

Item No.	Application No. and Parish	8/13 Week Date	Proposal, Location and Applicant
(2)	18/02635/COMIND	4 TH February 2019.	Conversion and redevelopment of land and buildings at Shalford Farm. Wedding shop, estate farm shop, overnight accommodation, bakery and cookery school, restaurant and yoga studio, biomass boiler and associated parking and landscaping. Shalford Farm, Wasing. Trustees of the 1975 Wasing Settlement.

To view the plans and drawings relating to this application click the following link:
<http://planning.westberks.gov.uk/rpp/index.asp?caseref=18/02635/COMIND>

Ward Member(s): Dominic Boeck.

Reason for Committee determination: The ward member called in the application irrespective of officer recommendation. This is because, on the one hand the application will benefit the local economy, on the other it will have a highways impact.

Committee Site Visit: 13th March 2019.

Recommendation. **The Head of Development and Planning be authorised to REFUSE planning permission.**

Contact Officer Details

Name: Michael Butler
Job Title: Principal Planning Officer
Tel No: (01635) 519111
E-mail Address: michael.butler@westberks.gov.uk

1. Site History

123268. Hire of horse trailers, vans and light vans. Approved February 1985.
133441. Change of use to container storage. Approved September 1989.
134754. Change of use for storage of exhibition display units. Approved September 1989.
135613. Storage of boxed goods. Approved February 1990.
149212. Change of use to office accommodation. Approved April 1997.
03/01229/FUL. Change of use of building to B1. Approved February 2004.

2. Publicity of Application

Site notice displayed. 16th November 2018. Expiry 7th December 2018.
Amended plans site notice. Displayed 13th February 2019. Expiry 27th February 2019.

3. Consultations and Representations

Brimpton Parish Council.	Objection. On two grounds. Highways impact. Development will significantly increase traffic on the surrounding rural lane network, which will be harmful. Roads prone to flooding as well. Parking pressures on site. Secondly, creeping urbanisation. Increased noise in a rural area and increased light pollution. Impact on nearby residents and character of the area. The parish council are not against the principle of redevelopment, but this scheme will have a profound effect on the nature of the village.
Adjoining Parish Council Aldermaston.	No objection raised. However needs to be control of traffic movements particularly during the construction phase.
Highways.	Parking and layout on the site is acceptable, as are the local sight lines. However the officer is concerned with the level of future traffic movements which will be attracted to the site in a non-sustainable location: cycling access is poor as is public transport. Quality of local road network is also poor. Accordingly recommends refusal, notwithstanding the applicant's offer of providing a bespoke shuttle bus service between the site and the nearby train stations, and the main estate itself.
Transport Policy.	Concerned about the poor location of the site in terms of walking, cycling and public transport. Not a suitable location for the extent of uses. Proposed travel plan and shuttle service most unlikely to be viable and very difficult to enforce and monitor. Agrees with Highways recommendation to refuse.
Defence Infrastructure Organisation.	No safeguarding objections raised.
Thames Water.	No objections.
Economic Development Officer.	Supports the application. It accords with National and Local policy in encouraging rural diversification, it will provide additional jobs, and support the Wasing Estate, an important local employer.
Berkshire Fire Officer.	Should the application be approved, additional hydrants will be required. To be conditioned.

Archaeology.	Conditional permission if the application is approved. Important site as it contains listed buildings and lies adjacent the Registered Park of Wasing. No objections in principle however. Maybe below ground deposits so require a watching brief.
Natural England.	No objections. Will not impact upon any nearby SSSIs.
Environment Agency	Holding objection. The development would have an unacceptable impact upon the West Berkshire Groundwater scheme. ie loss of access to land used as part of this scheme (the pumping station at the site). In addition the submitted FRA is deficient in terms of the advice in the NPPF about flood protection. Amended details needed. Officer comment – further details supplied. EA response awaited.
Environmental Health.	No objections - conditional permission. The potential for local noise disturbance has been looked at carefully, particularly on the farmhouse to the North. So long as conditions are applied about opening hours and deliveries, the application is acceptable. Also a contamination condition.
Conservation officer	Consulted. Response awaited.
SUDS	Similar to the EA holding objection, it is not considered that the submitted drainage strategy is sufficient to allay fears about future flood risk both on and off site. More information required.
Public representations.	<p>A total of 12 objections have been received, some additional, following the reconsultation on the amended plans. Concerns based on increased disturbance, increased light pollution impact on local highways network, Rosebourne in Aldermaston nearby is similar, so site not needed, intrusive on rural setting of the area. Site is of historical importance as well. Pressure on local parking. Possible future flooding problems and disposal of foul waste. Other sites in the Wasing Estate are available for this use. Detrimental impact on tranquil part of the Parish of Brimpton. Impact on setting of listed building to the north. Application should be refused.</p> <p>11 letters of support. The application will support the Wasing Estate and be a good boon for local business. Should be approved. It is a good location for the new businesses proposed. Will improve a dilapidated site in addition.</p>

4. Policy Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework 2018
National Planning Practice Guidance 2014.
West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006 to 2026.
Policies ADPP1, ADPP6, CS5, CS8, CS10, CS13, CS16, CS17, CS19.
Local Transport Plan for West Berkshire 2011 to 2026.

5. Description of development

5.1. The application site comprises Shalford Farm yard, which has long been redundant in agricultural terms. The yard adjoins the River Enborne immediately to the North, where, in addition, Shalford Farmhouse lies, being the original farm house attached to the yard, now separated off. The yard now lies in the ownership of the Wasing Estate, the main focus of which lies about 1km to the south east of the application site. The yard comprises five buildings in total:- the old piggeries to the north, the main threshing barn, the garages, the old dairy and a monopitch

timber clad building. The site is currently in various forms of low key employment use, plus storage all authorised and permitted. It is fair to say however, that the site is in some disrepair and rather dilapidated, in “need” of investment and a degree of refurbishment.

5.2. The following is proposed. Firstly, the conversion of the main barn to a restaurant with an ancillary bar facility. This will be open to the public. Secondly, the demolition of the garages on site with a new kitchen and plant room. Thirdly, the conversion of the piggeries to overnight accommodation to serve the wedding guests based at Wasing Estate, 8 number in total. Next, the conversion of the Old Dairy to a bakery and cooking school (or other local food production and ancillary education facility) and the replacement of the Workshop building with a new Dutch barn and adjoining narrow barn to provide bespoke wedding retail and estate farm together with yoga facilities, wedding retail use, a dress barn and a further 5 overnight guest rooms in the first floor of the narrow barn. In addition a new small building to the west of the site [outside the recognised curtilage of the yard] will house a small biomass boiler to serve the scheme, and finally a scheme of soft and hard landscaping with new hard surfacing, cycle stores and bin store. The total number of parking spaces will be 57. Seven spaces are to be provided for staff to the north of the site. Two accesses off Back Lane adjacent will be created, the principal one to the south serving the main site with a minor one to the north serving the piggeries.

5.3. To summarise the proposals - the restaurant will have 75 covers and be 154m². The guest accommodation is 14 rooms in total. The bakery and cooking school is 123m² and for up to 10 students. The wedding dress barn is 46m², and the estate and farm shop 166m². The wedding retail units will be 248m² and the yoga studio for 10 people and 60m².

5.4. The principal purpose of the project is to support the ongoing and successful wedding venue business at Wasing Park, whilst in addition, increasing the range of public facilities on site to diversify the estate further in economic terms.

6. Consideration of the application.

The application will be considered under the following matters.

- 1 - Policy and principle.
- 2 - Highways impact.
- 3 - Other issues –amenity.

6.1. Policy and principle.

6.1.1. The Committee will be familiar with the adopted Core Strategy for the District. In terms of the overall spatial strategy, **Policy ADPP1** sets out the general criteria to be applied to new development in the Council area. Whilst most development will be directed inside settlement boundaries, if sites in the rural areas are on previously developed land [as is the case here], then new development is acceptable in principle - subject however, to other matters such as the proposed intensity of the new use and the site location in terms of its accessibility. The policy goes on to state that “significant intensification of ...employment generating uses... will be avoided within areas which lack supporting infrastructure, facilities or services or where opportunities to access them by public transport, cycling and walking **are limited**”. [officer emphasis]. Flowing on from this, sites in the open countryside [as this application site], are at the lowest end of the hierarchy in terms of new building/changes of use and should only be permitted in the interests of promoting a strong rural economy. Next, **Policy ADPP6** covers the Eastern Kennet Valley area in which the application site is located, being south of Woolhampton. In terms of the environment section of this policy, it is stated in the second bullet point, that “... development in the open countryside will be strictly controlled”.

6.1.2 The next policy of relevance is **CS9**, which corresponds to [inter alia] the future scale, type and intensification of new business schemes. In section [c] of the policy, the more efficient use of

existing employment sites is encouraged, and this is what the application certainly does. The Council in the policy also notes that the intensification, redevelopment and upgrade of existing derelict employment sites will be encouraged where appropriate. Accordingly this supports the application concerned. However, following on through the policy it is clear that in terms of the sequential test, which covers accessibility and sustainability issues, the location of the application site is at the very lowest end of the scale ie. the least accessible, so is the least preferred option for new employment generation, in regard to this test.

6.1.3 **Policy CS10** relates to the rural economy. This policy identifies the need to support the rural economy, and it relates to farm diversification as well. The applicants are clearly praying in aid the fact that the new project will do much to assist the forward business plan of the Wasing Estate which already has a flourishing wedding business, which it wishes to enhance through the application. The applicant makes the point that without this business the remainder of the agricultural functions would not be viable, although the officers have not requested detailed financial statements to fully justify this proposition, so its accuracy cannot be verified. What is true however, is that undoubtedly local employment would rise if permission is granted, with the new farm shop, the yoga sessions, the bakery and cookery school and wedding shop all helping in this regard. The new on site accommodation would also boost employment and local tourism. This all aligns well with the advice in para 83 of the NPPF which corresponds to the rural economy. Indeed para 84 of the NPPF notes that planning authorities should recognise that not all new facilities in the countryside may be well served by public transport, but such development should be sensitive to its surroundings, and it should not have an unacceptable impact on local roads.

6.1.4. **Policy CS11** relates to the town and village centres across the District. The policy aims to protect the vitality and viability of these centres wherever possible, in recognition not only of the valuable private and public investment made in them, but also their importance to the wider economy. Because of this, both the policy and the NPPF identify typical town centre uses which are subject to the sequential test, should they not be located in or adjoining existing defined town centres. Retail and leisure uses are in part, these. The applicant is proposing these types of uses at Shalford Farm. The latter clearly does not lie in any defined centre, so a sequential test must be submitted. The applicants have failed to do this, presumably in the knowledge that the types and scale of uses could be accommodated in more accessible locations. They have however prayed in aid the fact that the sole purpose of the application is to support the ongoing commercial viability of the Wasing Estate and so due flexibility should be applied in the test. Whilst to an extent, this is true, any planning permission granted by the Council, would not be personal to the Estate, so there is nothing to stop the whole site/ planning unit being sold off in the future - unlikely but technically possible in planning/land use terms. Secondly, the whole remit of the highways objection corresponds to accessibility and sustainability, which is the premise upon which the purpose of the sequential test is founded. Accordingly, an additional reason for refusal will be based upon the lack of a satisfactory sequential tests being submitted by the applicant in accord with the advice in para 90 of the NPPF. Just to be clear - in the NPPF in para 88, it notes that the sequential test need not be applied to small scale rural development, but given the total new floorspace proposed in the application will be 1640m², this is certainly major.

6.1.5. Next, **Policy CS13** sets out the criteria against which new applications should be addressed vis a vis transport and sustainability implications. Development should reduce the need to travel, improve travel choice, by all modes of transport, demonstrate good access to key services and facilities and minimise the impact of travel on the environment. It is apparent to the case officer that the location of Shalford Farm meets none of these important criteria, notwithstanding the amended travel plan attached to the application, should it be approved. The site lies about 1 mile distant from Woolhampton to the north with its rail station and bus services, and approximately 0.5 miles from Brimpton to the west. Aldermaston lies about 1 mile to the east. Clearly this means walking, cycling and public transport means of accessing the site are currently poor and look set to remain so in the future. ie the prime means of accessing the site will be via private vehicle, and the Wasing taxi/ bus service proposed, assuming it runs successfully into the future. The officer view is that the application accordingly does not comply with the policy. Committee should note that both the Transport Policy Officer and Highways Officer are recommending refusal in this regard.

6.1.6. **Policy CS15** identifies the need for all new major commercial development in the District to achieve, from 2019 a zero carbon rating under the BREEAM regulations. The applicant has submitted a pre assessment with a covering letter, which notes that whilst BREEAM excellent could be achieved, this would be at significant cost to the developer, given the fact that the “poor” location of the site on sustainability measures, makes a number of credits effectively impossible to achieve. Officers accept this point and whilst the scheme would be technically contrary to the advice in policy CS15, no additional reason for refusal is recommended on this basis. However the point is re-iterated that this highlights one of the difficulties in promoting this scheme at this location.

6.1.7. The application site lies close to the River Enborne to the north, lying in flood zone 1. Accordingly any new development should be sensitive to any future flooding issues, in compliance with **policy CS16**. It is clear that despite the applicants FRA the Environment Agency is not satisfied with that assessment and has asked for revisions, and so have a holding objection. This may or may not be removed by the time of Committee. In addition, one reason for refusal related to the application scheme physically compromising access to the local pumping station on which it has a lease from the Estate - it is understood that the amended plans submitted now resolve this issue. What is important however, is that the new built form must not impede local flood flow or drainage to an unacceptable extent, which would harm local dwellings. One reason for refusal will accordingly relate to the FRA issue, at the time of writing, taking the precautionary approach.

6.1.8. **Policy CS17** in the WBCS identifies the need to respect local biodiversity and geodiversity. The applicants have surveyed the application buildings, to discover if any bat roosts exist on site. In the surveys, the Old Dairy and workshop do have bat roosts. Accordingly, if the application is approved, an EPS licence will be required prior to works commencing on site. Given the fact that Natural England have no outstanding objection to the development in question, being the statutory body in these matters, neither do your officers.

6.1.9. The final policy with which the Committee will need to test the application is **CS19**, which corresponds to the historic environment and landscape character. Taking the first point initially. Lying to the north of the application site is Shalford Farm house. This is listed grade 2. It is however physically divorced from the yard to the south by existing tree screening, and a drainage ditch. It also enjoys a separate vehicle access. Accordingly, in the view of officers the buildings in the yard are not curtilage listed, by virtue of the above physical factors which create a distinction in context between the two sites: the fact that the 2 sites are in separate ownership has no bearing on this planning judgement. Having said that, the Council as Planning Authority must have due regard as to whether the scheme would have a detrimental impact on the southern setting of the listed farmhouse. This is in accord with the advice in the NPPF about harm to a designated heritage eg a listed building. In addition any wider impact on the adjacent historic park of Wasing must also be taken into account as this is one more designated asset. Accordingly, the advice in para 196 in the NPPF must be taken into account. Members will have noted from their site visit that the current attractiveness of the yard is poor and does not enhance the locality. Officers consider that if the application is approved, on balance whilst the physical massing and scale of the new buildings/conversions will be more dominant than before, the design and external facing materials will be acceptable in this context and so not harmful to the setting of the Registered Park or the listed building. In this respect it will accord with policy CS19.

6.1.10. Policy CS19 also examines whether any new development will or will not have a harmful effect on local landscape character and quality. It is recognised that Shalford Farm does not lie in any protected landscape, such as the AONB. However it does lie in the Kennet Valley which is certainly an attractive corridor of countryside which the Council has a duty to protect and conserve. There is no doubt that the site being brownfield, already has a degree of impact on the locality. However this impact is constrained by the fact that it is low lying, it has built development around it on two sides [existing dwellings] and natural screening to the north and east. Accordingly, apart from Back Lane, it is only really visible at any distance from the south west, which in turn is screened by Chaplin’s Wood. Whilst new build will occur on the site and refurbishment, any wider

landscape impact caused by the scheme will be minimal, in the officer opinion, due to the above factors. So, if there is no visual harm, the application should not be rejected on these grounds, so in recommending refusal to the application, CS19 forms no part of this.

6.1.11 In conclusion on this policy examination in respect of the application, the following is noted : officers consider that the application fails policies ADPP1, ADPP6, CS9, CS11, CS13 and CS16 on the grounds identified –essentially on the poor location of the scheme, but including flooding. However in terms of policies CS10, CS15 , CS17 and CS19 the application is considered to be satisfactory ie in terms of support for the rural economy, BREEAM , biodiversity and landscape character /heritage. But the application should not only be considered on policy grounds.

6.2. Highways.

6.2.1. The Committee will note that many of the local objections relate to highways issues: indeed the Council highways officer is continuing to recommend refusal to the proposal, despite the revised Travel Plan with amended plans being submitted. Set out above in summary is the officer view of the application in regard to policy CS13 which is the principal policy in the Core Strategy relating to transport issues. In addition however, the Committee should take account of the Local Travel Plan of 2011 to 2026. This sets out a number of key issues, a number of which in particular correspond to the application in question - one is accessibility to services, another is carbon reduction and climate change. In addition, good performance of the highways network is important as is safe and healthy travel. Flowing on from this, one of the main objectives of the LTP is to improve access to employment, education, retail and leisure opportunities. In addition, the application site lies in the East Kennet Valley area in which options to improve pedestrian and cycle linkages are given due significance. Policy LTP K3, which corresponds to accessibility, seeks to ensure that new development is focused where there is already good access to services and facilities.

6.2.2. It is the officers' view that this proposal does not comply with the LTP in that it is a major scheme located in a non sustainable location as evidenced above. The applicants have submitted a revised Travel Plan which proposes a mini bus service to provide transport for both staff and wedding guests to and from the local rail stations to the site, and onto the main Wasing Estate. Whilst in principle this is laudable, in practice officers are not convinced how successful this scheme would be and indeed how long it would last - but more especially how it would be monitored into the future. The Council simply does not have the resources to monitor such travel plans, which normally relate only to major residential schemes. This is important since one of the tests on proposed conditions attached to any permission, in para 55 of the NPPF, is that they should be enforceable. Officers consider this applies to the travel plan noted.

6.2.3. To conclude on the above the application is considered to be clearly contrary to policy CS13 in the WBCS and policy K3 in the LTP2.

6.3. Other issues.

6.3.1. One factor the Council will need to bear in mind in the determination of this application is that of amenity. Presently, although the farm yard has an element of authorised commercial uses, it is low key and causes little disturbance, noise or traffic movements in the immediate locale. If this application were to be approved, it is clear that the number of traffic movements would increase considerably, the amount of noise would inevitably rise [especially at weekends] and light pollution may increase. The tranquil character of the area could then be diminished. Having said that, the Council Environmental Health Officer has not objected to the development, noting that so long as opening times of the new complex are conditioned and delivery times also conditioned, any impact on adjoining amenity will be regulated and so acceptable. Accordingly, notwithstanding the greater intensity of use proposed on the site, officers will not be recommending an additional reason for refusing the application on the grounds of amenity impact and so harm.

7. Conclusion .

7.1. All planning applications are required to be determined in accord with the three tenets of sustainability in the NPPF.

7.2. In economic terms the application is clearly to be encouraged as it is estimated by the applicants that up to 31 fte jobs will be created by the scheme. Not only this, but the increased turnover and profit for the Wasing Estate will be important in continuing to support that important local enterprise in the local area. Diversification is of course a key factor in supporting the rural economy, in the Core Strategy and the NPPF. Having said that, of course any permission if granted is not going to be personal to the applicant –but jobs will still be provided.

7.3. In social terms the application is also encouraged since the advent of these leisure and retail facilities will certainly promote social interaction to the benefit of ongoing community cohesion and strength, which is promoted in the NPPF. [para 92 refers].

7.4. However, it is in the environmental aspects that the application clearly fails. Whilst the design, massing, and layout of the new scheme is attractive and will not harm either local amenity, the setting of the listed building to the north or indeed the local landscape character or local biodiversity, it is the overall scale and location of the project which ensures that it is unacceptable having regard to the advice in the Local Transport Plan, the NPPF and policy CS13 in the Core Strategy. Accordingly, notwithstanding the apparent economic and social benefits arising from the application officers are recommending refusal on highway grounds, including the sequential test and also on the grounds of potential flooding.

8. Recommendation

8.1. The Head of Development and Planning be authorised to REFUSE planning permission for the following reasons.

- 1 The proposal will increase traffic in a rural location that has no pedestrian or bus routes and is linked by rural roads where at times cycling can be difficult. The location of the site will increase traffic where the mode of travel can only be the private car. The proposal is therefore unsustainable and is therefore contrary to Policy CS13 of the West Berkshire District Core Strategy 2006 to 2026 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2018. It is also contrary to the advice in the LTP2 of 2011 to 2026 for West Berkshire. It is accordingly unacceptable.
- 2 The applicant has failed to satisfy the Local Planning Authority that the proposed town centre uses of retail and leisure in this location is acceptable under the remit of the sequential test, as set out in the NPPF and the advice in policy CS11 in the WBCS of 2006 to 2026. Accordingly the application is unacceptable given the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate this test, as set out in para 90 of the NPPF.
- 3 The submitted flood risk assessment with the application is not satisfactory. Accordingly, it does not comply with the advice in para 163 of the NPPF and the advice in policy CS16 in the WBCS of 2006 to 2026. The application is therefore unacceptable on these grounds.