

Item No.	Application No. and Parish	Statutory Target Date	Proposal, Location, Applicant
(1)	19/01063/COMIND Aldermaston	6 TH August 2019	Construction of class A1 foodstore, car parking and access and landscaping. Land south of Ravenswing Farm, Adjoining Aldermaston Road and Silchester Road, Tadley Lidl GB Limited
¹ Extension of time agreed with applicant until 13 th December 2019.			

To view the plans and drawings relating to this application click the following link:
<http://planning.westberks.gov.uk/rpp/index.asp?caseref=19/01063/COMIND>

Recommendation Summary: The Head of Development and Planning be authorised to Refuse planning permission.

Ward Member(s): Councillor Dominic Boeck.

Reason for Committee Determination: The application is called to Committee by the Development Control Manager as the application has attracted much public interest – objection and support.

Committee Site Visit: 27th November 2019.

Contact Officer Details

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This application seeks planning permission for the erection of a food store [for Lidl] of 2177m² gross floor space with a net sales area of 1,411m². Associated with the store will be 128 parking spaces for cars, [including 8 disabled spaces and 8 for parent and child] 2 motorcycle spaces and 10 “Sheffield” stands which will accommodate up to 20 cycles. Vehicular access will be derived off the Aldermaston Road to the west of the site, with a right turning lane for northbound traffic. The application is a full application with no subsequent matters reserved for planning approval i.e. at this stage the applicant is seeking approval of access, layout, appearance, landscaping and scale.
- 1.2 The application site is about 0.9ha in extent and is located at the junction of the Aldermaston Road with Silchester Road, immediately to the north of the built up area of Tadley—which lies in Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council jurisdiction. It is presently an open grass field forming part of a wider agricultural land holding. The site currently has mature hedge rows facing both principal roads as mentioned: if the development were to proceed, those to the north would be cut back considerably in order to obtain the road widening required in the highway to accommodate the right turn lane, whilst still retaining the footway. Just for clarity the site is green field and lies outside any defined settlement boundary in the Local Plan.
- 1.3 The proposed store will be single storey, 32m in width and 73m in length. Its height will be just over 7m. The external facing materials are to be of traditional style, with red facing brick, [two proposed varieties of red/brown] timber effect cladding, white panelling, and a monopitch roof with a solar panel array: this will assist the BREEAM rating of the proposed store. In addition, on the south elevation there will be full height glazing, with the standard LIDL advertisement logo [subject to separate advertisement consent should this application be approved]. For clarity the original submitted plans included a far more modern style of materials, but these have since been amended to create a less contemporary approach.
- 1.4 Surrounding the building [via the amended plans] will now be a new landscaping strip, which will serve to reduce the future visual impact of the building. This strip of land on the north and east facing boundaries is not within the original red line of the application plans, but understood to be within the control of the applicant, via contract with the existing landowner. Should permission be granted, the landscaped area will then be required to be delivered via a s106 planning obligation. It cannot be delivered via a condition. On the proposed plans the western and southern boundaries [facing the two highways] are within the red line and there is to be a minimum 5m wide buffer strip here.
- 1.5 To assist public access to the site other than by the private car, a new footpath is proposed on the south western corner which will provide direct access to Tadley town centre.
- 1.6 The applicants have made much play of the fact that if planning permission is granted, they will be the food retailer to occupy the store. Whilst the case officer has no reason to doubt this point, the Committee will need to be aware that if they elect to approve the application tonight, it will be a store for any food retailer, not the discount retailer identified. That is to grant a “personal” permission to the Company would not comply with the NPPF tests on conditions.

2. Planning History

- 2.1 The table below outlines the relevant planning history of the application site.

Application	Proposal	Decision / Date
154650/OUT	Construction of indoor sports hall, and outdoor playing fields, MUGA, and changing facilities.	Approved 2000.

2.2 Just for clarity the siting of the above permission lies considerably to the east of the present application site.

3. Procedural Matters

3.1 The site notice was originally displayed on the site on the 21st of May 2019, expiring on the 12th June. An amended plans site notice has been displayed on the 8th November with an expiry of the 29th November 2019. In addition the application was advertised as a formal departure from the Development Plan on the 21st May.

3.2 The application, being A1 space, will be CIL liable. The present CIL rate is just under £154/m² GIA so if the application were approved and built the CIL figure would be approximately £335,000.

3.3 The case officer has examined whether the application is required to be screened under the 2017 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations. The application type is an urban development project under Schedule 2, part 10[b] of those Regulations: but it does not meet the scale thresholds identified and similarly, does not lie in a sensitive area as defined in the Regulations/DMPO. Accordingly, no environmental statement is required to be submitted with the proposal.

4. Consultation

Statutory and non-statutory consultation

4.1 The table below summarises the consultation responses received during the consideration of the application. The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report.

Aldermaston Parish Council:	Resolved to raise no objections, but subject to the following observations –traffic concerns, reservations about building on a greenfield site, and precedent set, limited parking on the site, and if scheme does proceed, will need to re assess bus stop location on the A340. Amended plans—views awaited.
Tadley Town Council.	Do not object or support—however welcome the addition of a new food store bringing more choice and competition to local residents. However worried about the access particularly at peak periods, and the location of the bus stop.
Silchester Parish Council.	No objections, but remain worried about additional traffic movements attracted along the Silchester Road to the site—seek contributions towards traffic calming measures accordingly in the

	village.
Baughurst Parish Council.	Not invited to comment, but wish to raise concerns about local traffic increase at an already very busy road junction. Do not object to the store per se however.
WBC Highways:	Original plans –objection. Amended plans. No objections on the basis that the right turning lane is provided adjacent the site. Car parking is adequate in addition. Traffic generation is on balance acceptable, No s 106 sought. Conditional permission is recommended.
WBC Planning Policy.	Do not object per se, but it is clear that the application scheme does not comply with Development Plan policy as it lies on a greenfield site outside any defined settlement boundary. No need for new convenience store in the District, but the store will serve Tadley. Query re the sequential test in addition. Policy ADPP6 in the Core Strategy is not satisfied.
WBC Economic Development officer	Supports the application. It will provide up to 40 new jobs on the site, many of which will be part time and lower paid, which is the job profile of the employment created. In addition, the creation of more choice and cheaper food will be of economic benefit to the local population.
HCC Highways	Originally objected in terms of concerns on impact on the A340 corridor at peak periods for the AWE. However after subsequent modelling undertaken, the provision of the right turn lane for northbound traffic will alleviate the situation, so removing the objection. No s 106 sought.
Basingstoke and Deane BC.	Originally objected to the application. Concerned about retail impact upon the District centre of Tadley. Further details about future catchment, trade draw and turnover assumptions of nearby stores need to be addressed. Details supplied—objection formally removed. If approved should condition nature of the food sales to restrict the range so that it remains a discount store.
WBC Emergency Planning	The application should be rejected. This is on the basis that the site location is within the inner protection zone of the AWE, it is greenfield so will bring additional population into the zone, it will require evacuation in the event of an incident, and the ability of store staff to respond adequately is questioned. Updated Emergency Plan submitted. Not satisfactory. Further report to be submitted; views awaited-see the update sheet.
Archaeology	No objections. Site may be of interest. Written scheme of investigation required.
Minerals officer.	The site is of known interest for gravel extraction. This should be conserved according to extant policy. However given the proximity of built form and the small scale of the application site, no objections are raised.
SUDS	Further additional detail is required in order that flows from the site do not cause problems outside the site. Matter can be

	technically resolved .Conditional permission should approval be forthcoming.
Thames Water	The application site lies within 5m of a strategic water main—the wayleave must be protected. Conditional permission –controls the issue identified. No objections otherwise.
Natural England	No objections raised. No protected species impacted, and no sites of ecological importance.
Transport policy	The site location is sustainable, being close to bus services and large areas of population. Seek electric vehicle charging points on site plus the implementation of the travel plan. Conditions recommended.
Environmental Health.	No objections –conditional permission. Dust suppression during construction, working hours, and noise from on site plant, including air conditioning.

Public representations

4.2 At the time of writing the report there are a total of 911 contributors, 849 of which support, and 55 of which object to the proposal. 7 representations are ambiguous.

4.3 The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report. In summary, the following issues/points have been raised in the **objections**.

- Building on a greenfield site.
- Outside settlement boundary.
- Traffic impact.
- Disruption to pedestrian and cycling flows through the area.
- Compromise air quality.
- Loss of agricultural land.
- Site used for the historic treacle fair.
- Impact upon ecology will be detrimental.
- Do not need another food store.
- Why not choose a brown field site?
- Visual impact –too much built up area.
- Significant effects on local noise and pollution.
- Wrong in principle for a Company to purchase land and then obtain permission.

4.4 The letters in **support** are as follows.

- The introduction of the new store will provide good competition for the existing Sainsbury's store. Food prices will fall.
- The store will provide additional jobs.
- With new housing being built in the area more food shopping choice is needed.
- Will mean fewer trips to other stores outside the Tadley area so saving time and money and fewer cars on the wider road network as a result. It will reduce costs for hard working families in the area.

4.5 The 7 letters of **ambiguity**.

- On the one hand want to see a Lidl store in Tadley, but concerned about the location in regards to taking up a greenfield site and traffic worries.

5. Planning Policy

5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following policies of the statutory development plan are relevant to the consideration of this application.

- Policies ADPP1 [Spatial Strategy] ADPP6 [Kennet Valley] and CS8 [Nuclear Installations], CS11 [Hierarchy of Centres], CS13 [Transport] CS14 [Design Principles], CS18 [Green Infrastructure] and CS19 [Landscape Character] of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (WBCS).
- Policy OVS6 [Noise] of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

5.2 The following material considerations are relevant to the consideration of this application:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019.
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- WBC Quality Design SPD (2006)
- WBDC Landscape Character Assessment of 2019.
- West Berkshire Retail and Leisure Capacity Assessment of 2017.

6. Appraisal

6.1 The main issues for consideration in this application are:

- The principle of permitting or rejecting the development.
- The visual impact on the surrounding area in landscape terms
- The retail issues surrounding the application.
- The highways issues
- Nuclear safety issues

Principle of development

6.2 Policy ADPP1 in the WBCS sets out the overall spatial strategy behind the Local Plan for new development. It sets out a hierarchy of settlements in the District, accordingly. Aldermaston is the “lowest” in this range, being [inter alia] a Service Village: this is where there is to be a limited range of services and some limited development potential. Accordingly, by definition to permit a large food store clearly runs contrary to this policy. Having said that, to be “fair” to the applicants, the principal purpose of the application will be to serve another settlement outside the District i.e. Tadley which is effectively a small town. So, whilst the Committee will need to take into account these Council policies, they should also take into account the needs of adjoining residents nearby. In policy ADPP1, in addition, most development will be directed towards land within **or adjacent to** settlements. The application site does lie adjacent the boundary of Tadley in the Basingstoke and Deane BC Plan and the site is greenfield as noted and forms no part of an allocation, in the West Berkshire Core Strategy.

- 6.3 Policy ADPP6 corresponds specifically to the East Kennet Valley in which the site is located. In terms of the environment section, the first bullet point identifies the fact that the character of settlements will be conserved and enhanced, by ensuring that any development corresponds positively to its local context. In this case officers consider that the introduction of a 2177m² food store on a green field site, with much associated hardstanding, will certainly detract from the attractive and soft landscape context to the north of Tadley—and so will run contrary to this part of the policy. In the Community Infrastructure and Services section, it is noted that the boundaries of retail and other services will be defined via the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD. It is apparent that no such allocation or boundary has been made in this document to allow for the new food store.
- 6.4 Policy CS8 in the WBCS corresponds to nuclear safety. This issue is considered in more detail later on in the agenda report.
- 6.5 Policy CS11 identifies the hierarchy of centres in the District. This notes that Aldermaston is a local and village centre. It would not normally be appropriate to permit such a major new retail store therefore in the parish, but as mentioned above, this store is to primarily serve Tadley. This policy can be “discounted” to that extent, without prejudice to the final officer recommendation for refusal. Policy CS13 considers transport issues which will be examined later.
- 6.6 Policy CS18 identifies green infrastructure across the District. This includes grasslands, of which the application site is comprised. The policy notes that the loss of green infrastructure will not be permitted. Accordingly this application would be contrary to the policy in hand. Secondly policy CS19 relates to Historic Environment and Landscape Character. This notes that the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape should be conserved and enhanced. Settlement patterns, and in particular how natural boundaries relate to the setting of built up areas, are important to protect. In this case there is little doubt in officer’s view that the incursion of such a major built form on this setting to the north of Tadley and to the south of Aldermaston parish will harm that local distinctiveness to its overall detriment: the proposal is thus taken to be contrary to policy CS19.
- 6.7 To conclude on the policy issues in the WBCS it is apparent that the application does not conform. Hence its advertisement as a departure from the Plan. Even if the Committee considered all other planning matters were acceptable on the application, it is considered that the application still remains unacceptable on this sole basis.
- 6.8 The Committee will also need to be aware of saved policy OVS6 in the WBDLP of 1991 to 2006 .This relates to noise control. It is noted that dwellings lie in fairly close proximity to the application site so it is important to take any noise issues into consideration, which might impact upon adjoining amenity, in this respect.

Landscape character

- 6.9 The Council has very recently published on its website the District Wide Landscape Character Assessment [LCA] of 2019. This is a detailed and comprehensive document which brings all the past three assessments together and updates them in regard to most recent policy in the WBCS and the NPPF of 2019. The LCA divides the whole of the District into a number of sub character areas which it then goes on to describe in some detail and to promote development management tools to conserve and enhance that landscape type in the face of ongoing pressures—such as from this application.
- 6.10 The application falls into LCA type WH5 which comprises the Burghfield Woodland and Heath land mosaic , which is largely but not wholly a plateau feature, south of the Kennet Valley .It is compromised by the significant MOD sites such as the AWE and substantial

built up areas—which include Aldermaston in part and Tadley. Accordingly the landscape is not of the highest value, but remains valuable in its own right, as espoused by the NPPF. In paragraph 170 of the latter, in section b] it notes that all countryside should be recognised for its intrinsic character and beauty, whether formally designated or not. The WH5 type has no formal designation as such.

- 6.11 Section 3 of the LCA policies focusses on how to protect the open areas in WH5, and notes that the settlement fringes should be carefully managed, in order to prevent the suburbanisation of that fringe and in addition to prevent the coalescence of settlements. Officer's view is that whilst the pasture land in question may not be "high value" per se, it performs an important function in providing a soft visual backdrop to all the buildings in the vicinity as the site visit will indicate. This is helped by the strong hedgerows which will be inevitably impacted seriously by the new development, opening up the past rural views to one of built form. Notwithstanding the proposed additional landscaping proposed by the applicant in the amended plans [which is helpful to a degree in mitigating the overall visual harm caused by the new store], it is clear that the scheme will still damage the surrounding area, to its detriment, so being contrary not only to the advice in the evidence base of the LCA, but also the advice in the NPPF and policy CS19 in the WBCS.
- 6.12 The Committee should also be aware that to the north of the application site runs a public right of way [prow] which is well used by the local population: it is inevitable that the rural and tranquil experience formed by using this public right of way will be harmed by the introduction of significant new built form to the south i.e. the new store. There will be a degree of new noise and disturbance caused by the vehicle traffic movements and deliveries in addition, plus the necessary security lighting which will create cumulative harm. The LCA notes in particular the significance of tranquillity—it is accepted that the presence of the AWE and the housing near the site means tranquillity is compromised, but this is an argument to preserve what open areas remain all the more important. In addition, whilst precedent can be a circular debate, it is quite conceivable that once this development boundary is breached, pressure in the future will mount for more incursions into the green fields around the site, which will clearly be more harmful.
- 6.13 The applicants have submitted an updated LVIA on the proposed scheme. This has carefully examined the proposal in the light of the existing physical surroundings of Tadley and Aldermaston, plus the existing policy base. A total of 22 viewpoints have been examined to see if and where the new store will have a detrimental impact. It is telling to note that on a number of points the consultants conclude that the impact on views will be moderately adverse, although the wider impact on the local landscape will be less so. Your officers concur with this point. These viewpoints are primarily from the main highways which are in the public domain.
- 6.14 In conclusion it is officer's view that the presence of this major new store on the greenfield site to the north of Silchester Road "in" the Tadley area will be harmful and should not be permitted on the grounds of visual and landscape impact, contrary to policy. This will accordingly be a specific reason for refusal in the recommendation.

Retail policies

- 6.15 The Committee need to be aware, in the planning balance, in examining this application the retail issues surrounding the proposal. These are varied but basically comprise the following, in summary: whether the store is appropriately located, in terms of sustainability and the sequential test as advocated in the NPPF. Whether there is an "exceptional" need for the new store, which would override any other negative policy views and finally whether the introduction of the store will have a harmful impact on the future viability and vitality of the centres around the site, including Tadley, albeit outside the District.

- 6.16 The NPPF in chapter 7, seeks to ensure the continuing vitality of town centres, which is becoming increasingly important in the light of far more consumer expenditure via the internet, which may now comprise circa 20% of all such retail spending. One of the methods of achieving this aim, is to apply what is known as a sequential test to any application for main town centre uses [para 86] which are neither in an existing centre, nor are in accord with an up to date plan. This is reiterated in the WBCS in the supporting text to policy CS11 in para 5.69. Basically, town centre uses should first be directed towards a centre, then edge of centre [within 300m] then out of centre, then elsewhere. Effectively the current application site is the latter. The site is certainly not allocated for new retail space in the District Local Plan. If the judgement on the sequential test was to be applied only to centres in West Berkshire, the application would certainly fail as the closest settlement would be Aldermaston to the north, and Brimpton to the west. However it is clear that it would be nonsensical to apply this strict approach in this instance, since Tadley lies immediately adjacent to the site with the centre being only some 200m to the south. Taking this into account means that having examined any future available sites sufficient to meet the space needs of this store in the immediate surrounding area, none are available. Without prejudice it is regrettable that no suitable brownfield site is available since in purely locational terms, such a site so close to the Tadley centre would be normally encouraged on the grounds of sustainability alone. Be that as it may, officers are satisfied that the sequential test is met in this proposal so no retail reason for refusal is recommended on this basis.
- 6.17 The next principal issue which the Committee will need to take into account is retail impact. This is an important matter since, if an existing centre is affected badly in retail draw terms by the introduction of a new store, this will be detrimental to its future vitality and ability to attract future investment: this in turn will affect the centres continuing attractiveness and viability, so having a negative impact on future community cohesion. Again, in this instance since the immediate catchment of the proposed store will be very largely Tadley, the impact on stores a greater distance away, such as discount stores in Newbury [e.g. Aldi], and others in West Reading, and Theale will be minimal. The most serious impact will be upon the present Sainsbury's store in Tadley town centre which is predicted to be a loss of circa 9.8% of turnover i.e. £3.8million in the projected year of 2024. A number of points to consider here: firstly it is recognised that the Sainsbury's store is "overtrading" in terms of increased turnover well above Company averages, given the lack of competition in the locality. Secondly it is pertinent to note that no objection has been received from that Company to the application. Thirdly it is germane that Basingstoke and Deane BC have not formally objected to the application on retail impact grounds, which would affect Tadley, a District centre in their Local Plan. It is also relevant that in para 89 of the NPPF where there is no locally set threshold, local planning authorities may only request an impact assessment if an application is in excess of 2500m². The Council has no locally set threshold so the figure of 2500m² applies. The Lidl application is 2177m². Notwithstanding, the applicant has submitted an impact assessment which has been helpful. To conclude on the retail impact issue this will accordingly not form any part of a reason to refuse the application. It is expected that the application will simply serve to improve Lidl's market share in the area and indeed improve price competition, whilst reducing the leakage of retail household expenditure on discount food stores outside the Tadley area. This is of substantial retail benefit.
- 6.18 The final retail issue to take into account is retail need. It is of note that retail need is now not a test in the NPPF which can be applied to such applications. However, your officers believe this is still of relevance as a) the applicants have prayed this in aid in support of the application, and b) if an exceptional need were to be demonstrated [similar in principle to e.g. agricultural workers dwellings which then permits new development in the countryside] then on balance the application could be capable of approval. The Council has recently published in 2017 a West Berkshire Retail and leisure needs assessment. This has been on the website for some time. This report

makes it very clear that no specific need for additional convenience goods is identified in this part of the District up to 2036. In fact in some areas such as Newbury there is almost “too much “space. The applicants however say this is of little relevance since it is the local needs of Tadley which must be borne in mind—which is accepted in principle. At no point however have the adjacent Borough Council actively supported the application, noting that a specific need is required to be met—they merely have not objected to the application. It is accepted that should this store be approved it would receive much local support for additional discount food shopping in the area, which is evidenced by the many hundreds of letters of support. But this level of support would presumably be for a Lidl store anywhere in the Tadley vicinity, not specifically on this greenfield site .It is the latter point which is fundamental to officers view on the application. As there are already a number of food retailers in the town, such as Budgens, the Co-op and of course Sainsbury’s, it is not as if no other food stores are available. Accordingly, to conclude on this issue, in the absence of any special justification to overrule well established and extant up to date development plan policies for the continuing protection of the countryside, the application is not supported on the basis of exceptional retail need.

- 6.19 For clarity in the reasons for refusal, no specific retail reasons are included: the lack of retail need cannot be added in, since this is now no longer a test in the NPPF so would not be upheld at any potential appeal. The application satisfies the impact and sequential tests as identified above.

Highway issues

- 6.20 It was proposed to access the site via the A340 Aldermaston Road by a turn right lane and ghost island with a 9.0 metre wide access road. A pedestrian access is provided further to the south near the A340 Aldermaston Road / Mulfords Hill / Silchester Road traffic signal junction. Sight lines of 2.4 x 43.0 metres are provided which comply with standards set in the governments Manual for Streets. Some ‘Keep Clear’ markings will be required on the A340 southbound to ensure that traffic potentially queueing at the traffic signal junction will not prevent vehicles from turning into and from the site. Also with the traffic signal junction immediately to the south, there should be sufficient pauses in traffic flows on the A340 northbound to assist traffic turning right from the site. Highway Officers have been liaising with counterparts in Hampshire County Council. Highway Officers from both authorities are content with the proposed access. The access will need to be provided via Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980. The West Berkshire Council Parking Standards from Appendix 5 of the Local Plan Saved Policies 2007 require one space per 14 sq m gross floor equating to 156 car parking spaces. A lesser provision of 129 spaces is provided equating to one space per 17 sq m. Therefore the car parking provision does not meet the current standards. However these standards are somewhat outdated and are “maximum” provisions. Data has also been submitted from surveys of other Lidl stores submitted in the south. All show a lesser parking demand than what is proposed. While highway officers still have concerns from the above, it would be difficult to argue that there is insufficient car parking proposed for the store. Parking for cycles seems to be provided in line with the *cycle and Motorcycle Advice and Standards for New Development Guidance Note (2014)*.
- 6.21 Highway Officers are also content with the site layout including facilities for deliveries. To project traffic levels, the Trip Rate Information Computer System (TRICS) has been used. TRICS is a UK and Ireland wide database of traffic surveys including retail stores. Highway Officers have also referred to the data accepted for the new Lidl store at the A4 Bath Road in Calcot. This was approved with planning application 15/02794/COMIND.
- 6.22 The following traffic projection is therefore made:

	Arrivals	Departures	Two way
Weekday 17.00 to 18.00	74	72	146
Saturday 12.00 to 13.00	126	147	273

Projected total traffic generation from the proposal

6.23 It is then common practice when assessing retail stores to consider: Linked and pass-by (non-diverted) trips that are already present on the road network fronting the site, which will turn into the site; Primary transferred trips which are trips which would otherwise choose another store. Instead, they choose to visit the proposed store. New trips that do not appear anywhere on the network prior to the opening of the development; from population data it is projected that traffic to and from the access is distributed circa 2:1 A340 south: A340 north at the proposed site access. This would seem reasonable considering that circa two thirds of Tadley is situated to the south. With the above trip type and distribution, there will be an additional 37 vehicle movements along the A340 (7 from the north, 30 from the south) during the PM peak, with an additional 60 during the Saturday peak (12 from north, 48 from the south). Therefore very little additional traffic is passing along the A340 into West Berkshire and the A340 Falcon Gyratory. Traffic surveys were undertaken at the following junctions over three days in January and March 2019:

- a. A340 / Silchester Road / Franklyn Avenue
- b. The A340 Falcon Gyratory
- c. A340 / Sainsbury

6.24 From these surveys, the above junctions have been modelled using LinSig, which is a reputable software package used for modelling the capacity of traffic signal junctions. The following scenarios have been modelled for weekday AM and weekday PM and a Saturday peak.

- 2019 Base - From observed traffic flows;
- 2024 Base - 2019, plus traffic growth to 2024
- 2024 Development - as 2024 Base, plus the development.

6.25 From the traffic modelling results, highway officers along with counterparts in Hampshire County Council have no concerns regarding traffic impact on the A340 Falcon gyratory. However there is a concern that during the Friday PM peak by 2024, the southbound traffic queue from the A340 / Sainsbury traffic signal junction will be on average 21 cars in length. This will result in an increased frequency of traffic tailing through the A340 / Silchester Road / Franklyn Avenue junction to the front of the proposed store. This added to the expected traffic queue at the A340 / Silchester Road / Franklyn Avenue junction could result with more frequent traffic queues extending towards the A340 Falcon Gyratory. Despite this there is no possible scheme to improve the A340 / Sainsbury junction. On this basis along with the proposed store projected to marginally increase the southbound traffic queue from 21 to 24 cars, it is considered difficult to raise objection on traffic grounds. Accordingly in conclusion, while some concerns remain from highway officers regarding car parking level and traffic impact on the A340 southbound, it is considered that the concerns are not sufficient to raise objection. This is having regard to the advice on these matters in the NPPF which states that planning applications should only be refused if the impact on the local network is severe.

Nuclear safety issues

6.26 The application site lies within the Inner Consultation zone in relation to the AWE site at Aldermaston, which lies some 600m to the north of the site. This inner zone, under policy CS8 in the Core Strategy, mandates consultation with the Office for Nuclear Regulation [ONR] for all planning applications which are either residential or “where one

or more additional person may live, work or shop “. Clearly the current application falls within the latter remit. The policy states that in the interests of public safety, development in the inner zones is likely to be refused planning permission where the ONR has objected. At the time of writing this report, the ONR have a holding objection to the proposal, in the absence of a bespoke Emergency Action Plan being agreed for the site, should an emergency occur at the AWE. The Council Emergency Planning Officer has sought to agree such a document, which if the application were to be approved, would be accordingly conditioned in any permission. Again at the time of writing this has not been clarified but the update report will note the conclusions. If the officer still objects then there will be an additional reason for refusal recommended.

- 6.27 The Action Plan submitted by the applicants, in summary, seeks to achieve the following safety procedures on site, should a major incident occur at the AWE site. Firstly, the principal aim of the report is to enable a successful “lockdown” of all staff and shoppers on the site should an emergency happen. Such a lockdown should specifically not impinge upon the successful ability of all the various blue light services to effectively carry out their necessary operations during an incident: accordingly Lidl staff [or the retailer who builds out the scheme] will be trained in the required emergency procedures, how an incident will be notified, actions following that notification, and actions for continuing shelter of people during an event. Clearly the provision of both food and liquids in the store will be easy to obtain, but other matters such as ventilation and waste disposal over perhaps a 24 hour period has to be taken into account. The actions of staff in keeping shoppers calm as well is important as are any evacuation plans.
- 6.28 The applicants have prayed in aid the fact that many of the shoppers in the store would have been in the vicinity of the AWE site in any event as the catchment of the store is “local” by definition—see the retail section above. This is to an extent true, but the LPA must not resile from its public responsibilities in taking full account of public safety, having regard to the advice in policy CS8 in the WBCS. Accordingly, any planning decision to approve the application must not compromise future public security and health, in accord with the advice in para 95 of the NPPF. This states that [inter alia] “local planning authorities should ensure that operational sites are not adversely affected by the impact of other development proposed in the area”.

7. Planning Balance and Conclusion.

- 7.1 The application must be determined in accord with the Development Plan, unless material factors indicate that the benefits [or negative impacts/harm] caused by the development indicate otherwise. This is enshrined in planning policy advice and guidance. In this instance it is clear that the Council has an up to date plan, so an exception would need to be weighed in the planning balance if the application were to be approved—having regard to the fact that the application is clearly a departure from the Development Plan, being proposed on a green field site outside any defined settlement boundary.
- 7.2 In this instance, on the one hand, account needs to be taken of the apparent local retail need for the store in the Tadley/ Aldermaston retail catchment. On the other hand, the acceptance of this application would not only be contrary to extant policy, for protecting the countryside, but the proposal will also have a visual / landscape character impact, in addition to a degree of highways impact. What the Committee may also wish to take into account is that having regard to overall sustainability issues and the need to reduce CO2 production where possible, if the application were approved it would reduce car travel to other discount stores in the three main surrounding towns of Reading , Basingstoke and of course Newbury. In addition, should the Council Emergency Planning Officer [via the ONR] continue to object to the application [see the update

sheet] this would be a significant negative factor against the application to be taken into account.

- 7.3 So, in economic terms the application is of certain benefit, providing shoppers with the better choice than is presently the case, plus the advent of additional employment in the Town. In social terms an advantage is also gained, by a new meeting place being provided in Tadley. In environmental terms the application fails however, since it will entail the incursion of a greenfield site upon which no exceptional need has been justified. The officer advice is that the scheme, **on balance**, should be rejected for the reasons below.

8. Full Recommendation

- 8.1 To delegate to the Head of Development and Planning to REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION for the reasons listed below.

1. The application site is located on a green field site outside any defined settlement boundary as identified in the West Berkshire Core Strategy of 2006 to 2026. Accordingly, having regard to the advice in policies ADPP1, and ADPP6 in the WBCS, the application is unacceptable having regard to the overriding need to protect the open countryside from urban growth. This is reflected in the advice contained in para 170 of the NPPF of 2019.
2. The development of this substantial retail store, at this prominent location in terms of public visibility close to main thoroughfares, with the associated access, hard surfacing, car parking and external lighting, will be harmful to both local visual amenity and be harmful to the wider landscape character /setting of the urban built form of Tadley. This in turn will be contrary to the advice in para 170 of the NPPF of 2019, policy CS18 in the WBCS [due to the loss of green infrastructure] and policy CS19 [Landscape harm]. The application is accordingly unacceptable, notwithstanding the proposed additional landscaping around the application site.
3. Potential nuclear safety reason - subject to confirmation.