

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE ON 7TH AUGUST 2019

UPDATE REPORT

Item No: (3) **Application No:** 19/01171/FULD **Page No.** 65-88

Site: Blacknest Farm, Brimpton Common, Reading

Planning Officer Presenting: David Pearson

Member Presenting:

Parish Representative speaking: Councillor Mary Cowdery,
Councillor Pete Main

Objector(s) speaking: N/A

Supporter(s) speaking: N/A

Applicant/Agent speaking: Sean Bates (Applicant),
Steven Smallman (Agent)

Ward Member(s): Councillor Dominic Boeck

Update information:

Bat Survey

During the site visit, and in a subsequent email (05/08/2019) the agent provided further information regarding the applicant's intentions in respect of the requested Bat Survey Up-date report. As stated in the Committee report, a Bat Survey was submitted with the application, however this information is out-of-date, as such an update report was requested by the case officer.

As a survey has already taken place for the site, as such it was only an up-date report that was requested by the case officer, this report was requested three times during the determination period. The agent has claimed that a Bat Survey for the site would be expensive, therefore the applicant was not willing to commit to this financially until the principle of new residential development has been approved on this site. The agent has been informed as part of the current application and previous application 18/02134/FULD that the principle of new residential development on this site is contrary to policy and therefore not acceptable.

Whilst the agent and applicant have proposed that a new Bat Survey for the site would be expensive, the case officer did not request a new Bat Survey, merely an up-date report for the existing Bat Survey was requested, *“update reports are required for the submitted Bat Survey Report and Phase 1 Ecology Assessment”* (case officers email to agent 29 May 2019). During the determination period of the application the agent has had ample time to submit the requested up-date report. Bat Survey up-date reports are of a much lower cost than a new Bat Survey, as such the applicant/agents argument that the required up-date report would be costly is not accepted by the case officer.

Due to the above, the agent has expressed the applicants intension to request that at this Committee, Members assess and determine whether the principle of the development is acceptable on this site, and should Members be minded to find the principle acceptable, then request that the determination of the application is deferred to a later date in order to allow time for the up-date report to take place. It is the officer view that the application should be determined on the information that has been presented to Members at the time of Committee. The deferral of this application based on the above reason (cost to the developer) would be at an unnecessary and unjustifiable cost to the public purse.

However, should Members be agreeable to the above approach and accept the deferral of the application, it should be noted that Bat Survey works can only be under-taken at certain times of the year (April – September). The time for the applicant to have the works undertaken this year would be limited.

New Build Office (B1) Units

The agent has clarified that the proposed office units will be new build units and not converting the existing structure on the site. The Committee report refers to these units being converted rather than new build as they are not included or referenced in the submitted document ‘Proposed Re-Development of Farm Buildings Sustainability Statement’.

Due to the office (B1) units being new build structures and not a conversion, in accordance with policy CS15 of the Core Strategy, these buildings will be required to be built to a standard of BREEAM Excellent and zero carbon.

Description of the Development – “live/work”

At the site visit the agent queried the Committee report with the case officer in terms of how the proposed scheme has been assessed with reference to use classes. As per the Committee report, the proposed development has been assessed on the basis of separate office (B1) and residential (C3) uses and not a genuine ‘live/work’ (sui generis) development, this approach is consistent with the latest refusal on the site (18/02134/FULD) and advice from the Planning Policy Team.

Planning Consent 17/01857/FULD

The site does have an extent planning consent for the conversion of the existing units. Whilst the proposed scheme would result in a development of the same appearance as 17/01857/FULD, there is an important difference in how these consents would be achieved. The consented (conversion) scheme is compliant with the Local Development Plan, however the proposed scheme is contrary to the Local Development Plan as it would result in the new build residential development in the countryside which is contrary to policy in principle. Should Members be minded to approve the proposed scheme, officers are of the view that this would have a damaging strategic impact on the implementation of the Development Plan policies relating to residential development in the countryside.

The case officer's report for the conversion consent 17/01857/FULD does consider the separate uses and conversion of the existing buildings to residential (C3) and office (B1) units, the proposal scheme is not considered as a genuine live/work development in the report. The planning conditions attached to this development specifically reference the 'dwellings' and not the 'live/work units', there is a planning condition that ties the office (B1) unit to the use of the residential (C3) dwellings, as to allow offices in this location independently would not be appropriate. The office use was found to be appropriate in connection with the conversion of the existing buildings to residential.