whilst the development will introduce residential use near the tree-lined northern boundary, other parts of the golf course remains open, particularly that near the railway line which would offer an alternative corridor for the Barbastelle bats. There is no evidence that the proposal will significantly deplete the habitat of Serotine bats. WBC Ecology officer has reviewed the submitted information and raised no objections in terms of impact on these protected species.
72. **Biodiversity Net Gain:** The applicant has submitted a revised biodiversity impact assessment calculator using Defra metric 4.0 alongside a brief technical note (Derek Finnie Associates, Ref: DFA23004V2, June 2023). This brings the impact assessment in line with the current Proposed Parameter Plan MA/SGC/OPA/05 Revision C dated 01.03.23. The technical note includes the condition scoring sheets for the habitats identified during the baseline survey.
73. The WBC Ecology officer has assessed the baseline score and arrived at an amended score of 25, which is the upper limit of a poor score. Officers therefore think it reasonable to accept the poor condition applied in the baseline page of the calculator. Section 3.2 of the Biodiversity Net Gain report outlines habitat creation and enhancement works proposed for the development. It seeks net gain through enhancement of the woodland habitat, creation of scrub and other neutral grassland and the inclusion of a pond.
74. The headline figures in the new impact assessment calculation submitted indicate a biodiversity net gain of 20.53% with all trading rules met. If the pond were to be part of the sustainable drainage system, the headline figure would drop to 18.87% with all trading rules met. Given that this is an outline application, WBC ecology officer commented that it has been demonstrated the proposal can achieve a

biodiversity net gain benefit. It still remains for reserved matters to show that this benefit persists at the detailed layout stage.

Open Space and Green Infrastructure:

75. Policy TB08 of the MDD DPD lays out the required standards for development in terms of Public Open Space (POS) provision. Whilst outline in nature, the indicative site layout plan illustrates how the proposals would provide for the on-site provision of open space required by Policy TB08. This includes more than 1.5 hectare of open space within the eastern edge of the site and a smaller POS near the apartment blocks. These areas would be further detailed at the reserved matters stage and a management plan will be secured by s106 agreement.
76. Contributions in lieu of on-site allotment and sports facilities will be secured through the S106 and are reflected in the Heads of Terms. The cost of provision of these will be secured via CIL.

Sustainable Design and Climate Change:

77. Core Strategy Policy CP1 requires development to contribute towards the goal of achieving zero carbon development by including on-site renewable energy features and minimising energy and water consumption. This is amplified by MDDLDP policies CC04: Sustainable design and construction and CC05: Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks and the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (May 2010). As the proposal is for residential of over 1000sqm, Policy CC05 also advises that planning permission will only be granted for such proposals that deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology.
78. A Sustainability & Energy Statement has been submitted with the application which sets out the various renewable and low energy technology measures which could be used in the design of the development in order to reduce energy demand on site, and as such, reduce CO₂ emissions. As the application is outline in nature, details provided within the energy statement are based on calculations using a sample of dwelling types as the final layout/dwelling types would not be agreed until the reserved matters stage. Notwithstanding, it is stated that by applying fabric first approach combined with the use of renewable technologies, a 36% reduction in CO₂ emission could be achieved.
79. It is also to be noted that some of the sustainable building construction details are also controlled by Building Regulation climate emergency response such as Part L – Conservation of fuel and power, Part F – Ventilation, Part O – Overheating and Part S – Infrastructure for charging electric vehicles. Considering all of the above, no objection is raised on Sustainable Design and Climate Change grounds in this instance.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Special Protection Area (SPA) & Affordable Housing:

80. **Community Infrastructure Levy:** As the proposal is for residential development, it would be a CIL liable development. The CIL charge for new residential development is set at £365 (index linked) per square metre for any net increase in residential floor space.
81. **Special Protection Area:** The application site is not located within 5km or 7km of Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area and as such the proposed development would not require any mitigation measures in terms of monetary contributions.
82. **Affordable Housing:** The application proposes policy compliant level of on-site affordable housing (40%). This will be secured by s106 legal agreement prior to the grant of planning permission.

Employment Skills:

83. Policy TB12 of the MDD Local Plan requires an employment skills plan (ESP) for this development. ESPs use the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) benchmark based on the value of construction. This is calculated by multiplying the total floor space by £1025, which is the cost of construction per square metre as set out by Building Cost Information Service of RICS and the methodology as set out in the Council's Employment and Skills Guidance. In this instance, as the proposal is in outline form, the final ESP contribution could not be calculated. Notwithstanding, a legal agreement will be completed to secure the ESP contribution at reserved matters stage.

Planning Balance:

84. The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Consequently, the tilted balance, as advocated by paragraph 11d of the NPPF is triggered and planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole.
85. The site is considered to be a sustainable and suitable development site that would offer public benefit to help meet the needs of the community by delivering market and affordable houses. The application will deliver residential development in accordance with the Council's overall spatial strategy and although it is situated beyond the existing settlement boundary within the countryside, the site is located between a limited development location of Sonning and a major development location of Woodley and as such will not result in an unsustainable development. The proposal will deliver 50 dwellings, 20 of which will be affordable units, and this attracts significant weight. The provision of affordable housing also contributes to the social limb of sustainable development, as advocated by the NPPF.
86. A range of economic benefits would also derive from the development such as the creation of a range of construction jobs and opportunities; increases in resident expenditure in the locality providing a boost to the local economy; and the creation of "spin-off" jobs in services and other firms resultant from wage spending and supplier sourcing from the occupiers of the new development. Whilst some of the economic benefits relating to construction will be offset by ecological impact of the construction process, the ESP contributions to develop skills for local residents will

nonetheless have both economic and social benefits. These economic effects align well with a wide range of national, regional, and local policy objectives, in particular, increasing the supply of high quality, sustainable housing to meet projected increases in population and enhancing economic prosperity through creating employment opportunities for local people. The site will also deliver the provision of 40% on-site affordable housing provision, which would be equivalent to 20 dwellings.

87. In terms of negative impact, whilst there will be landscape harm, the development will not have a significant detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area due to its contained nature and opportunities for landscaping. Harm to biodiversity and protected species will not be significant warranting a refusal. Any harm arising from the locational aspect of the scheme will be limited and localised.
88. In applying significant weight to the provision of additional housing including on-site provision of affordable units, in the instance where the Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing, it is considered that those identified adverse impacts of the proposal would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Overall, it is considered that the benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh the conflict with the settlement boundaries and the limited harm in terms of landscape character and visual impact. On this basis a decision, other than in accordance with the development plan is justified and therefore the application is recommended for an approval.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts upon protected groups as a result of the development.

APPENDIX 1 - Conditions / informatives

APPROVAL subject to the following conditions and informatives:

Conditions:

1. Timescale:

- a) No development shall commence until details of the appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and the development shall be carried out as approved.
- b) Application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority not later than three years from the date of this permission. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than two years from the date of approval of the last of the reserved matters to be approved.

Reason: In pursuance of s.92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The number of dwellings hereby permitted shall not exceed 50.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development proceeds in accordance with the outline plans.

3. Approved Details

This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered MA/SGC/OPA/[01A Location Plan; 02C Annotated Site Layout; 05C Proposed Parameter Plan; 06C Proposed Illustrative Site Layout]. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

4. Access

Prior to commencement of the development, there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, details of the proposed vehicular access on to Duffield to include visibility splays of 2.4m by 43m. The access shall be formed as so-approved and the visibility splays shall be cleared of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height prior to the occupation of the development. The access shall be retained in accordance with the approved details and used for no other purpose and the land within the visibility splays shall be maintained clear of any visual obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

5. Walking Strategy

Prior to commencement of development, details of pedestrian connections from the development to be submitted for approval by the local planning authority. These details shall demonstrate how these routes will be upgraded. The measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of the first dwelling.

Reason: In the interests of sustainable travel, convenience and highway safety in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP6.

6. Stopping up Access

The existing vehicular access onto Duffield Road shall be stopped up and abandoned, and the footway and/or verge crossings shall be re-instated within one month of the completion of the new access(es) in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

In the interests of highway safety and convenience. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

7. Highway Construction details

Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the construction of roads, cycleways and footways, including levels, widths, construction materials, depths of construction, surface water drainage and lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Each dwelling shall not be occupied until the vehicle access to serve that dwelling has been constructed in accordance with the approved details to road base level and the final wearing course will be provided within 3 months of first occupation, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that roads and footpaths are constructed to a standard that would be suitable for adoption as publicly maintainable highway, in the interests of providing a functional, accessible and safe development. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

8. Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

Prior to commencement of development hereby permitted, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) in respect of that phase shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Construction of the development shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the approved CEMP. The CEMP shall include the following matters:

- i) a construction travel protocol or Green Travel Plan for the construction phase including details of parking and turning for vehicles of site personnel, operatives and visitors;
- ii) loading and unloading of plant and materials;
- iii) storage of plant and materials;
- iv) programme of works, including measures for traffic management and operating hours
- v) piling techniques;

- vi) provision of boundary hoarding;
- vii) details of a site security strategy;
- viii) protection of the aquatic environment in terms of water quantity and quality;
- ix) details of proposed means of dust suppression and noise mitigation;
- x) details of measures to prevent mud from vehicles leaving the site during construction;
- xi) details of any site construction office, compound and ancillary facility buildings. These facilities shall be sited away from woodland areas;
- xii) lighting on site during construction;
- xiii) measures to ensure no on-site fires during construction;
- xiv) monitoring and review mechanisms;
- xv) implementation of the CEMP through an environmental management system;
- xvi) details of the haul routes to be used to access the development;
- xvii) details of temporary surface water management measures to be provided during the construction phase;
- xviii) details of the excavation of materials and the sub-surface construction methodology;
- xix) Relevant ecological mitigation measures for protected species and;
- xx) appointment of a Construction Liaison Officer.

Reason: To protect occupants of nearby dwellings from noise and disturbance during the construction period, in the interest of highway safety and convenience and to minimise the environmental impact of the construction phase in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP3, CP6 and CP7 and TB23 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy.

9. Lighting

Details of external lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the development is occupied. The details shall include location, height, type and direction of light sources and intensity of illumination for all external lighting strategies including details of lighting for all highways, footpaths and public areas. The details shall demonstrate how the areas identified as the retained boundary hedgerow and ecological buffer zone are retained unlit. No further external lighting shall be installed without the written approval of the local planning authority.

Reason: To prevent an adverse impact upon wildlife and safeguard amenity and highway safety in accordance with NPPF and Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP1, CP3, CP6 and CP7 and TB23.

10. Garage to be retained as such

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), the garage accommodation on the site identified on the approved plans shall be kept available for the parking of vehicles ancillary to the residential use of the site at all times. It shall not be used for any business nor as habitable space.

Reason: To ensure that adequate parking space is available on the site, so as to reduce the likelihood of roadside parking, in the interests of highway safety and

convenience. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

11. Details of car and motorcycle parking

The reserved matters application for the development shall include details of car and motorcycle parking in accordance with the Council's policies and which are to be approved in writing by the Council. No dwelling shall be occupied until the vehicular accesses, driveways, parking and turning areas to serve it including any unallocated space have been provided in accordance with the approved details and the provision shall be retained thereafter. The vehicle parking shall not be used for any other purposes other than parking and the turning spaces shall not be used for any other purposes than turning.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP6, CC07 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (Feb 2014), the Parking Standards Study within the Borough Design Guide 2010, and the North Wokingham Development Location Supplementary Planning Document (October 2011).

12. Parking Management Plan

Prior to the first occupation of any dwelling, a Parking Management Strategy for the management of the parking arrangements shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The submitted Parking Management Strategy shall include details of the management of all parking spaces and the monitoring and the delivery of additional electric vehicle charging spaces when required. The approved details shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development and shall be permanently maintained.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory development in the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP6, CP13 and CP21 and MDDL policies CC07 and TB20.

13. Electric Vehicle Charging

Prior to commencement of development, an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. This strategy shall include details relating to onsite electric vehicle charging infrastructure in accordance with Building Control Regulations Approved Document S and details of installation of charging points. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the agreed strategy thereafter.

Reason: In order to ensure that secure electric vehicle charging facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

14. Cycle parking

The reserved matters application for the development shall include details of secure and covered bicycle storage/parking facilities serving that dwelling for the occupants

of, and visitors to the development. The cycle storage/parking shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before occupation of the development hereby permitted and shall be permanently retained in the approved form for the parking of bicycles and used for no other purpose.

Reason: In order to ensure the development contributes towards achieving a sustainable transport system and to provide parking for cycles in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP6, the Parking Standards Study within the Borough Design Guide 2010 and CC07 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan.

15. Hours of Work

No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place other than between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 13:00 Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays.

Reason: To protect the occupiers of neighbouring properties from noise and disturbance outside the permitted hours during the construction period. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

16. Infiltration Details

No development shall take place until a soakaway test's has been carried out in accordance with BRE Digest 365, or such other guidance as may be agreed in writing by Local Planning Authority (LPA). The results of the tests shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the LPA. The ground through which infiltration is designed to occur should be unsaturated to a depth of at least 1m below the base of infiltration unit. The scheme shall subsequently be completed in accordance with the approved details before the development is first brought into use/occupied.

Reason: To ensure that the site can be adequately drained. It is important that these details are agreed prior to the commencement of development as any works on site could have implications for drainage in the locality. Relevant policy: Relevant policy: NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10.

17. Exceedance Flow

Development shall not take place until an exceedance flow routing plan for flows above the 1 in 100+40% climate change event has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The proposed scheme shall identify exceedance flow routes through the development based on proposed topography with flows being directed to highways and areas of public open space. Flow routes through gardens and other areas in private ownership will not be permitted. The scheme shall subsequently be completed in accordance with the approved details before the development is first brought into use/occupied.

Reason: To prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10.

18. Archaeology

Prior to the determination of reserved matters applications dealing with layout, the applicant or their agents or successors in title must have secured the production and submission of a desk-based assessment, and the implementation of a programme of archaeological work (which may comprise more than one phase of works) in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme approved pursuant to this condition.

Reason: The site lies within an area of archaeological potential. The condition will ensure that any archaeological remains within the site are adequately investigated and recorded in order to advance our understanding of the significance of any buried remains to be lost and in the interest of protecting the archaeological heritage of the Borough. Relevant policies: National Planning Policy Framework Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB25.

19. Tree Protection Plan

- a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until a scheme which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority (the Approved Scheme); the tree protection measures approved shall be implemented in complete accordance with the Approved Scheme for the duration of the development (including, unless otherwise provided by the Approved Scheme) demolition, all site preparation work, tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery.
- b) No development (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence until the local planning authority has been provided (by way of a written notice) with a period of no less than 7 working days to inspect the implementation of the measures identified in the Approved Scheme on-site.
- c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.
- d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials

removed from the site, unless the prior approval of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

20. Landscaping

Prior to the commencement of the development, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include, as appropriate, proposed finished floor levels or contours, means of enclosure, car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas, hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and structure (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, external services, etc). Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

A biodiversity impact assessment calculation using Defra metric 4.0 shall be submitted alongside the landscaping detail to continue to demonstrate biodiversity net gain across the site.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to secure biodiversity net gain. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03, TB21 and TB23 and NPPF para 174(d).

21. Retention of trees and shrubs

No retained tree shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be topped or lopped other than in accordance with the approved plans and particulars, without the written approval of the local planning authority. If within a period of five years from the date of the planting of any tree that tree, or any tree planted in replacement for it, is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place, unless the local planning authority gives its written consent to any variation.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site which are of amenity

value to the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

22. Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

A landscape and ecological management plan (LEMP) for all areas of public open space shall be submitted to, and be approved in writing by, the local planning authority prior commencement of the development. The content of the LEMP shall include the following:

- a) Description and evaluation of features to be managed.
- b) Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management.
- c) Aims and objectives of management – to include maintenance of habitats required for achieving biodiversity net gain for a minimum period of 30 years.
- d) Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives.
- e) Prescriptions for management actions.
- f) Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period).
- g) Details of the body or organization responsible for implementation of the plan.
- h) Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures.

The LEMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery. The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The approved plan will be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To secure biodiversity net gain. Relevant policies: NPPF para 174(d) and MDD policy TB23.

23. Species Enhancements and Ecological Permeability

Prior to the commencement of development hereby permitted, a strategy for biodiversity enhancements and ecological permeability for the site shall be provided to the local authority for its approval. This strategy shall be prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist and appropriate to the local ecological context, providing a mix of feature such as bat and bird boxes at a ratio of at least one per dwelling. Once approved the strategy shall be implemented in full unless otherwise agreed by the local authority in writing.

Reason: to ensure that the proposal is in accordance with Section 41 NERC Act re. UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species (Species of Principal Importance), and complies with Planning Policies for Wildlife including CP7 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010), MDD policy TB23, and the National Planning Policy Framework which requires consideration of the potential biodiversity gains that can be secured within developments.

24. Contamination

a) Site Characterisation/Land Contamination Investigation.

An investigation and risk assessment should be completed in accordance with a scheme to assess the nature and extent of any contamination on the site, (whether it originates on the site or not). The investigation and risk assessment should be undertaken by competent persons and a written report of the findings produced. The written report would be subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority. The report of the findings should include:

(i) a survey of the extent, scale, and nature of any contamination.

(ii) an assessment of the potential risks to:

- human health, including radon gas levels
- property (existing or proposed) including buildings, crops, livestock, pets, woodland and service lines and pipes,
- adjoining land,
- groundwaters and surface waters,
- ecological systems,
- archaeological sites and ancient monuments.

(iii) an appraisal of remedial options, and proposal of the preferred option(s).

This must be conducted in accordance with DEFRA and the Environment Agency's 'Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination, CLR 11'.

b) Submission of Remediation Scheme (where required).

A detailed remediation scheme to bring the site to a condition suitable for the intended use by removing unacceptable risks to human health, buildings and other property and the natural and historical environment should be prepared and would be subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority. The scheme should include all works to be undertaken, proposed remediation objectives and remediation criteria, timetable of works and site management procedures. The scheme should ensure that the site will not qualify as contaminated land under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in relation to the intended use of the land after remediation.

c) Unexpected Land Contamination.

If land contamination is found at any time during site clearance, groundwork, and construction the discovery shall be reported as soon as possible to the local planning authority. A full contamination risk assessment shall be carried out and if found to be necessary, a 'remediation method statement' shall be submitted to the local planning authority for written approval.

Reason: To ensure that any contamination of the site is identified at the outset to allow remediation to protect existing/proposed occupants of property on the site and/or adjacent land. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) and Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3.

25. Plant/Machinery to be attenuated.

All plant, machinery and equipment installed or operated in connection with the carrying out of this permission shall be so enclosed and/or attenuated that noise

therefrom does not exceed at any time a level of 5dB[A] below the existing background noise level [or10dB[A] if there is a particular tonal quality] when measured at a point one metre external to the nearest residential or noise sensitive property.

Reason: To ensure that no nuisance or disturbance is caused to the occupiers of properties. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment), Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

Informative:

1. Section 106 Agreement

This permission should be read in conjunction with the legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act dated **TBC** the obligations in which relate to this development.

2. Pre-commencement Conditions

The applicant is reminded that this approval is granted subject to conditions which must be complied with prior to the development starting on site. Commencement of the development without complying with the pre-commencement requirements may be outside the terms of this permission and liable to enforcement action. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once the details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.

3. Additional Consent Advertisements

This permission does not convey or imply any approval or consent that may be required for the display of advertisements on the site for which a separate Advertisement Consent application may be required. You should be aware that the display of advertisements without the necessary consent is a criminal offence liable to criminal prosecution proceedings through the courts.

4. Protected Species

This permission does not convey or imply any approval or consent required under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for protected species. The applicant is advised to contact Natural England with regard to any protected species that may be found on the site.

5. Overland flow

The layout of the development site and the drainage system should be designed so that natural low-lying areas and overland conveyance pathways are used to manage surface runoff, where appropriate, where they do not pose an unacceptable risk to the new developments or downstream areas/ elsewhere. Where run-off from off-site sources is drained together with the site run-off, the contributing catchment should

be modelled as part of drainage system in order to take full account of additional flows.

6. Access Construction

The Head of Highways at the Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham [0118 9746000] should be contacted for the approval of the access construction details before any work is carried out within the highway (including verges and footways). This planning permission does NOT authorise the construction of such an access or works.

7. Mud on the Road

Adequate precautions shall be taken during the construction period to prevent the deposit of mud and similar debris on adjacent highways. For further information contact the Highway Authority on tel.: 0118 9746000.

8. Works Affecting Public Highway

Any works/ events carried out by or on behalf of the developer affecting either a public highway or a prospectively maintainable highway (as defined under s.87 New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA)), shall be co-ordinated and licensed as required under NRSWA and the Traffic Management Act 2004 in order to minimise disruption to both pedestrian and vehicular users of the highway.

Any such works or events, and particularly those involving the connection of any utility to the site must be co-ordinated by the developer in liaison with the Borough's Street Works team (0118 974 6302). This must take place AT LEAST three months in advance of the intended works to ensure effective co-ordination with other works so as to minimise disruption.

9. Tree Preservation Order

The applicant is reminded that there are trees on site protected by a Tree Preservation Order. It is a criminal offence to wilfully or knowingly cause damage to those trees, including their roots unless in accordance with express planning permission.

10. Thames Water Sewer

Records indicate a public sewer beneath or in close proximity to the proposed development. In order to protect public sewers and to ensure that Thames Water can gain access to those sewers for future repair and maintenance, approval must be sought from Thames Water where the erection of a building or an extension to a building or underpinning work would be over the line of, or would come within 3 metres of, a public sewer. Thames Water will usually refuse such approval in respect of the construction of new buildings, but approval may be granted in some cases for extensions to existing buildings. The applicant is advised to contact Thames Water Developer Services on 0845 850 2777 to discuss the options available at this site.

11. CIL Liable Development

The development hereby permitted is liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy. The Liability Notice issued by Wokingham Borough Council will state the current chargeable amount. A revised Liability Notice will be issued if this amount changes. Anyone can formally assume liability to pay, but if no one does so then liability will rest with the landowner. There are certain legal requirements that must be complied with. For instance, whoever will pay the levy must submit an Assumption of Liability form and a Commencement Notice to Wokingham Borough Council prior to commencement of development, failure to do this will result in penalty surcharges being added. For more information see - Community Infrastructure Levy advice - Wokingham Borough Council. Please submit all CIL forms and enquiries to developer.contributions@wokingham.gov.uk.

12. Discussion

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant in terms of:

- addressing the evolving planning policy context;
- planning issues relating to ecology;
- amended plans being submitted by the applicant to overcome concerns relating to development layout.

The decision to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF is considered to be a positive outcome of these discussions.

APPENDIX 2 - Parish Council Comments

Sonning Parish Council

PLANNING REF : 223458
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Council Office
: Pearson Road, Sonning, Reading
: RG4 6UL
SUBMITTED BY : Sonning Parish Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 18/05/2023

COMMENTS:

Sonning Parish Council has carefully considered these revised plans and although they are pleased that the original proposed density of 54 dwellings has been recognised as too great, reducing it by 4 dwellings is totally insufficient. This reduction fails to reduce this large intrusion into the countryside and will still have a negative impact on the surrounding area of large, detached dwellings in large spacious grounds. Reducing the numbers by 4 will make no material difference to the overall harm this development will have on the countryside.

The Parish Council also has concerns about the area to the right of the drawing, now identified as 'Public Open Space'. If this is seen as sufficient improvement, leading to approval, how can the area be protected and what is to stop the developer subsequently submitting plans to build on this area due the 'unviability' of the revised plans.

The revised highway plans rely heavily on the implementation of revisions to the road layout not in their ownership or under their control. The access to 50 dwelling is still to be shared by members of Sonning Golf Club using the car park and even with these revisions to the road layout, the access is sub-standard and insufficient to allow an unhindered exit from the dwellings and Golf Club car park at peak times. This will add substantial pressure on Duffield Road and Pound Lane. The Travel Plan also illustrates the impossibility of accessing bus services, particularly in accessing the bus service to Maidenhead and access to two schools along a dangerous part of Duffield Road with no pedestrian footpath. The Travel Plan also implies that the local bus services are good, which any resident using the bus service will say is simply incorrect.

The objections from Golf Club member speak for themselves and Sonning Parish Council fully supports these objection. The Ecological Assessment has identified the Golf Club as an exceptionally important habitat corridor for nationally rare Barbastelle Bats and further analysis is required to clarify this further. The presence of Serotine Bats and unidentified Myotis Bats is also of great significance. It is clear that this part of the Golf Club plays a major role in preserving these rare Bats. The Parish Council understands that the developer should be undertaking further analysis as the previous one was undertaken in July 2023, when there was a heatwave, and August and September when weather conditions were unusual. Therefore, the restricted timing of this survey during this unusual weather shouldn't be used to be conclusive as to the bat activity levels on the site and greater detail is

required to establish the true levels. A survey should therefore be undertaken between May and September 2023.

For the above reasons, Sonning Parish Council urge refusal of this application and subsequent revised plans and that site 8 and 13 should be retained and not developed.

Woodley Town Council

PLANNING REF : 223458
PROPERTY ADDRESS : The Oakwood Centre
: Headley Road, Woodley, Wokingham
: RG5 4JZ
SUBMITTED BY : Woodley Town Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 04/01/2023

COMMENTS:

The Planning & Community Committee have considered this application and recommended it be refused, with the development likely to increase traffic flow on Duffield Road, increasing congestion and causing highways issues in the area. They specifically noted that residents were more likely to require the use of cars living in this location as the nearest public transport and conveniences are based in Woodley, and there is no footpath across the nearby railway bridge. As such, residents would have little choice but to drive, exacerbating highways issues.