

## **Hall Farm Development Planning Application – EEG Comments January 2026**

These comments on the University of Reading's (UoR) planning application (Ref: 252498) for the proposed development at Hall Farm are submitted by the Earley Environmental Group (EEG). The EEG is a local community group aimed at helping to protect Earley's natural environment. It has around 350 members, mostly living in the Earley area. Its work includes conserving and improving the environment within Earley, and protecting and enhancing Earley's green spaces.

### Adverse Impact of Increased Traffic

Having assessed the future year-traffic forecasts given within the Environmental Impact Assessment Chapter 17, Transport Assessment 2025, the EEG is concerned that there will be substantial increases in traffic on some roads in the Earley area resulting from the UoR's proposed development at Hall Farm. These increases will have an adverse impact on the lives of Earley's residents and wildlife, including delays to traffic, severance effects and adverse impacts on the general amenity of the area.

According to the traffic forecasts given in Table 17.9 for the year 2040 when the proposed development is planned to be completed (the Operational Traffic Appraisal), there will be notable increases in peak-hour traffic on some residential roads in Lower Earley, and on some of the adjacent principal roads serving Earley. The Table below shows the increases in two-way AM peak-hour, PM peak-hour and 24-hour daily traffic forecasts on the most affected roads in the Earley area, as given in the Transport Assessment.

Highway Link	AM Peak Hour		PM Peak Hour		24 hr Daily	
	Name	Base	% Change	Base	% Change	Base
Meldreth Way	354	41%	371	28%	3,803	32%
Lower Earley Way (north)	3,321	9%	2,889	14%	32,450	9%
Lower Earley Way (south)	3,076	5%	2,787	6%	30,647	5%
Lower Earley Way (east)	2,112	4%	2,194	-2%	22,788	3%
Hatch Farm Way	1,730	22%	1,530	41%	17,038	27%
Shinfield Road ERR (north)	1,814	42%	1,917	32%	6,672	34%
Observer Way	1,282	36%	1,360	32%	13,835	34%

Changes in Traffic Forecast for 2040 with the Proposed Development (Table 17.9)

For Meldreth Way, the forecast for year 2040 is for a 41% increase in AM peak hour traffic, a 28% increase in the PM peak and a 32% increase in daily traffic. Of the principal roads serving Earley, it is forecast that there will be a 41% increase in traffic on

Hatch Farm Way in the PM peak hour, 42% increase on Shinfield Road in the AM peak and a 36% increase in traffic on Observer Way (north of Arborfield) in the AM peak. These represent substantial increases in traffic on parts of the road network serving the Earley area. Some of this traffic will use the local road network to access residential and commercial areas.

Notably, there are lower increases in traffic forecast for Lower Earley Way, even with the inclusion of the proposed bridge over the M4 and the new roundabout junction at Meldreth Way/Lower Earley Way. Within the development area, the traffic flows for the new approach road to the bridge are forecast to be 13,530 two-way daily, with around 1,300 two-way in each of the peak hours. The proposed bridge and new junction at Meldreth Way will, therefore, provide a major route for traffic between the proposed development and the Lower Earley area, as substantiated by the proposed need to widen Lower Earley Way to the east of Meldreth Way to cater for additional traffic volumes.

In reality, as a result of the development, there will be substantial increases in overall traffic volumes using the road network within the Earley area. The consequential increased delays to traffic, will encourage drivers to find routes through the Lower Earley residential area, adversely impacting roads such as Meldreth Way and Rushey Way.

Adding to the forecast traffic increases, it is understood that, in the previous set of forecasts for the development, the August 2024 Transport Assessment Report by Stantec, a background growth of 20% was included as part of the traffic forecasting scenario. It is not clear, however, whether such background growth should have been, and has been, included in the 2025 version of the forecasts. Inclusion of such a 20% background growth will add extra traffic to the forecasts given in the 2025 Transport Assessment. With this addition, while the percentage increase in traffic generated by the proposed development would be the same, the overall volumes of traffic using roads in and around Earley will be higher in the forecast years, increasing delays, severance and loss of amenity.

Even without a 20% increase, the EEG is concerned that, with such substantial increases in overall traffic on Earley's road network, routes through the residential area will become attractive for traffic joining and leaving the principal road network. This is particularly the case for the Meldreth Way/Carshalton Way route via Rushey Way, and while this route is to be defined as an 'Active Travel Route' under the development, it appears from the proposal documents that it will remain open to motorised traffic.

#### Additional Mitigation

The Lower Earley area needs to be protected from the adverse environmental impact of increased traffic resulting from the proposed development. Traffic management measures need to be implemented to ensure that through-traffic along routes such as

Meldreth Way/Carshalton Way is discouraged. These measures should ensure that residents retain easy access to the residential area, whilst suppressing unwarranted through-traffic movements. Most importantly, Lower Earley's existing green spaces need to be protected, enhanced and improved, as these provide routes and habitats for wildlife, and reduce the impact of traffic noise and air pollution. The proposed mitigation relating to the impact of the development appear either to be located within the development area, or to be additional highway infrastructure measures required to cater for forecast increases in traffic flows. There is little mitigation proposed for the residential areas of Lower Earley.

To address this, the EEG proposes the recognition by the local authority of the green corridor that runs along the northern side of Lower Earley Way forming a green buffer between this and Lower Earley Way and the M4. The green corridor comprises a series of green spaces that are linked through footpaths, open ground and woodland, and runs between Wokingham Road at The George PH in the east to the Shinfield Road junction at the Black Boy Roundabout in the west. The EEG has developed the outline proposals for the corridor and has gained strong support for its adoption as a recognised green corridor. Following its recognition, the EEG would like to see the corridor formally designated as a Local Nature Reserve.

Towards its eastern end, the Lower Earley Green Corridor runs along the River Loddon at Riverside Park. To the south of this, the river forms a key element of the proposed development's Country Park. The Lower Earley Green Corridor and Loddon Garden Village Country Park are therefore naturally linked, forming continuous green routes between the proposed development area and the Lower Earley residential area. The linking of the green corridors would support the recommendations of the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy which, under which Priority 7, requires the improvement of the quality of urban habitats, and includes parts of both corridors on its Habitat Map for the protection for wildlife.

#### Concluding Remarks

The EEG is concerned that, with the proposed development, the substantial forecast increase in overall traffic for parts of Earley's road network will make routes through the residential area more attractive for drivers joining and leaving the principal road network. This will adversely affect the lives of residents and wildlife living within, and using, the area; particularly along routes such as Meldreth Way/Carshalton Way.

The EEG acknowledges the proposed development's green credentials and welcomes its EcoValley aspects, including the proposed Country Park, ecological enhancements and public open spaces, as well as the retention of agricultural land. The EEG would welcome the opportunity to work with the UoR to enhance green spaces in the area, as it has already done with Swallows Meadow.

The proposal is, however, a large-scale development that includes up to 2,800 homes, with more housing to be added to the area over time. The proposed development is in close proximity to Lower Earley, which itself is a large-scale housing development. With the proposed development, Lower Earley will no longer be a new 'edge of urban area settlement' and will instead become an established 'semi-inner urban area'. The impact of the proposed development on the lives of residents and wildlife in Lower Earley will therefore be substantial.

The EEG calls for additional mitigation measures to be implemented to protect the area from the adverse impact of increased traffic growth in the area. These are additional traffic management measures to be implemented within Lower Earley to discourage through-traffic, and the formal recognition of the Lower Earley Green Corridor by Wokingham Borough Council, in line with the priorities and habitat protection recommended by the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

BC/final