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Clerk of the Council, Wokingham Rural District Council, Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berks.	Your reference  Our reference SE2/1848/21 9/6 Date 28 March 1974
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TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1971  
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF LAND AT WOOSEHILL, WOKINGHAM  
3 APPLICATIONS BY A CONSORTIUM OF LANDOWNERS AND BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
REFERRED UNDER SECTION 35  
7 APPEALS BY MR S J PHILLIPS, HAMPSHIRE & CITY ESTATES LIMITED, FAIRVIEW  
ESTATES (ENFIELD) LIMITED, MR D J HANDS AND P H SMITH (READING) LIMITED  
MADE UNDER SECTION 36

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to say that consideration has been given to the report of the Inspector, Mr P S Maynard, DipTP, FRTP, who held a local inquiry into:

i. an application (Application E) by a consortium of landowners for residential and ancillary development of about 363 acres of land at Woosehill, Wokingham. The Secretary of State had directed in pursuance of Section 35 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 that the application be referred to him for decision instead of being dealt with by the local planning authority;

ii. two applications (Applications F & G) by Berkshire County Council for a Roman Catholic Primary School on about 3 acres of land on the north side of Chestnut Avenue, Wokingham, and for a County Primary School on about 5.75 acres of land south of Chestnut Avenue, which are deemed to have been referred to the Secretary of State under Section 35 of the Act of 1971 for decision;

iii. an appeal by Mr S J Phillips (Appeal A) against the refusal of the Wokingham Borough Council, acting on behalf of the Berkshire County Council, to permit the residential development of about 39 acres of Scots Farm, Chestnut Avenue, Wokingham.

iv. an appeal by Hampshire and City Estates Limited (Appeal H) against the failure of the Wokingham Borough Council, acting on behalf of the Berkshire County Council, to issue a decision within the statutory period on an application for residential development (250 houses) and public open space on land adjoining Scots Farm, Chestnut Avenue, Wokingham;

v. three appeals by Fairview Estates (Enfield) Limited (Appeal D) against the failure of the Wokingham Borough Council, acting on behalf of the Berkshire County Council, to issue decisions within the statutory period on 3 applications for housing, shopping, public open space, primary

schools and access roads on about 313.8 acres of land at Woosehill, Wokingham;

vi. an appeal by Mr D J Hands (Appeal B) against the refusal of the Wokingham Borough Council, acting on behalf of the Berkshire County Council, to permit the residential development of, and to include in the Implementation Plan for West Wokingham, some 50 acres of land to the east of Bearwood Road, Wokingham;

vii. an appeal by P H Smith (Reading) Limited (Appeal C) against the refusal of the Wokingham Borough Council, acting on behalf of the Berkshire County Council, to permit the residential development (122 houses) of about 17.5 acres of land at Folly Court, on the southeastern side of Barkham Road, Wokingham.

2. A copy of the Inspector's report is enclosed. In his conclusions the Inspector said:

### General

i. Despite the decrease in the population trends in the south-east, the growth in Planning Area 8 has gone ahead at a considerably faster rate than that envisaged in the Strategic Plan for the South East. There is no apparent indication that this will change.

ii. It has been generally recognised that there is about 6.2 - 8.4 years' supply of land which could be available for building. The information is not wholly agreed by the parties and was presented in differing forms, but what is clear is that the figures include land without planning permission and that at least part of a possible expansion area for Bracknell New Town has been taken into account in addition to consultant's proposals for Winnersh which have yet to be considered by the Berkshire County Council. Moreover, the areas suggested for development contained in the consultative document, the Yellow Book, which include Woosehill, have been included. This, coupled with the fact that it is unlikely that there will be any material releases of defence lands in the Aldershot complex, indicates that land on which there are no obstacles to early development must be considerably less than a 6 year supply. The exact position will no doubt be revealed by the Area 8 Study now taking place. However, for a major growth area this small reserve seems, in my view, to be inadequate.

iii. The position in Central Berkshire appears to be even less satisfactory. Taking into account releases of land on appeal there is still only 28 months' supply of land with planning permission on sites of over 3 acres, or if land without planning permission where starts could be made within 2 years is included the total is increased to about 4 years. In my view this is materially less than what is needed for even short term planning requirements and provides builders with little chance of having an assured supply of land or to retain an effective work force to ensure the smooth continuity of development schemes. To claim that there is an 8 year supply of land by including sites which might become available in 5 years' time is totally unrealistic.

iv. In Wokingham itself only 304 houses could be built. Even if the exceptionally and somewhat unrealistic low building rate of 175 units in 1972, as opposed to the 464 units of 1962, is used, this indicates a land availability of only about 1¾ years, and if sites of under 1 acre without planning permission are included the supply is sufficient for less than 2½

years. This allows for but minimal growth and little or no choice for builders.

v. It has been represented that there is no need for further development in Wokingham as up to 500 houses are presently for sale. This is a situation not exclusive to Wokingham. The demand for houses is affected by many conditions and the position could just as rapidly change back to what it was 2 years ago, when supply could not keep pace with demand. Therefore, having regard to all the circumstances, in my opinion, it would be prudent to provide a measure of additional housing land in Area 8 before the results of the study are made known, despite its publication being scheduled for the end of next year.

vi. The question arises of whether Wokingham can contribute to this necessary growth. As the town's population has doubled in the last 10-11 years there have been strong pleas that it should be given a rest pending the assimilation of the growth that has been forced upon the community, or that it should not expand any further into the countryside having regard to the lack of central area and other facilities and the effect any large scale growth would have on the town's character and surroundings. However, I consider that. Wokingham, being an integral part of Planning Area 8 and strategically placed in relation to centres of employment and a potentially good communication pattern - although the commuter rail service to and from London is over-crowded - is capable of accepting a degree of further growth without destroying the character of the town or having a materially detrimental effect on the standard of life of the existing inhabitants. The material issues are whether the proposals are suitably located so as not to cause any unreasonable intrusion into the countryside, particularly having regard to the size and type of the consortium's proposals; what cumulative effect the proposals might have on the existing main traffic network and whether they would prejudice the formulation of a properly designed plan for the town following the publication of the traffic studies, the Area 8 Study and the subsequent production of structure plans for the area.

#### **Application E**

vii. Although the site is large and involves a considerable amount of agricultural land I feel that the proposals would not extend development into the countryside to an unreasonable degree as the area concerned is fairly compact and is bounded by existing residential development around at least half its perimeter and for the large part of the remainder it is contained by the very pleasant and extensive Woodlands along Bearwood Road and Simons Lane. In this connection, views across the open land are comparatively restricted and are only generally available from parts of Chestnut Avenue and Simons Lane, and in a lesser degree from the short frontage on Barkham Road, from the properties bordering the site, and from the small amount of riverside walk presently available to the public.

viii. The proposed development, which has the support of the county council, would be carried out comprehensively by a consortium of landowners who have entered into legal agreements designed to implement a Master Plan for the area. Although the application is in outline, nevertheless I am satisfied that the supporting illustrative details contained in the Master Plan would result in a high standard of comprehensive development with adequate facilities to make the area largely self sufficient and that the scheme of development would not prejudice a future plan for the town as a whole. As housing associations wish to take part and the Wokingham Borough Council has been invited to participate, this would provide the opportunity to build some much needed rented accommodation within the framework of the overall scheme.

ix. There are no infrastructure problems in relation to the comprehensive scheme itself. The first stage of the diversion of foul sewage flows to the Wargrave sewage disposal plant should be finished by 1975, in time for the completion of the first houses in Woosehill. Proposals for the disposal of surface water through dry flood parks to the Emm Brook are to the Thames Conservancy's requirements.

x. The existing road pattern with numerous small road junctions with the major roads, Reading Road and Barkham Road, is incapable of dealing with the large generation of traffic from the proposed Woosehill development. **Particularly it would be wrong to inflict an unrestricted extra volume of traffic on to Barkham Road in view of the level crossing difficulties, which have no foreseeable solution, and the fact that the road is already operating at about its theoretical capacity.**

xi. Although Reading Road has the drawback of, multiple side roads, I accept that this is the only highway capable of taking the major part of the volume of traffic likely to be generated by Woosehill. **The idea of having one main access to serve such a large area is perhaps revolutionary in concept.** Nevertheless, it has been accepted by the Berkshire County Council as highway and planning authority and, in my opinion, it has been adequately demonstrated that it would be workable and the safest method of dealing with the traffic now. No working drawings have been prepared for the proposed mini-roundabout, but the plan which has been put forward is in sufficient detail and of a design based upon flow calculations which satisfies me that it would provide a suitable junction with A329 and have adequate reserve capacity. Methods for dealing with emergencies caused by accidents or spillage on the highway at the main junction appear to have been thoroughly provided for, and are satisfactory to those who have to operate the emergency services. Additionally, the Thames Conservancy is satisfied that plans for the junction and main spine road can be carried out without detriment to the flood plain of the Emm Brook.

xii. The small amount of extra traffic which would be put on to Simons Lane would not materially increase hazards or highway danger. **On the other hand, the volume of traffic from the consortium's site which would be directed to Barkham Road is just about as much extra as the highway could reasonably be expected to take in the light of the fact that it would result in a 32% overload on the capacity of the Class 11 road, as computed by the consortium, and the presence of the level crossing. Obviously the overload would be greater on the county council's smaller estimate of the road's capacity.**

xiii. Although the visual outlook for some of the residents beyond the northern and south-eastern boundaries of the site would be affected to a degree, the detriment to the residents of the eastern side of Westward Road would be much greater as they would virtually abut the first and busiest part of the spine road where it would pass through the narrow neck of the site. Although the application is in outline and supported by details of the Master Plan, it would be most difficult to alter the route of the road at this spot. Therefore, it is particularly important that the very fine row of oak trees should be preserved and that consideration should be given to the provision of some form of protection for the residents from annoyance caused by traffic noise and vehicle headlights, perhaps in the form of acoustic banking and landscape screening. Mr Morgan of No 1 Westward Road has demonstrated that his property would be particularly vulnerable from the spine road and spur road proposals. It is to be hoped that the consortium could alleviate this problem when preparing their detailed layouts.

xiv. **Undoubtedly proposals which would increase the population by  $\frac{1}{2}$  would have an effect on the town's facilities such as schools, shops, car**

parking and medical services and would aggravate central area problems. Nevertheless, as the development would be phased over 8 years this would provide time in which to rectify such defects including improvements to the local road pattern. As the building of the health centre appears to be particularly urgent, the plan might, with advantage, be re-examined to attempt to bring it forward to an earlier phase. Moreover, consideration ought to be given to the provision of a community centre to serve all age groups.

xv. Although the town as a whole is seriously deficient in public open space this is no reason to reject the Woosehill proposals. The on-site facilities would provide a good standard of open space for the extra population, and it is possible that it could be used to a degree by other townfolk, thus making some contribution to the general shortfall. Moreover, Fox Hill, which is presently privately owned, would become accessible to the general public. Because it would be close to an area of development there is no reason to believe that it would deteriorate from an aesthetic point of view, or that the wildlife would be materially affected.

xvi. The principle of the one main access to A329 to take the majority of the traffic generated by Woosehill would lead to an eventual overload of the principal road and increased central area traffic which would require some measure of relief. Some residential proposals, already permitted, including those on appeal, would add to this overload. With the predominantly east-west axis of vehicular flows, due to the location of major employment centres, I feel that the situation on A329 could become increasingly acute after A329(M) is completed to Amen Corner, particularly as it is proposed to close the link with A321 to the north of the town. It would mean a large proportion of locally generated traffic would have to travel a fair distance to one end or the other of the A329(M) - and mostly along A329 - in order to reach the M4 motorway. I am sure that the county council's transportation studies, in conjunction with the Planning Area 8 Study, would examine this problem and the need to accelerate the provision of an inner distributor road so that the town centre could be pedestrianised as early as possible. In this connection, I inspected the town centre on a Saturday morning and, although it was crowded, I found it to be no worse than many other towns of comparable size and better than some.

xvii. I draw attention to the consortium's remarks about the land hoarding charge (para 21.3) and to the Wokingham Borough Council's view that if permission is granted a condition is needed in relation to the phasing of the proposals (para 34.38).

#### Appeals A and H

xviii. The development of the land concerned would constitute an unwarrantable and unco-ordinated outward extension into the countryside of solely residential development without any supporting facilities. The erection of about 250 dwellings would materially increase the use of Simons Lane and Woosehill Lane North, junctions with A329 and cause additional danger and hazard which would seriously interfere with the free flow of traffic on the main road.

xix. The area should not be developed except as part of the comprehensive Woosehill scheme (Application E).

#### Appeal B

xx. Whilst no doubt a satisfactory and comprehensive distribution of land uses could be arrived at for this site, which approximates to the

area of the Woosehill scheme minus Fox Hill, all 3 appeal proposals make use of the existing pattern of roads.

xxi. The existing road network is quite incapable of taking, even on a temporary basis, the amount of traffic likely to be generated. **Apart from the extra hazards and danger which would be created at the junctions with the main roads, serious overloading of Barkham Road would be caused; and this Class II road is already subjected to the constraints of the level crossing.**

#### Applications F and G

xxii. Irrespective of whether the Woosehill scheme is permitted these 2 proposed schools are required to serve the existing population in this part of the town. Site G intrudes to a minor degree into the rural area, but a school, by its very nature with generous open space about the building, is a suitable use for an urban fringe area.

xxiii. Provision has been made to integrate both schools into the Woosehill scheme, but arrangements for vehicular access are satisfactory to the highway authority whether the consortium's proposals go ahead or not.

xxiv. Although strict cost limitations make it difficult to provide any material amount of car parking facilities, no doubt the county council will keep in mind the views expressed by several of the local residents on this aspect.

#### Appeal B

xxv. Although the proposed dwellings concerned in this case would use well under half the total area of the site would not be readily visible from the surrounding area and the town would benefit from the dedication of 29 acres of woodland as public open space, I consider that the proposal, in itself, would result in an undesirable extension of urban development into the countryside beyond the reasonable limits of the town. Moreover it would introduce residential estate development into this magnificent area of unspoiled woodland to the detriment of the rural character of Bearwood Road as a whole.

xxvi. Taking into consideration the need generally to provide more housing land and the government's policy in relation to 'white' land in a major growth area, I am of the view that this proposal cannot be looked upon as a logical or reasonable extension of the Woosehill proposals which in this direction would be well contained by the extensive Bearwood Road woodlands. Moreover, if this proposal were to be allowed it could prejudice the design of a satisfactory plan for the town as a whole which should stem from the Area 8 Study and subsequent structure plans.

xxvii. It would be physically possible to have a vehicular link to the consortium's scheme. However, I cannot accept that it is either necessary or desirable, on the tenuous ground of the possible lockage of the mini-roundabout, for the Woosehill development to have access to Bearwood Road. I have already found that the emergency provisions for such a contingency have been adequately provided for in the consortium's scheme.

xxviii. Suggestions have been made that a road link from this site to Woosehill would be used as a western by-pass to the town, although I am of the opinion that the Bearwood Road access would be too far west to make this a readily attractive proposition, **there are always those people who will go considerable distances out of their way to avoid delays such as those which occur at the Barkham Road level crossing; as witnessed by the**

use of the existing 'rat runs' in the town. Therefore, I feel that there could be an unnecessary and undesirable additional flow, particularly at peak hours, through Woosehill if the sites were to be linked.

xxix. Whether or not the link were to be effected, I doubt whether the maximum amount of traffic which would emerge on to Bearwood Road would have any materially detrimental effect from a traffic point of view as the road is currently operating at well below its capacity. Nevertheless from a visual amenity aspect, it would be undesirable to introduce more vehicles on to this charming country road.

xxx. Doubtless some vehicles from the site would turn south. **These must be considered in relation to other development proposals as more traffic would add to the eventual overloading of Barkham Road.** Traffic from this appeal site, together with that which might be generated from other potential development sites, could cause the county council to have to improve Winnersh cross-roads slightly sooner than necessary. This is not a matter of paramount importance as the junction is going to need fairly early attention if the Woosehill proposal goes ahead.

### Appeal C

xxxi. Despite the existence of the large electricity sub-station to the west of the grounds of Folly Court and part of the Woosehill site being on the opposite side of Barkham Road, I take the view that the reasonable limit of urban development in this south-western part of the town is the eastern side of Blagrove Lane. Irrespective of the large number of trees on the site and the extensive landscaping scheme proposed, to develop residentially this 17 acre site would materially intrude upon and reduce the valuable open rural wedge between Wokingham and Barkham and tend towards the eventual coalescence of the two communities.

xxxii. That the house and grounds have been allowed to become derelict is no valid reason for permitting a type of development which would be to the detriment of the area and which could prejudice the preparation of a satisfactory plan for Wokingham and its environs.

xxxiii. Although it may not be feasible to restore the grounds for agricultural or horticultural use it is the type of site which might be turned to some form of institutional use. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association has already expressed an interest.

xxxiv. A satisfactory new access could be provided to the site, and the idea of stopping-off the northern end of Blagrove Lane and re-routing its existing traffic through the site would result in improved junction conditions with Barkham Road. Nevertheless, the additional traffic which would be generated by the proposed development would increase the interference with the free flow of traffic along Barkham Road which could be at a greater volume than at present as a result of other development proposals. **Also it would lead to an unacceptable overload of the Class II road, which already is subjected to serious delays caused by the level crossing.**

3. The Inspector recommended that the referred planning applications be permitted subject to certain conditions and that all 7 appeals be dismissed.

4. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's conclusions and accepts his recommendations. Therefore he hereby refuses planning permission for the proposals contained in the 4 applications by Hampshire & City Estates Limited (1) and Fairview Estates (Enfield) Limited (3) and dismisses those

appeals; dismisses the 3 appeals made by Mr S J Phillips, Mr D J Hands, and P H Smith (Reading) Limited, and grants planning permission:

i. for the development of 5.75 acres of land to the south of Chestnut Avenue, Wokingham by the erection thereon of a County Primary School in accordance with the application made by the Berkshire County Council's Director of Education on 26 January 1972 subject to the following conditions:

a. Approval of the details of the siting, design, and external appearance of the buildings, the means of access thereto and the landscaping of the site (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be obtained from the local planning authority.

b. Application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority not later than 31 March 1977.

c. The development hereby permitted shall be begun on or before whichever is the later of the following dates:

1. 31 March 1979; or

2. The expiration of two years from the final approval of the reserved matters or, in the case of approval on different dates, the final approval of the last such matter to be approved.

ii. for the development of approximately 3 acres of land to the north of Chestnut Avenue, Wokingham, by the erection thereon of a Roman Catholic Primary School in accordance with the application made by the Berkshire County Council's Director of Education on 17 April 1972 subject to the following conditions:

a. Approval of the details of the siting, design and external appearance of the buildings, the means of access thereto and the landscaping of the site (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be obtained from the local planning authority.

b. Application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority not later than 31 March 1977.

c. The development hereby permitted shall be begun on or before whichever is the later of the following dates:

1. 31 March 1979; or

2. The expiration of two years from the final approval of the reserved matters or] in the case of approval on different dates, the final approval of the last such matter to be approved.

iii. for the development of approximately 363 acres of land at Woosehill, Wokingham, for residential and ancillary purposes in accordance with application No WOK B/O/24/73 dated 2 March 1973 subject to the following conditions:

1. a. Approval of the details of the siting, design and external appearance of the buildings, the means of access thereto and the landscaping of the site. (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be obtained from the local planning authority.

b. Application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority not later than 31 March 1977.



2. The development hereby permitted shall be begun on or before whichever is the later of the following dates:

i. 31 March 1979; or

ii. The expiration of two years from the final approval of the reserved matters or, in the case of approval on different dates, the final approval of the last such matter to be approved.

3. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with a properly phased programme of work to be agreed by the local planning authority or in default of agreement as shall be determined by the Secretary of State.

4. The existing trees shall be retained and shall not be felled, lopped, or topped without the previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees removed without such consent or dying, or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased shall be replaced with trees of such size and species as may be agreed with the local planning authority or in default of agreement as shall be determined by the Secretary of State.

5. The plans submitted in accordance with condition 1(a) of this permission shall indicate the location of all the trees on the land together with the species of each tree.

6. Works to protect the residents of the eastern side of Westward Road from the effects of traffic using the stretch of the proposed spine road where it would run through the narrow neck of the site immediately southwards of the A329 shall be carried out in accordance with a scheme to be agreed with the local planning authority or in default of agreement as shall be determined by the Secretary of State.

5. Attention is drawn to the fact that an applicant for approval of the reserved matters referred to in this permission has a statutory right of appeal to the Secretary of State if approval is refused or granted conditionally or if the authority fail to give notice of their decision within the prescribed period.

6. This letter does not convey any approval or consent which may be required under any enactment, byelaw, order or regulation other than section 23 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

I am  
Your obedient Servant



LEONARD MANN  
Authorised by the Secretary of State  
to sign in that behalf