

Statement from Great Shefford Parish Council regarding planning application 25/01800/FUL – Land to the west of Spring Meadows.

A meeting of Great Shefford Parish Council was held on 16th September 2025 to consider planning application 25/01800/FULMAJ – Land to the West of Spring Meadows – 16no. dwellings, new access, public open space and landscaping.

Residents in attendance raised a number of concerns, and these were put to the developer after the meeting, as follows:

1. **Highway Safety in Spring Meadows** – Concerns were expressed regarding both construction traffic and the long-term increase in vehicle movements, particularly given the proximity of the local primary school.
2. **Alternative Construction Access** – The Parish Council wishes to stress that providing dedicated construction access via the existing track to the north of the site, redirecting construction vehicles away from Spring Meadows, would go a long way towards addressing some of the legitimate concerns expressed by residents. We therefore request full exploration of this alternative access route to be a priority and would welcome a response on its feasibility.
3. **Drainage and Sewage Capacity** – Clarification is sought on whether existing systems can accommodate the proposed development without adverse impact.
4. **Site Elevation and Privacy** – Questions were raised about potential overlooking and loss of privacy for neighbouring properties due to site elevation.
5. **Flood Alleviation Scheme** – Residents are concerned about potential impacts on the recently completed flood alleviation scheme. Have flood risk calculations been independently verified?
6. **Ground Water Capacity** – Clarification on how potential impact on groundwater issues will be managed, given the history of flooding in this area.
7. **Impact on Wildlife** – Information on surveys undertaken and proposed mitigation measures would be appreciated.
8. **Construction Impact on the School** – What specific measures will you take to minimise disruption to the school during construction?
9. **Emergency Escape Route** – Are you aware of the school's emergency escape route that passes the site, and can you confirm that this will remain unimpeded?

The following points were also raised but these may ultimately be matters for West Berkshire Council:

1. Provision of adequate **emergency vehicle turning spaces**, as current proposals appear not to align with existing guidelines of the Fire & Rescue Service.
2. Clarification on the land's designation under the **Section 106 agreement** as a community asset for football provision, provided as compensation for the Spring Meadows development.
3. Consideration of the **wider impact on highway maintenance**, as the village already bears significant maintenance issues from its use as a motorway off-route.

Developer's Response to residents' concerns:

The proposed development, as you are aware, has been included in the Local Plan Review and many of the points raised will have been considered prior to its inclusion in this plan.

Highway Safety in Spring Meadows:

- As with all new developments there will be an increase in traffic post development. We have had an independent consultant (Condon Drew Associates) produce a Transport Statement. In the production of this they have looked at present and predicted vehicle movements. Their figures calculate the average daily two way vehicle trips from this proposal to be 87 across a 12hr day. Highways West Berkshire have responded to this saying “ *The figures may be slightly on the low side for such a rural location, however, this scale of development was considered as part of the Local Plan Review when the allocated housing sites were considered and it was deemed an acceptable level*”.
- Construction Traffic: Part of our works going forward will be to produce a Construction Method Statement which will identify potential hazards and procedures to ensure safe working. This exercise will mainly look at activities on site as our ability to control activities off site is more challenging. We will however look at other potential hazards such as how we can best manage any vehicle movements to and from the site passing the Primary School.
- I did visit yesterday and noted at 3pm there were 4 cars outside the Spring Meadows school gate, this rose over the following 20mins to 12 cars, by 3.27pm all cars had gone. All children were accompanied by adults and there were no busses or larger vehicles collecting children.

- The road was not blocked at any stage.
- There appears to be a 30min period in the afternoon and presumably similar period in the morning which will need to be looked at and see how best to manage any construction traffic should it be necessary to pass the school within these times.
- Should this be the case my initial thoughts would be:
- Look at the possibility of more collections of children from the main school entrance where there is more provisions of parking/fenced off area and a turning circle. I believe this was originally designed for collection of the children and the additional gate on Spring Meadows was added during Covid.
- Any vehicles collecting from the Spring Meadows gate to park on the school side of road rather than opposite so that no crossing of road is required.
- Additional signage erected to warn any passing traffic of the location of the school.

Alternative Construction Access:

- I have looked again at the existing track to the north of the site to see its potential as an alternative point of access. This track joins the A338 where there is a 40mph speed limit and visibility to the south is limited to 20-25m. The visibility requirement for an A road is 100m. I personally think this point of access is not suitable for construction traffic and is more likely to cause accidents than using the existing Spring Meadows exit to the A338. Here there is a 30mph speed limit on the A338 and correct visibility in both directions. I am happy to discuss further with highways however if we could find a solution to the School drop off and collection times this point of access would be preferred.

Drainage and Sewage Capacity:

- I have been in communication with Thames Water Developer Services and they have confirmed their network has sufficient capacity for disposal of foul water and the supply of clean water. The Sewage Treatment plant at East Shefford will receive and treat the waste water from this site.

Site Elevation and Privacy:

- The proposed properties at the entrance to the site have been designed to sit lower than the existing ground level to prevent overbearing at this point. Other properties are set further away from the existing Spring Meadows properties and will be screened with new planting. We are happy to look at specific areas of concern and add additional plant screening if necessary.

Flood Alleviation Scheme:

- We have undertaken a Flood Risk assessment for the site (Flood Zone 1, an area with low probability of flooding). A small portion of the site overlaps with potential surface water flooding, this area in the north east corner of the site will not be developed. The groundwater flooding the surface in this area is 'low risk'.

Ground Water Capacity:

- We have had a full drainage strategy designed to deal with all surface water from any new properties, hard standing, roads, etc. This surface water will be contained in underground storage below parts of the site and then disperses at a controlled rate back into the ground. This design ensures there will be no increase in surface run off water due to the construction of the proposed dwellings.

Impact on Wildlife:

- All Ecology have undertaken an Ecological Impact Assessment for this proposed development. The site was visited on 12th November 2024 and surveyed in accordance with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Phase 1 Habitat survey. This provided an inventory of the basic habitat types present and identifies any areas of greater potential. This report is attached and covers the present ecological features including sites, fauna and wildlife along with and proposed works which will provide mitigation and compensation.

Construction Impact on School:

- As with all construction sites we will need to consider neighbouring properties whilst construction is being undertaken. These measures will include things such as working hours, noise reduction, dust suppression, on site parking etc. The school building itself is completely screened from the proposed construction site by existing properties in Spring Meadows and is located approx 80m from the site boundary. The school playing field is the only location from where the site is visible. There will be security fencing along this boundary.

Emergency Escape Route:

- The existing locked gate in the corner of the playing field has been noted. The design layout provides a new footpath to join the proposed development to the existing footpath to the west of the site (opposite corner to existing gate location). We can move the existing gateway to this location once construction is completed, if required, on the agreement that it remains chained and locked and only used as an emergency escape route.

Additional points:

- The internal road layout has been designed to include a swept path analysis to allow a Refuse Collection Vehicle or similar full access to the properties. Should it become apparent fire regulations require additional facilities these will be added.
 - We have not seen any documentation showing the football field was part of any Section 106 agreement. The original agreement on this land was only between West Shefford Farms Ltd (the landowner) and Trustees of the West Shefford Football Club. The club ceased playing over 20yrs ago and as stated in agreement the land was returned to agriculture at that point.
 - There was an agreement between West Shefford Farms Ltd and Great Shefford Parish Council on 12th July 1994 regarding The Recreation Area by the Village Hall.
 - Highway Maintenance: This is an issue on all roads especially where there are motorway connections in the vicinity. The average daily movements of all motor vehicles along the A338 past Spring Meadows has been calculated at 3,031. The proposed development will add approximately 87 vehicles to this number.
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Great Shefford Parish Council held a follow-up meeting on 23rd September 2025, to discuss the developer's response. Further questions arose from this meeting, and these have been put to the developer, as follows:

Highway Safety in Spring Meadows

Thank you for directing us to Section 5 of the Transport Report for details of how the transport data for Spring Meadows was compiled. Please could this be reassessed to ensure the data more accurately reflects current and expected traffic movements in Spring Meadows, as it is believed the current figures may underrepresent reality.

Alternative Construction Access

Residents expressed a strong desire to try and identify an alternative access route to the proposed development, both during construction and for permanent site access thereafter.

We request further exploration into the feasibility of using the existing track to the north of the proposed development site, as well as other potential land options for providing access.

Drainage and Sewage Capacity

Residents and the Parish Council would appreciate sight of the drainage and sewage calculations, including details of how these were prepared and by whom.

We would be grateful for sight of written confirmation from Thames Water that drainage capacity has been assessed and confirmation of how this will be managed.

Given the area's history of flooding, please could the assessment area for surface water run-off be extended to include land beyond the proposed development site.

Please confirm the maintenance requirements and responsibilities for the underground drainage infrastructure.

It was also noted that serious sewage issues experienced by several residents as recently as last year are not referenced in the drainage report. Residents feel this is a significant omission, and we request that this be addressed in the reporting, including proposed mitigation measures.

Site Elevation and Privacy

Residents have requested a reassessment of the site layout to address privacy and overlooking concerns.

Thank you for confirming that privacy screens would be erected between the site and the school playing field during construction, and that access to the existing emergency escape route will be retained.

Other Matters

You indicated that you would be happy to share the Architect's report regarding the emergency vehicle turning point's compliance with guidelines, and we would be grateful to receive this.

We will likely direct the question regarding a restrictive covenant on the land to West Berkshire Council; however, if you have any additional feedback on this matter, it would be welcome. We understand the covenant is set out in Section 7 of an agreement dated 24th May 1988, between Highcross Limited & West Shefford Farms Limited and Newbury District Council (a copy of which can be provided if required).

Similarly, we will follow up with West Berkshire Council regarding assessment of school vehicle movements.

Developer's Response to residents' further concerns following meeting on 23rd September 2025:

Highways Safety in Spring Meadows:

- I have contacted our Highways Consultant to see if he can obtain the current traffic flow for Spring Meadows. I will update you once I have a response.
- I await your update on possible improvements to the present situation regarding drop off and collection of children from the school.

Alternative Construction Access:

- We will produce a detailed Construction Method Statement once planning has been approved. At this stage, I would be happy to discuss with Highways and the landowner a possible temporary access to the site for some construction traffic from the existing track to the North.
- The Local Plan Review states in Policy RSA 19 *The site will be required to be developed in accordance with the following parameters: b. Access to the site will be provided from Spring Meadows.* Our proposals have therefore taken Spring Meadows as the point of access to stay in accordance with this parameter.
- Due not only to stipulation of access being provided from Spring Meadows in the Local Plan Review but also visibility splays, speed limits and financial costs permanent access from this location would not be an option.
- Highways West Berkshire have reviewed the Transport Statement we have provided and confirmed that in the Local Plan Review it states: *The suitability of the site, including traffic generation, has already been considered by the LHA and the site has been deemed suitable for the scale of development proposed.*

Drainage and Sewage:

- Since the meeting on Tuesday 23rd September, I have been in contact with our Drainage Engineers and discussed the concerns of the Parish with regard to Foul and Surface Water drainage. I have requested he examines all the design options and confirms a scheme that will ensure the required safe disposal of both Foul and Surface Water from the site. I am happy to share this design with you once complete.

Thames Water:

- Please see attached documentation from Thames Water dated 21st June 2023 confirming they have sufficient capacity (foul water) for 18 new houses (This figure is now 16)
- Please see attached document from Thames Water dated 23 March 2023 confirming they have sufficient capacity of clean water to serve 18 properties (This figure is now 16)

Site Elevation and Privacy:

- We are happy to include additional planting within our landscape proposals between No 21 and 23 Spring Meadows and Plot 5 and 6 on the proposed development.
- We can install the proposed 6ft high close boarded fence to the southern boundary onto the school playing fields at the start of any development. This will then provide the necessary screening in this location.
- The existing gate used for emergency access will be repositioned in a suitable location once development completed. This gateway will remain for emergency exit purposes only.

Fire Appliance coverage:

- My Architect has confirmed: *See the attached site plan. I have added in red the 20m and 45m radii which shows that plots 14, 15 and 16 are well within the required distances. Plots 6 and 7, which are the farthest away to the south also appear to be fine, with the distance to the front door of around 33m and 34m.*

Access to the Building

Distance: For a pump appliance to be effective, there should be vehicle access to within 45 meters of all points inside a dwelling house or a flat. This distance is typically measured along the route of the hose from the rear of the fire appliance.

Reversing Distance: A crucial rule is that fire and rescue service vehicles should not have to reverse more than 20 meters from the end of a dead-end access road.

Site Plan attached showing these distances

I hope the above information will give more clarity on the points and concerns raised and our commitment to produce a scheme that will be acceptable.

Great Shefford Parish Council wishes to thank the developer for their ongoing engagement and cooperation with the Parish Council and residents.

At a scheduled meeting of Great Shefford Parish Council on 6th October 2025, the Parish Council resolved to submit the following response to the planning application:

Great Shefford Parish Council objects to planning application 25/01800/FULMAJ (proposing 16 dwellings, new access, public open space and landscaping) on the following grounds:

1. Access:

The Parish Council considers the proposed access arrangements inadequate both during construction and after occupation. The submitted Transport Report does not accurately reflect current or potential vehicle movements in and around Spring Meadows.

The developer has suggested that the school should use the Blakeney Fields entrance, however, this would not be suitable. Parents were previously asked to use the Spring Meadows entrance due to ongoing issues associated with the Blakeney Fields access. Although the school grounds include a roundabout, it is located within the fenced area of the site and is not accessible for vehicle circulation. In addition, staff parking on the approach to the school significantly limits available space for residents and parents during term time.

2. Drainage and Sewage Capacity:

There are serious concerns that the existing and proposed drainage and sewage infrastructure is insufficient to accommodate an additional 16 dwellings.

Over recent years, there has been a great deal of publicity given to the Lambourn Valley sewage issues in the national press and TV, as well as vociferous local complaints, of manholes overflowing, sewage flooding the streets and residents' properties. A number of homes in Great Shefford have suffered loss of sanitary facilities, such as unusable backed up toilets and ground floor showers. Unlike many other areas within the Thames Water catchment, where storms lead to sewer flooding, our problems are mainly caused by groundwater flooding. In their report, Thames water themselves state that they are confident the sewer has capacity for the extra homes **provided that the pipes are secure from groundwater infiltration.**

Sewer flooding by groundwater, and subsequent river pollution in our valley, is nothing new, and for years the Environment Agency have not taken any punitive action to stop it. However, the issue has attracted far more attention by Thames Water in recent years and our area is now firmly amongst those at the top end of TW's priority list, possibly due to pressure from local residents and local groups such as SAGLUV (Sewage Action Group for the Lambourn Valley), and Thames Water began a programme to reline the pipes and reseal manholes. In the past, one of the major sources of pollution was the discharge of untreated sewage into the river at the East Shefford Sewage Pumping Station whenever groundwater threatened to flood the sewer.

We would, however, as a parish, like to understand what absolute and specific assessments have been made by Thames Water to understand the impact of this development on the Great Shefford waste system further into the village (Station Way and the lower end of the Wantage Road) and to see evidence that relining work undertaken will ensure that the drainage and sewage infrastructure is fit for purpose.

3. Impact on Flood Alleviation Measures:

Flood alleviation works were completed in 2025, and their effectiveness is still being monitored. In light of recent groundwater flooding incidents in 2024, increasing housing density adjacent to the flood alleviation construction without sufficient time to assess its long-term performance is considered premature.

4. Loss of Privacy:

Due to the elevated nature of the site and the current layout, some proposed dwellings would overlook existing properties in Spring Meadows, along the southern boundary, resulting in a loss of privacy.

Great Shefford Parish Council is mindful that the site has been allocated in the West Berkshire Local Plan 2023 – 2041, therefore, if West Berkshire Council is minded to approve the application, the Parish Council requests that the following matters are addressed prior to approval or secured through planning conditions:

- A suitable alternative access route is provided for both the construction phase and permanent access, to avoid exacerbating existing congestion within Spring Meadows.
- The Transport Report is reassessed and resubmitted with data more accurately representing current and predicted traffic conditions.
- An assessment of school-related traffic movements to and from Shefford Primary School is undertaken and considered in the overall transport evaluation.
- A robust foul and surface water drainage strategy is submitted, supported by an updated Flood Risk Assessment that includes the wider area beyond the site boundary to account for surface water run-off.
- The dwelling layout is amended to remove or reduce overlooking of existing properties along the southern boundary of Spring Meadows.
- The designated area of public open space within the proposed development is formally transferred to the ownership of Great Shefford Parish Council upon completion of the development, to secure its retention in public ownership and its long-term management in the interests of the local community. In addition, the Parish Council seeks the provision of a commuted sum equivalent to 20 years of maintenance costs, to support the ongoing upkeep and preservation of the open space to an appropriate standard.

Covenant Agreements (1988)

The Parish Council also wishes to draw attention to two agreements dated May & August 1988, between Highcross Limited, West Shefford Farms Limited and Newbury District Council

Summary of the covenants on the land:

May 1988 Agreement:

- Seventh Schedule (f): The area shown edged brown on Plan No. 2 “shall not at any time hereafter be used... for any purpose other than as a Football Pitch with Associated Landscaping or for agriculture PROVIDED that the Owner shall have first obtained the written consent of the Local Authority... for such change of use to agriculture.”

August 1988 Agreement:

- Fifth Schedule: “Not at any time hereafter to use the Open Space for any purpose other than as open space recreation land.”

The Parish Council requests confirmation and clarification from West Berkshire Council as to whether the proposed development would constitute a breach of the terms of these agreements.

Summary

In summary, while Great Shefford Parish Council recognises that this site is allocated in the West Berkshire Local Plan 2023–2041, it maintains that the current application fails to adequately address key issues relating to access, drainage, flooding, and residential amenity. The Council therefore objects to the proposal unless the above matters are resolved to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Piers Storey

Chairman

Great Shefford Parish Council

7th October 2025