

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

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.