

Submission from Bernard Clark, Vice Chair of Cold Ash Parish Council, to the WAPC  
Wednesday 20th May 2020; 19/00832/REM 'Land Adjacent To Summerfield'

Let's start with the good news: West Berkshire Council OWN the hedge next to Summerfield. From the definitive map that Highways provided on 16<sup>th</sup> March, this is 100% certain.

By magnifying that map, it's easy to measure the width of West Berkshire's ownership of the verge, and the width of the hedge. (Also, there's a wire fence on the field side that delineates the boundary between the West Berkshire owned verge and the farmer's field).

So, the hedge is 100% within West Berkshire's verge, that's 100 per cent certain; West Berkshire Council OWN the hedge, as West Berkshire Officers have known for some time.

Why is this important? For two reasons.

Firstly, because West Berkshire, like all owners, have total rights over it. Preservation of the hedge is not only a planning matter, but under the control of any owner. Given that West Berkshire Council have publicly said that they want to take the lead in enhancing the district's arboreal heritage – planting thousands of trees – it's great news that they own this beautiful, important hedge. Because it's entirely in your power, Councillors, to preserve it or destroy it, at today's meeting. As owners. It is your hands on the chainsaw.

The second reason your ownership is important, Councillors, is because the question then arises of the danger of being misled by the Senior Planning Officer, whose responsibility it is to provide you with an accurate, clear and impartial Report.

Please look at item 6.38 of the Planning Officer's Report.

6.38 In relation to objectors concerns over the ownership of the hedgerow, The Highways Asset Management Team have confirmed the hedgerow falls outside Adopted Highways Boundary. Furthermore, officers consider the necessary consultation and notification on those with interest in the application site or land affected by the proposal has been undertaken correctly.

That makes it appear like West Berkshire Council DON'T own the hedge.

We've read it to a dozen impartial people – that's what they thought.

You may feel it's been deliberately drafted to confuse, to seem like West Berkshire DON'T own the hedge, without actually saying that.

If so, you may wonder if it's wilfully disingenuous, designed to mislead you, elected Councillors. You're simply trying to do the best job you can, needing to trust Executive Officers to be clear and impartial, and to help you understand the truth.

And --- if the report is demonstrably misleading on this key point, how can you trust it on others?

Well, that's most of our 500 words gone – on the hedge.

Except to say – our planning regulations do not allow the planning officer's report to be biased or misleading. By law it has to be balanced.

And that Parishioners of Cold Ash are outraged at how this development will fundamentally change the gateway into our village, with five massive houses. The scale, mass, uniformity, is completely out of keeping, especially bordering the AONB.

So please use the power vested in you by our democratic system to resoundingly vote this flawed application down, so West Berkshire can work together with us – the local community – and the developer, to come up with the right, sensitive solution for a beautiful location in our village.