

Extract from the Minutes of the Eastern Area Planning Committee held on the 03 August 2016

Application No. & Parish: 16/01034/OUTMAJ - Land opposite Hall Place Farm Stables, Sulham Hill, Tilehurst

(Councillor Emma Webster declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 4(1) by virtue of the fact that she had already commented on and predetermined the planning application. As such she would not be taking part in the consideration of the matter and would take no part in the debate or voting on the matter other than to address the Committee as Ward Member.)

(Councillor Tim Metcalfe declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(1) by virtue of the fact that he knew the owner of the site and those living in neighbouring properties. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.)

(Councillor Keith Chopping declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(1) by virtue of the fact that he knew two individuals with an interest in this site. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.)

(Councillor Webster left the Committee at 6.34pm.)

Councillor Graham Bridgman referred to discussions held at the site visits for agenda items 4(1) and 4(2) in relation to speaking rights being extended at Committee due to the levels of public interest. He therefore proposed suspension of standing orders to allow an extension to ten minutes of speaking time for each group of speakers on these two applications. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Peter Argyle and was approved. Councillor Richard Crumly voted against this proposal.

Councillor Alan Law felt that this extension of speaking rights should also apply to agenda item 4(3) and he therefore proposed suspension of standing orders for this item also. Councillor Bridgman seconded the proposal which was then approved.

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4(1)) concerning Planning Application 16/01034/OUTMAJ in respect of an outline application for 39 residential units with all matters reserved.

Following the Planning Officer, Samantha Kremzer's, introduction to the report, Members asked a number of questions.

Councillor Bridgman sought clarity on the requirements for a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and a Landscape Visual Assessment (LVA) following the comments of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and whether these had been adhered to. Bryan Lyttle confirmed that a LVIA had been undertaken and had been provided as evidence to the Planning Inspector as part of the Examination of the Housing Site Allocations (HSA) Development Plan Document (DPD). The Planning Inspector had advised that he was content with the LVIA and this requirement had therefore been complied with. The Planning Officer added that issues relating to scale, design and layout of the site were not considerations for this outline application. This would become relevant at the reserved matters stage of the planning process.

Councillor Alan Macro also referred to the comments of the North Wessex Downs AONB and their suggestion that the access to the site be taken from Chapel Hill or Clements Mead. He was aware that Highways had a preference for Clements Mead and Councillor Macro asked that this be confirmed. The Planning Officer stated that access was a consideration for the reserved matters stage.

Councillor Macro then turned to the consultation comments of the Lead Local Flood Authority which stated that the requirements for a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) had not yet been met for this site. He queried whether this was a consideration for this outline application stage. The Planning Officer reiterated that the layout of the site was a consideration for the reserved matters stage and SuDS requirements would be confirmed once the proposed layout was clear. The comments from the Lead Local Flood Authority were based on indicative plans only.

Councillor Pamela Bale sought clarity on housing numbers. The application was for up to 39 residential units, but the update report made reference to approximately 35 dwellings and she therefore sought clarity on this point. Mr Lyttle explained that the HSA DPD stated approximately 35 dwellings and a potential increase of four dwellings would be compliant with this approximation.

Mr Lyttle then referred to comments made by the Planning Inspector on the overall housing numbers for the eastern area of West Berkshire based on the numbers outlined in the Core Strategy and the HSA DPD. The proposal in the HSA DPD was for 1200 new homes in the eastern area but the Planning Inspector voiced concerns that this was 200 short of the 1400 new homes (approximately) indicated in the Core Strategy and had queried this with West Berkshire Council's Planning Policy Officers. The Council had responded to this query by pointing out that the 1400 new homes in the Core Strategy was an approximate number. However, proposals did exist for additional homes to meet the Planning Inspector's concerns if necessary, this included the potential for an increased number on this and on other sites.

Councillor Crumly was concerned should this outline permission be granted and the Planning Inspector then rejected the HSA DPD or the proposals for the Eastern Area. He questioned whether it would be preferable to defer this decision until the Planning Inspector had determined the HSA DPD. Mr Lyttle commented that this was a matter for Members to consider. He did however reiterate the Planning Inspector's concerns at a reduced provision in the HSA DPD in comparison to the Core Strategy. Mr Lyttle also pointed out that the numbers in this outline application contributed to West Berkshire's Five Year Housing Land Supply (dated December 2015) and deferral of this item could put this at risk.

David Pearson added that should this application be deferred then the applicant could appeal on the grounds of non-determination and make an application for costs.

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Mrs Jean Gardner, Parish Council representative, and Mr Matthew Jeal/Ms Angela Miles, applicant/agent, addressed the Committee on this application.

Mrs Gardner in addressing the Committee raised the following points:

- She acknowledged that this was a relatively small site, but it was outside of the settlement boundary and although not located in the AONB, was close to it.

- Highway safety was a significant concern. Sulham Hill had no footpath and was a narrow, busy road with fast moving traffic.
- Little Heath School and local primary schools were at capacity in terms of pupil numbers and it was therefore unclear which schools the children who would live at this proposed development would go to. Traffic around Little Heath School was also a factor with numerous cars parking on Little Heath Road which was closely located to Sulham Hill.
- Mrs Gardner also voiced concern at the quality of life available for residents living on this site in future. There were no local facilities available, i.e. no library, the local church had a full congregation with no further capacity even after being extended, GP surgeries and dental practices were full and no recreation area was provided by West Berkshire Council.

Councillor Macro noted from the report that the proposed footpath to the Cornwell Centre would not be allowed by the Parish Council and queried the reasons for this. Mrs Gardner explained that as this footpath could not be monitored and in order to help protect the local landscape, only one access could be in place.

Councillor Bridgman referred to pressures being felt on all councils to meet housing needs and difficulties with finding land for housing as well as the extensive work which had gone into the HSA DPD, and questioned where alternative land could be found if this application was refused. Mrs Gardner acknowledged the point around difficulties in identifying land for housing, but in response to Councillor Bridgman's question advised that the site for this and the subsequent planning application were located at the edge of Tilehurst and there was no more land available beyond this within Tilehurst.

Ms Miles in addressing the Committee raised the following points:

- She pointed out that this was an outline application with all matters reserved. This application sought agreement in principle to a development for a maximum of 39 homes.
- The detail of the development would be subject to a further period of consultation when it reached the reserved matters stage and there was therefore the opportunity for further comments to be made and then considered. The plans produced to date were indicative and further work was to take place to confirm these, they were merely provided to demonstrate how the site could be developed.
- The site had been allocated for residential development in the HSA DPD and the sites which had been approved for this document had gone through a rigorous selection process.
- A number of consultation exercises had been conducted to date and the views that had been expressed had been considered by West Berkshire Council.
- As already referred to, the Planning Inspector had raised concerns as part of the Examination process for the HSA DPD on the ability to achieve the overall number for the eastern area indicated in the Core Strategy. It could therefore follow that additional sites would have to be found, particularly if applications such as these were refused.
- No concerns had been voiced by the Planning Inspector on the principle for developing this site.
- The report noted that West Berkshire Council could demonstrate a five year housing land supply and this site contributed to that supply. Subject to

permission being granted by Committee this evening, it was felt that homes could be built to completion by 2018/19. Refusal of this application could put the five year housing land supply at risk.

- Ms Miles did not feel that this application was premature. Its submission was consistent with local planning policy and significant weight needed to be given to the HSA DPD as stated in the planning report.
- The proposal did constitute sustainable development as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- The 'Keep Tilehurst Green' group had been seeking deferral of this application until post the publication of the Planning Inspector's report. However, this was not expected until early 2017 and Ms Miles felt that deferral would therefore be unreasonable.
- Approval of this outline application would not prejudice the outcome of the HSA DPD Examination. Ms Miles pointed out that the Planning Committee had already approved a development at Pangbourne Hill which was also identified as a development site in the HSA DPD.
- In terms of traffic concerns, access was to be considered at the reserved matters stage. However, the applicant felt that safe access could be achieved to the site from either Clements Mead or Sulham Hill. It was acknowledged that a modest traffic increase would result from the development of this site, but the impact of this would be offset by implementing highway related conditions. The Council's Highways Officers had not lodged any objections to this application.
- In terms of accessing local amenities, public transport would be available to residents and shops/local services were in walking and cycling distance.
- In terms of objections which related to the capacity of local services, Ms Miles pointed out that service providers had been consulted on the application and no objections had been raised. This included Education and Housing.
- CIL contributions would be discussed at the reserved matters stage in order to meet infrastructure needs arising from the development.
- A Flood Risk Assessment had been undertaken and the site fell within Flood Zone One. A strategy was therefore being put in place to manage flood risk in accordance with West Berkshire Council's policies. This would be developed for reserved matters discussions.
- Concerns for the future of Hall Place Riding Stables had been raised, but this development would have a minimal impact on the operation of the stables and would not impact on their viability. The stables were located on private land and as such there was no right of access. The stable owners had been made aware of proposals and would be offered alternative land for grazing by the land owner.
- Ms Miles concluded her presentation by reiterating that this site had been identified for residential development by West Berkshire Council and its development would be in accordance with Council Planning Policy. There were no technical grounds on which to refuse the application and planning permission was requested.

Councillor Law explained that he proposed acceptance of the HSA DPD at the West Berkshire Council meeting in November 2015, prior to further consultation and then consideration by the Planning Inspector. He was however concerned that this outline application seeking in principle permission was pre-empting the Planning Inspector's

determination and the HSA DPD was not yet approved policy. In response, Ms Miles reiterated that the site had been allocated for housing in the DPD and the Inspector had raised no objection to this in principle, the the Council was relying on the site coming forward early in its 5 year land supply figures, and that planning permission had been granted in identical circumstances at Pangbourne Hill

In response to a question from Councillor Bale, Mr Jeal confirmed that the site was owned by Sulham Estates. Councillor Bale then queried whether a covenant was in place on the land to retain it as amenity space and, if so, whether this application was in breach of the covenant. Mr Jeal explained that this was not the case and added that this was not a planning matter.

Councillor Bridgman sought clarity on affordable housing numbers and whether the Council's ratio requirements for affordable housing would be adhered to for the 39 dwellings proposed for this site. Mr Jeal firstly explained that the application would not necessarily be for 39 dwellings in total, but gave a commitment that regardless of the confirmed number of homes, 40% of all dwellings on the site would be affordable.

Councillor Emma Webster, speaking as Ward Member, made the following points:

- While the site was not located in the AONB, Sulham Hill was on the edge of it and the impact on the AONB therefore had to be a consideration.
- Local residents had been unaware of this proposal until consultation letters had been received from the Council. No earlier contact was made by the applicant.
- She felt the application was premature and should be delayed until the Planning Inspector had determined the HSA DPD. While it was noted that the applicant could lodge an appeal on non-determination, the appeal process was lengthy and the HSA DPD could be resolved by that time. She therefore felt there would be no disadvantage of deferring the decision until the Inspector had determined the HSA DPD and the document had become confirmed planning policy.
- Determining this application in principle was not straight forward when the impact on the surrounding area from up to 39 dwellings was unclear. Deferral would therefore be preferable. It was also not guaranteed that the Planning Inspector would approve this site for the HSA DPD.
- Councillor Webster questioned the projected traffic movements contained in the update report, particularly the number of vehicle movements estimated during peak times, i.e. 14 additional movements between 7-8am and 22 between 8am and 9am. This was felt to be unlikely when considering that some of these homes would be occupied by families with journeys to and from work, and on school run journeys.
- The shortage of housing in the HSA DPD in the eastern area had already been noted, but this was not the fault of Tilehurst.

Councillor Tony Linden, speaking as Ward Member, made the following points:

- He agreed that this application was premature and felt it was reasonable to defer this application until the Planning Inspector had determined the HSA DPD. This was anticipated in late October/early November 2016 and the document would then be adopted post consultation.

- The close location of the site to the AONB was a concern and time should be taken to ensure that plans for the development were right. The high level of public objection to the development of this site was another reason not to rush to make a decision on this outline application and the objections that had been raised needed to be taken into account.
- The impact on highways also gave cause for concern as did drainage from the site.
- No suitable alternative had as yet been identified for the stables and this needed clarification.

Councillor Richard Crumly queried whether Ward Members felt that the permission granted for Pangbourne Hill, referred to earlier in the item, was comparable to this site. Councillor Webster was unclear whether the sites were comparable and regardless stated that it was for Members to consider this site on its own merits.

A number of questions were then put to the Officers present. Councillor Law sought to understand the level of weight that should be given to the policies contained in the emerging HSA DPD. The view of Planning Policy Officers was that considerable weight should be given to it, but recent Planning Inspectorate appeal decisions had noted that the emerging plan carried little weight as it was not yet adopted. Councillor Law quoted a passage from a recent appeal decision as an example.

Bryan Lyttle responded by explaining that the NPPF advised decision makers to give weight to emerging plans. The level of weight was subject to criteria which included levels of preparation, unresolved objections to policies and the degree of consistency in the emerging plan with the NPPF. The NPPF also contained a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Applications which were considered sustainable should be approved either if they were in accordance with development plans or, in the absence of approved plans, if the benefits of an application outweighed its impact.

As had already been explained the HSA DPD was under Examination by the Planning Inspector and a number of questions had emerged for the Council from this process. It was queried whether the process for producing the HSA DPD was sound and this was confirmed by the Council. The Council had confirmed that evidence was in place which demonstrated the preferred distribution of homes in the eastern area including the allocation at Tilehurst. Policy requirements could also be delivered for this area.

Based on these points, Mr Lyttle felt that considerable weight should be given to the emerging HSA DPD in determining this application and Officers' recommendation was to grant planning permission.

Councillor Law noted these points but remained unclear on the level of weight when considering the views expressed by Planning Inspectors in determining recent appeal decisions. If the emerging HSA DPD was not given significant weight then there were grounds to refuse this application.

Councillor Bridgman queried what would happen in the event that the Planning Inspector rejected a site put forward in the HSA DPD. Mr Lyttle confirmed that a site could be rejected if the Planning Inspector did not feel that need was demonstrated. If this should occur then a replacement site, which had been rejected as part of the

formulation of the document, could be put forward. Ultimately, the Planning Inspector could find the HSA DPD itself unsound if there were concerns over sites.

Councillor Bale was concerned that the additional traffic movements from this development, outlined in the update report, did not reflect reality and for future reference asked Highways to consider their methodology for projecting traffic figures. Paul Goddard explained that traffic figures were projected via a nationally used database of traffic surveys which included traffic on residential roads. The figures in the update report did take account of the additional traffic movements from this proposed development at peak times and took into account the fact that many households would have two vehicles.

Mr Goddard also confirmed that traffic figures included school journeys and the local roads that were most frequently used for travelling to, for example, Little Heath School and Denefield School.

Councillor Law voiced his concerns that this application sought to pre-empt the views of the Planning Inspector on the HSA DPD. As already stated he supported the emerging HSA DPD which this site was a part of but this outline application contained a number of unknowns including issues relating to highways and density. He reiterated the comments made by the Planning Inspectorate on recent appeal decisions that the emerging HSA DPD carried little weight. Councillor Law therefore felt that the Committee could choose to refuse planning permission as the application did not conform to existing planning policies.

Councillor Metcalfe stated that he would be prepared to accept this application in principle. He was however disappointed that the aims for this site, highlighted in the Eastern Area Vision, had not been followed through, i.e. community use.

Councillor Crumly explained that he had listened carefully to the expert advice given by Officers and was of the view that their recommendation should be followed. A deferral of the application could result in a claim for costs being made against the Council and he did not feel there was a justifiable reason to either defer or refuse this application. He therefore proposed acceptance of Officers' recommendation to grant planning permission. This proposal was not seconded.

Councillor Bale responded to the many references made to the separate Committee decision for a site on Pangbourne Hill, which was also within the emerging HSA DPD. Councillor Bale pointed out that the Pangbourne Hill application was vastly more detailed than the outline application provided for this application and contained specific proposals on areas of importance. She did not therefore feel that the Pangbourne Hill application could be compared to this application. Councillor Law added his view that the only similarity was that both sites were recommended in the emerging HSA DPD.

Councillor Bale then stated her view that the application should be refused due to a lack of information and being contrary to existing policy. David Pearson advised that refusal on the grounds of a lack of information would not stand up at appeal for an outline application. However, the application being contrary to existing policy was a legitimate reason for refusal if members took the view that more weight should be given to existing policies than the emerging DPD.

Councillor Law commented that the issue of the Council incurring costs was much more likely to arise from non-determination of the application.

Councillor Bale then proposed to reject Officers' recommendation and refuse planning permission on the grounds that the application did not conform to existing planning policy and greater weight should be given to current and not emerging policy. The site was also outside of the settlement boundary. Councillor Quentin Webb seconded the proposal and clarified that this planning application did not conform with existing policies HSG1 and ENV18, both of which restricted developments in the countryside.

RESOLVED that the Head of Planning and Countryside be authorised to refuse planning permission for the following reasons:

Whilst the West Berkshire Council Housing Sites Allocation DPD was emerging it had yet to be adopted. The oral examination stage was completed in July 2016 and further work was required in the form of major and minor modifications before the inspector's report was produced and therefore only limited weight could be given to the policies in the emerging Development Plan at the time. The application site was outside of any defined settlement boundary and was land currently forming part of the countryside. This being the case the greater weight had been given to the saved policies of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 [WBDLP] and the policies contained in the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 [CS] and the proposed development ran contrary to the provisions of policy HSG1 of the WBDLP as the site was outside of any defined settlement boundary and to the provisions of policy ADDP1 of the CS which listed the possible exceptions where such development might be allowed.

Application No. & Parish: 16/01223/OUTMAJ - Land adjacent To Stonehams Farm, Dark Lane, Tilehurst

(Councillor Emma Webster declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 4(2) by virtue of the fact that she had already commented on and predetermined the planning application. As such she would not be taking part in the consideration of the matter and would take no part in the debate or voting on the matter other than to address the Committee as Ward Member.)

(Councillor Tim Metcalfe declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(2) by virtue of the fact that he knew the owner of the site and those living in neighbouring properties. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.)

(Councillor Keith Chopping declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(2) by virtue of the fact that he knew two individuals with an interest in this site. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4(2)) concerning Planning Application 16/01223/OUTMAJ in respect of an outline application for up to 66 residential units with access from Long Lane. Matters to be considered: Access.

Following the Planning Officer, Samantha Kremzer's, introduction to the report, Members asked a number of questions.

Councillor Metcalfe noted the concerns of the North Wessex Downs AONB which stated that the number of dwellings was greater than indicated in the HSA DPD and approval would force the development to encroach into the landscape buffer and queried whether this was the case. The Planning Officer explained that site layout and the impact on the landscape were reserved matters. The illustrative plans provided would not necessarily form part of any final approval for the site.

Councillor Alan Macro referred to the update report and queried the accuracy of the statement that the width of the proposed access road would widen to 19.2 metres where it joined Long Lane. The Planning Officer clarified that this width was a measurement of the full splay of the access road as it turned into Long Lane.

Councillor Graham Bridgman also referred to the update report and the fact that confirmation was awaited from the Tree Officer on whether any existing trees were worthy of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). The Planning Officer explained that this could not be confirmed at the present time, but was in the process of being considered.

Councillor Pamela Bale noted that the width of the proposed access road, aside from the point at which it joined Long Lane, was 5.5 metres and questioned whether this was suitable as this was too narrow for two cars to pass one another. She felt that traffic controls and road markings were needed when considering the likely traffic movements on this road. Paul Goddard explained that the junction for this proposed access road would be measured and marked out in the usual way and added that traffic controls could not be determined until the new road was in place.

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Mrs Jean Gardner, Parish Council representative, and Mr Matthew Jeal/Ms Angela Miles, applicant/agent, addressed the Committee on this application.

Mrs Gardner in addressing the Committee raised the following points:

- The proposal for this site was of greater concern than the previous application as it was located within the AONB.
- Highway safety issues were significant. The site visit was conducted within the summer holiday and school traffic movements could not be appreciated. This was of most concern for the two secondary schools (Little Heath and Denefield) and for Brookfields Special School, in particular for buses travelling to/from these schools. Transport to primary schools was also a concern and there were no suitable footpaths to walk to these schools.
- A further concern in relation to schools was the fact that they were at capacity and had no room to accommodate children who would live at this site. There was also no capacity in the local doctor and dental surgeries.
- There was no library and no recreation area was available to residents. The adjacent wooded area was not well managed and was liable to flooding.
- Mrs Gardner expressed concern at the accuracy of the traffic movement figures provided by Highways. In addition, this did not take into account the fact that many of the immediately local roads could only accommodate single file traffic. This created difficulties for motorists travelling to the M4.

Councillor Marigold Jaques referred to a 'near miss' accident which had occurred on the site visit day at the Dark Lane roundabout and queried whether accidents

occurred frequently in this area. Mrs Gardner explained that in general, people drove very carefully due to poor sight lines in many areas.

Councillor Richard Somner referred to the point made that there was no library. He noted that there was a library, but it was not located within West Berkshire. Mrs Gardner reiterated that there were no West Berkshire Council facilities in Tilehurst beyond schools.

Ms Miles in addressing the Committee raised the following points:

- Many of the comments made for the first application also applied to this application.
- This site was allocated within the HSA DPD for approximately 60 homes. This application was for up to 66 residential units and this increase was acceptable to Planning Policy.
- This site would also contribute to West Berkshire Council's five year housing land supply. It was anticipated that the homes could be built to completion by 2018/19 if permission was granted by Members at this meeting. The loss of these homes would put at risk the five year housing land supply.
- Ms Miles did not believe that this application was premature as it was consistent with local planning policies.
- This application constituted sustainable development and it should therefore be approved in line with the NPPF.
- Access to the site could be achieved from Long Lane and would be between two mature trees. Ms Miles confirmed that these trees would be retained and their roots protected.
- The increase in traffic movements was negligible.
- A pedestrian crossing was already in existence and would form part of proposed pedestrian links.
- This site was located within the AONB and Keep Tilehurst Green had given the view that this proposal constituted major development in the AONB. Section 6.2 of the report gave consideration to what constituted major development in the AONB and concluded that, after taking into account a number of factors, the proposed development did not amount to major development as specified in the NPPF. Ms Miles did however draw attention to a specific factor which related to the scale of the proposed development in relation to the size of the overall settlement. This application for up to 66 dwellings would be an increase of only 1.2% on the Tilehurst Parish area which contained a total of around 5,600 dwellings.
- The Pangbourne Hill application, approved previously by the Planning Committee, was also located in the AONB and this was a higher proportional increase in comparison to this application.
- Developments on the edge of a settlement boundary and the edge of the AONB could be accommodated if measures were put in place to protect the AONB.

- This proposed development was supported by an independently produced Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and it had been confirmed by West Berkshire Council that an Environmental Impact Assessment was not required for this application.

Councillor Alan Law asked Ms Miles to confirm whether it was the case that without the sites allocated in the HSA DPD the five year housing land supply could not be achieved. Ms Miles confirmed that the sites contained in the HSA DPD did contribute to West Berkshire's five year housing land supply.

Councillor Metcalfe, Ward Member, elected to make his comments as part of the debate on the item.

Councillor Rick Jones, speaking as Ward Member, made the following points:

Residents had significant concerns in relation to this application and these included:

- The timing of this outline application was questioned with the HSA DPD still under Examination. As already discussed at this meeting the weight to be given to this emerging document was uncertain.
- The illustrative layout was concerning and particularly its potential visual impact.
- Traffic and road safety concerns were significant. Roads surrounding the site were already very busy with some parts only allowing single file traffic, i.e. Long Lane. It was felt that highway improvements would be needed for this scheme to work.
- As already reported, there was a lack of public amenity in the area.
- It was questioned how the proposed attenuation ponds to help alleviate flooding would be maintained and associated health and safety risk was also of concern to residents.
- The impact on the landscape buffer was a concern for the AONB.

Councillor Webster, speaking as Ward Member, made the following points:

- Members had been able to witness for themselves the access difficulties to this site at the site visit. The near miss accident was not an infrequent occurrence. Highway issues on the narrow access roads were exacerbated during school term time.
- The potential to build within the AONB was a serious decision to make. The NPPF gave great weight to conserving the landscape of the AONB and development in the AONB should not be permitted unless there were demonstrable reasons that it was in the public interest. This proposal was not in the public interest.
- The question of whether this was considered a major development had already been touched upon. This was a matter for the Committee to determine based on the proposal before Members and its local context.
- The emerging HSA DPD should not be allowed to override the loss of AONB land and an alternative location should be found for the proposed 66 houses.

- Councillor Webster felt that this application should also be refused as being contrary to existing policy, particularly as this application was located in the AONB.

Councillor Tony Linden, speaking as Ward Member, made the following points:

- He agreed that the Committee should consider refusal of the application on the same grounds as for the previous application i.e. being contrary to existing policies HSG1 and ENV18.
- The encroachment on the landscape buffer was a concern from the proposal. The need to avoid this was particularly important within the AONB.

Councillor Bridgman referred to paragraph 6.2.3 which contained a conclusion from the Planning Officer that this proposal did not amount to major development when considering the guidance of the NPPF. He therefore questioned Councillor Webster on the local context that meant this development should be considered as major. Councillor Webster responded that the site was positioned within the AONB and on the edge of the settlement boundary, and 66 dwellings in the AONB was significant. Councillor Webster pointed out the HSA DPD contained proposals for only 90 new dwellings to be built in the AONB. 66 new homes in the AONB for this application would therefore constitute a large percentage of this allocation.

Officers then sought to respond to the concerns raised in relation to the landscape buffer. It was reiterated that plans were only illustrative at this stage and finalised plans/the impact on the buffer would be debated at the reserved matters stage. Bryan Lyttle explained that the Planning Inspector had requested, as part the Examination, that the role of buffers be more clearly defined for all appropriate sites. David Pearson clarified that layout was a reserved matter and a proposed layout could still be refused when the reserved matters application was received, regardless of whether outline permission was granted by Committee.

Councillor Metcalfe felt there was little to commend this proposal. He accepted the need for development and the likelihood of development on this site but this proposal was not suitable and should only be considered for this site in conjunction with the adjoining site rather than separating the two. The landscape buffer zone would need to be protected at all costs in order to protect the AONB.

Councillor Metcalfe continued by stating his view that the proposed access to the site would be his preference. Vehicle parking was an issue in the area which was popular for dog walkers and questioned whether it would be appropriate to incorporate a car park into the development as had been the case in the already referred to Pangbourne Hill application.

Councillor Metcalfe concluded his comments by reiterating concerns in relation to traffic and road safety. Present difficulties could not be ignored on the single track roads surrounding the site. These difficulties would be exacerbated by additional housing and mitigation measures would be required to resolve issues. This key issue would need to be returned to at the full application stage.

Councillor Macro felt that this application was premature when considering that the HSA DPD was still emerging. Long Lane traffic issues had to be noted and development would add to the traffic pressures. Road safety could be improved by the inclusion of a footway to the Long Lane/Dark Lane junction.

Councillor Bridgman gave his view that this was a major application in the context of the AONB and development of the site was not in the public interest. He noted the views of Officers in the planning report in terms of the quantum of development comparative to the size of the settlement, but guidance enabled consideration to be given to site constraints, i.e. local context and the nature of the area concerned.

David Pearson urged Members, if they were considering refusal of the application, to consider carefully grounds for refusal. West Berkshire Council's Full Council had approved the HSA DPD for consultation and Examination after considering that the impact from development on proposed sites was acceptable. This included acceptance in principle on the impact on the AONB and on highways. Refusal of the application could be considered however if Members again felt that greater weight should be given to current rather than emerging policy.

Councillor Bale sought to understand more clearly the views of Officers and the Planning Inspector on the number of homes proposed for the AONB. Bryan Lyttle clarified that the proposed homes for this application contributed to the allocation for the Eastern Urban Area and did not count towards housing in the AONB. If considered as AONB development then approval of this application would increase proposed housing numbers in the AONB (up to 2,000 homes in the AONB as set out in the Core Strategy) which could be a concern to the Planning Inspector.

Paul Goddard then commented on highway concerns. He stated that Officers shared concerns in relation to the suitability of some parts of Long Lane for additional traffic. This was the reason why Highways Officers rejected two alternative sites in the HSA DPD. In terms of this and the previous application, access from this part of Long Lane and from Clements Mead had been recommended respectively in order to lessen the impact on the narrower sections of Long Lane.

Councillor Richard Crumly felt there was a need to pay close heed to the comments of David Pearson on the fact that the Council had voted in favour of the HSA DPD. He accepted that issues had been highlighted in terms of highway impact but he felt the impact of this could be mitigated. Councillor Crumly felt that Members should give great weight to the expert views of Officers and he proposed acceptance of Officers' recommendation to grant planning permission. This proposal was not seconded.

Councillor Somner commented that road safety concerns could not be ignored. Traffic was already frequently gridlocked on local main roads and smaller roads, such as Long Lane, were used as an outlet from gridlocked roads.

Councillor Law agreed with the earlier point that Members had voted in principle for the development of this site as part of the HSA DPD. However, this was not for a development of 66 new homes which was in excess of the HSA DPD figure and Councillor Law viewed this application as pre-empting the Planning Inspector's determination on this emerging policy. There was also an issue to resolve in terms of whether or not these homes would count towards the AONB allocation in the Core Strategy, currently they were not and this was likely to be questioned either by the Planning Inspector or as part of the subsequent period of consultation, post Examination.

Councillor Law therefore proposed refusal of the planning application as it conflicted with existing policies HSG1 and ENV18 which restricted development in the countryside. Greater weight should be given to existing rather than emerging policy.

Councillor Peter Argyle advised that he would abstain from the vote on this application. He also commented that the HSA DPD sites were with the Planning Inspector for consideration and it was possible that not all sites would be accepted.

Councillor Metcalfe seconded the proposal to refuse planning permission. He agreed that the application was premature when the HSA DPD was still emerging policy and the proposal was not in keeping with present policy. He also reiterated that road safety concerns would need to be addressed should a fuller application for this site return at a later stage.

Before proceeding to the vote, Councillor Bridgman made the comment that this application was for housing in the AONB and not the Eastern Urban Area and needed to be considered as such.

RESOLVED that the Head of Planning and Countryside be authorised to refuse planning permission for the following reasons:

Whilst the West Berkshire Council Housing Sites Allocation DPD was emerging it had yet to be adopted. The oral examination stage was completed in July 2016 and further work was required in the form of major and minor modifications before the inspector's report was produced and therefore only limited weight could be given to the policies in the emerging Development Plan at the time. The application site was outside of any defined settlement boundary and was land currently forming part of the countryside. This being the case the greater weight had been given to the saved policies of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 [WBDLP] and the policies contained in the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 [CS] and the proposed development ran contrary to the provisions of policy HSG1 of the WBDLP as the site was outside of any defined settlement boundary and to the provisions of policy ADDP1 of the CS which listed the possible exceptions where such development might be allowed.