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Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 5 AUGUST 2020

Councillors Present: Nassar Kessell (Substitute) (In place of Jeremy Cottam), Alan Law (Chairman), Tony Linden, Ross Mackinnon, Alan Macro (Vice-Chairman), Geoff Mayes, Richard Somner (Substitute) (In place of Graham Pask), Joanne Stewart and Keith Woodhams (Substitute) (In place of Royce Longton)

Also Present: Sharon Armour (Solicitor), Jessica Bailiss (Policy Officer (Executive Support)), Stephen Chard (Policy Officer), Paul Goddard (Team Leader - Highways Development Control), Lydia Mather (Senior Planning Officer) and David Pearson (Development Control Team Leader)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Jeremy Cottam, Councillor Royce Longton and Councillor Graham Pask

PART I

17. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2020 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

- **Item 16 (1): 19/01172/OUTMAJ – Land North of The Green, Theale: Page 7, penultimate bullet point:** Councillor Alan Macro requested that the second sentence should read as follows: This created a road safety issue, particularly for school children needing to cross the bus park.
- **Item 16 (1): 19/01172/OUTMAJ – Land North of The Green, Theale:** Councillor Alan Macro stated that at the vote it had been decided that the application be approved however, that the plans for the pedestrian crossing should be reviewed. He believed that it had been agreed that the drawing for this should be removed from the conditions however, he noted that it was still included under condition four on page 11 of the minutes.

Reference to a plan for pedestrian crossing would be removed from condition four in the minutes.

- **Item 16 (2): 20/00737/COMIND – Land at Shalford Farm Brimpton: Page 31, penultimate paragraph:** To be amended to read as follows: “The local roads did therefore already carry traffic related to the wedding venue and the distance to Shalford Farm would be less than traffic to other accommodation.”

18. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Alan Law, Joanne Stewart, Tony Linden, Alan Macro, Ross Mackinnon and Richard Somner declared an interest in Agenda Item 4(1), but reported that, as their interest was a personal or another registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, they determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

19. **Schedule of Planning Applications**

(1) Application No. & Parish: 20/00674/FUL - Land to the South East of Mortimer Station, Station Road, Mortimer.

(Councillors Alan Law, Joanne Stewart, Tony Linden, Ross Mackinnon and Richard Somner declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(1) by virtue of the fact that they were politically acquainted with Richard Benyon who owned Englefield Estate. As their interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, they determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.)

(Councillors Alan Law, Joanne Stewart, Tony Linden, Alan Macro and Ross Mackinnon declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(1) by virtue of the fact that they had been lobbied on the item. As their interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, they determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.)

(Councillor Geoff Mayes declared that he had been involved with the objectors to the previous application in 2008 however, would consider the item afresh and therefore was not declaring an interest)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4(1)) concerning Planning Application 20/00674/FUL in respect of the change of use of land and the construction of a 150 space car park with alterations to the highway, landscaping, and associated works.

As resolved at the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 29 April 2020, public speaking rights had been removed for virtual Council meetings. This right had replaced with the ability to make written submissions. This decision had been made in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panels Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Ms Lydia Mather, Senior Planning Officer, introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- The existing car park for the station consisted of 53 spaces.
- The red line shown on plans of the proposed site did not include all of the landscaping.
- The planning report set out the history of the site and the previous appeal. There were five objectors in total and a letter of support from Great Western Railway (GWR) who would operate the car park.
- The update sheet included a further letter of support from a resident and one further objection.
- A slide was presented that showed the capacity of the existing car park to be between 55% and 92%. Although the car park was often at high capacity it was never at full capacity according to data.
- A questionnaire had been submitted, as part of the Statement of Community Involvement, which was carried out with local residents in June and July 2018. 85 residents had responded saying that they used the car park daily however, more used it monthly. The vast majority of those using the car park travelled to it by car. 377 had said that they would travel by train more frequently if it was easier to park at the station. 80 had responded that they did not use the station because it lacked parking however, a higher proportion of people had skipped this question.

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Councillor Alan Law felt that the key question should have been how many people actually parked their car at the station however, he did not see this featured within the information. Ms Mather confirmed that this question had not been included and that people had only been asked how often they used the station. Lydia Mather would double check this point.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon referred to the middle table on the slide, which asked people 'if travelling by train how do you normally get to the station' in particular the option to select 'car (sole occupant)' and he queried if this covered the query raised by Councillor Law. Ms Mather highlighted that there were only 53 spaces at the station and Councillor Law highlighted that the number selecting this option (203) had not all travelled to the station at once and could be parking on the street.

- Ms Mather referred back to the slide showing the result of the questionnaire and referred to the frequency and stated that one question not asked was how much more people would use the station if parking was increased.
- It was noted that there was demand however, it was not possible to quantify the number of spaces required.
- The size of the car park overall was not considered to meet a justified need or be sustainable. This had also been the view of the Appeal Inspector regarding the 2008 application.
- The update sheet noted that the landscaping required outside of the red line could be secured using a Grampian Condition however, it would not be possible to secure long term maintenance and therefore this was not considered to be appropriate by Officers.
- There was outstanding information required on drainage. A revised plan had been received however, a consultation response had not been received. If this was overcome then this issue could possibly be removed as one of the reasons for refusal.
- Concerns regarding highways included the safety of the footpath over the bridge in terms of the separation distance from vehicles and the steepness of the gradient. Concerns regarding narrowing in regards to the footpath had been rectified.

Mr Paul Goddard, Highways Development Control Team Leader, highlighted the following points:

- The plans presented to Members showed a proposed car park with 150 spaces, with a new vehicle access on to Station Road.
- Highways Officers were content with the layout of the car park and the proposed ramp and steps to the station. They were also content with the proposed sight lines.
- The bridge which was currently about 5.5 metres wide would be narrowed to 3.5 metres wide by the provision of a pedestrian route from the car park over the bridge. This then only allowed one way traffic and was why traffic signals were being proposed.
- The Highway Consultants on behalf of the applicant had undertaken a traffic survey along the road and using projections up to 2025 had created a LinSig model. Traffic Officers at West Berkshire Council had viewed the LinSig and felt it was acceptable however, they were still concerned regarding the proposal and its design.

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- The first area of concern was the red area across the brow of the bridge. Originally this was going to be only a painted surface and concern had been raised by Officers that this was not sufficient to ensure pedestrian safety. Improvements had been made to this element to include a 50ml/5cm kerb. However officers were still not content that this would adequately protect pedestrians and this was mainly due to issues with the gradient. Officers would normally seek a gradient of one in 20, when in places gradients of 1 in 7 were proposed.
- Highways Officers had concerns about the application and were therefore recommending refusal.
- Another question raised by Highways Officers regarding the proposal was whether the site would be lit.
- Mr Goddard referred to the survey data submitted. He could also not see a question which asked how many people actually used the car park. He could not see how the figure of 150 spaces had been reached from the data obtained. Ideally a projection of parking numbers during the day should have been received from the Transport Consultants. There were traffic figures included in the data however, it was not possible to see how this related to the figures included in the Statement of Community Involvement.
- Mr Goddard was concerned regarding the accuracy of these figures and highlighted that this in turn meant that the LinSig could not be relied upon. Mr Goddard also queried how the 150 spaces could be justified considering a similar amount of spaces were being proposed for larger stations in the area such as Newbury and Greenham Park. Moving forward past the Covid-19 pandemic it also needed to be considered what impact this would have on travel and increased homeworking. From the Highways Department's own surveys it was known that traffic levels were 65% of what they were pre-lockdown.
- Because of the overall design issues Highways Officers were recommending refusal of the application.
- Finally Ms Mather added that Planning Officers were aware that the application was acceptable in policy terms however, it was the size and scale that was of concern. Planning Officers were recommending that the application be refused and the reasons were set out in the report.

In accordance with the Extraordinary Council resolution, written submissions had been received from, Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council Parish, John and Ruth Clatworthy, objectors, Great Western Railway, supporter and Katherine Miles (Pro Vision), applicant/agent.

Written submissions were read out by the Clerk to the Committee as follows:

Parish Council Representations:

The written submission of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council was read out as follows:

- Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (SMPC) fully supported the planning application for the change of use of land and construction of a 150 space car park at Mortimer Station together with alterations to the highway, landscaping and associated works. The application derived from the strong local wish for increased parking at the station evidenced over a long period and had received full support from GWR and Englefield Estate since the outset.
- The project was a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) project. Stratfield Mortimer had the only adopted NDP in West Berkshire; adopted by West

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Berkshire Council (WBC) in 2017, its policies were frequently cited by WBC in response to planning applications. In the main NDP questionnaire in 2015 1006 people (92%) endorsed station car park enlargement. This was the highest single response in a lengthy questionnaire. As a result, Policy IS3 established “extension to the station car parking will be promoted and encouraged”. SMPC was carrying out the wishes of the community in this application and WBC should support this.

- SMPC’s Statement of Community Involvement illustrated the methods used to involve and inform the people of Mortimer of the plans and proposals in line with the Localism Act 2011. In particular, the Community Needs survey June – July 2018 attracted 494 responses with results demonstrating overwhelming support for increased and improved station parking:
 - 410 (83%) thought current parking provision poor or very poor;
 - 377 (76%) would travel by train more if parking more accessible;
 - 438 (87%) thought train use would increase with improved parking.
- They noted that the survey was only carried out in Mortimer, thus capturing only a third of the catchment of Mortimer station i.e. excluding Burghfield Common, Silchester, Sulhamstead.
- The survey also did not take into account the residents of the 110 new homes allocated in the NDP and since granted permission. Analysis of the full results established the need for 150 new parking spaces. West Berkshire Core Strategy 2012 - Area Delivery Plan P6 Identified “poor transport connections of the East Kennet Valley” and stated “improvement to the accessibility of Mortimer Railway station will be sought, for example through enhancements to the road bridge. This will be taken forward through partnership working”. The application was clearly consistent with WBC policy.
- Increasing capacity at Mortimer station also supported CS13 – “Improve travel choice and facilitate sustainable travel particularly... between... main urban areas and rural service centres”. Mortimer was designated as a Rural Service Centre in the Core Strategy.
- The shortage of parking spaces had led to indiscriminate and very dangerous parking along Grazeley Road (up to 25 cars) eroding verges and along The Street towards St. Mary’s Junior School exacerbating significant school drop off/pickup issues. This generated continued complaints from the public to SMPC and WBC.
- The village centre was more than a mile from the station; there was no public transport between the two. The steep hill meant walking to and from the station was not an option for many.
- SMPC urged councillors to support the application and give the residents of Mortimer what they had strongly requested.

Objector Representations:

The written submission of John and Ruth Clatworthy was read out as follows:

- The public consultation/community involvement claimed by SMPC to support their application was crude and did not adequately explore public views. Prior to the drawing up of the plans there was no consultation with the public on either site location or size and at the consultation event held in February 2019 the public was presented with a seeming fait accompli with no alternative offered.
- In their attempt at rebuttal of objections submitted, Pro Vision refer to "various long-term benefits of the proposal for villagers and those using the station for commuting" and claimed the pedestrian link would provide access to the station "and other village community facilities". There was no definition of these "long-term benefits" or "other village community facilities." There was also reference to

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"significant support from the wider community" but no evidence of this had been provided.

- The claim by Pro Vision that their survey demonstrated scope for a "modal shift" to increased use of rail travel from Mortimer was now severely undermined. GWR had recently announced that they planned to revise their season ticketing strategy to accommodate the reduction in passenger numbers because of the modal shift to home working resulting from the Covid 19 epidemic. Passenger numbers were 16% of pre-Covid -19 figures, they had announced. This reduction was reflected in the fact that a daily maximum of 5 parked cars had been observed in the existing station car park since the start of easing of lockdown restrictions on 15th June.
- West Berkshire Council's recent residents' survey of the impact of Covid-19 reported that "almost all respondents who were able to work from home intend to continue to do so and even more in the future."
- It was also worth noting that there was no prospect of electrification of this line in the foreseeable future and therefore use of diesel locomotives would continue. Encouraging increased rail passenger traffic on this line and therefore road traffic to access it was surely contrary to the Greener Berkshire policy.
- The applicants claimed that their proposed car park "fully respect(s) the rural character of the area". Urbanisation of the rural landscape involved showed no respect, and they contended, no amount of "sensitive landscaping" could mitigate the visual impact of a car park with height restriction gantry and other inevitable paraphernalia.

Supporter Representations:

The written submission of Great Western Railway was read out as follows:

- GWR strongly supported the proposed expanded parking provision for Mortimer Station.
- GWR had worked closely with Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (SMPC) over the last three years to progress the project. Mortimer Station had seen significantly lower growth in rail passenger numbers than the industry average over the last 15 years. The existing car parking provision at the station was full to capacity, with rail users also parking on street in the vicinity of the station. These factors strongly suggested that the lack of car parking supply for the station was suppressing growth in rail use and limiting the station's role in the local transport network.
- The 2018 Assessment of Community Survey which covered only around a third of catchment area of Mortimer Station, clearly demonstrated that use of rail services was currently suppressed by the current car park capacity. Of 494 responses received more than 350 people stated they would travel by train more often if more parking was available at the station.
- The Office of Rail and Road published estimates of station usage each year for every station in the UK. Between 2004/5 and 2018/19 the number of passenger journeys to and from Mortimer station increased by just 3%. This compared with a 95% increase in passenger numbers across the industry and, as a more local comparable, 39% growth at Bramley Station over the same period. Growth in rail use at Mortimer Station had not grown in line with background demand growth.
- GWR had a track record of investing in station facilities and had expanded car parking provision at a number of rural stations over the last ten years where existing facilities were full, providing capacity for suppressed demand. For example, at Kingham doubling the car park capacity to 248 spaces increased the

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passenger numbers by 47%. At Hanborough increasing spaces from 39 to 278 saw a tripling of passenger numbers.

- Following and expansion of station car parking at Mortimer, GWR would expect a similar significant increase in passengers using the station.
- Access between the platforms at Mortimer was via a stepped footbridge and there was no step-free route between platforms. The Planning application recognised this through the provision of a safe pedestrian route and associated infrastructure via the proposed new car park and over the railway bridge on Station Road.
- In December 2019 GWR introduced additional Services on the Reading to Basingstoke line. GWR also intended to introduce 4-car trains on the route which had additional capacity compared to the current 2 and 3-car trains. These improvements would provide additional capacity and make the use of rail services from Mortimer Station more attractive, increasing demand and the role the station could potentially play in delivering modal shift away from the private car. For this to be realised however required additional car parking for the station.

Agent's Representations:

The written submission of Katherine Miles (Pro Vision), was read out as follows:

- Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (SMPC) was the Applicant but Great Western Railway (GWR) would construct the facility and appoint APCOA, who managed the existing car park, to deal with fee collection, safety and security.
- Pro Vision had consulted WBC following the project being heavily endorsed in the NDP. SMPC had since worked closely with GWR and Englefield Estate (the landowner) over the last 4 years to procure studies and reports on Need, Landscape, Highways, Drainage, Trees, Ecology etc. to deal with concerns of the Council. Their three main concerns had been resolved: Firstly, justification of need for 150 spaces:
 - An independent survey was conducted in Mortimer and demonstrated overwhelmingly that at least 150 more spaces were needed.
 - GWR advised that rail travel from Mortimer, currently 189,000 annual journeys and only 51 spaces, was being significantly suppressed by parking limitations and that similar rural stations had much greater parking capacity e.g. Kemble, 223,000 journeys, had 220 spaces and Kingham, 124,000 journeys, had 123 spaces.
- Secondly, highway safety and accessibility for disabled and movement-restricted passengers using the road bridge and proximity of the access point to the bridge.
 - A new pedestrian footpath over the road bridge was proposed. Passengers would be able to park either side, complete a return journey, and safely return to their car via the road bridge as an alternative to the footbridge over the line. The access point had been moved further from the bridge to achieve visibility splays.
- Thirdly, visual impact on the character of the area:
 - A landscape and visual impact assessment had minimised the visual effect of the car park. The existing hedgerow would be maintained at a height not less than 2.5 metres. The car park would be almost invisible from the road and there were no footpaths from which walkers could see it. The car park was well screened from the station by dense existing trees and hedging along the back of the Basingstoke platform. A Grampian condition could secure additional planting.

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- Green Park Station would increase demand for parking at the station from those working in Green Park or travelling to Reading Stadium.
- New homes in Mortimer would also increase demand.
- Although Mere oak Park and Ride was useful for off-peak journeys to Reading or Royal Berkshire Hospital, there were delays of up to 30 minutes for traffic from Mortimer/Burghfield direction at morning rush-hour and of course it would be no help for passengers to Basingstoke.
- Some objectors cited a possible station at Grazeley as a reason not to increase capacity at Mortimer; this had been talked about for 40 years. GWR had stated that with the opening of Green Park station there would be no station built at Grazeley. In addition the Wokingham Local Plan was on hold pending a judicial review regarding the enlarged protection zone for Aldermaston and Burghfield AWE so the prospect for Grazeley had yet again receded into the distance. WBC should support the application to fulfil the wishes of residents to be able to make use of the transport link.

Ward Member Representation:

Councillor Graham Bridgman in addressing the Committee raised the following points:

- Councillor Bridgman commented that he hoped planning decisions were not being based on the pandemic that was happening at that time.
- There was a clear and explicit need for a larger car park at Mortimer Station.
- The survey that led to the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) had been carried out with over 1000 people.
- The Community Needs Survey and the submission by Great Western Railway suggested that Mortimer Station had not seen the growth in rail traffic seen elsewhere, which should be encouraged. This was hindered by the lack of parking. These issues were set out in the lobby pack sent to Members by the applicant prior to the deadline date for information.
- Through landscaping the urbanising effect had been extensively mitigated by the proposed landscaping detailed in Pro Vision's submission.
- Councillor Bridgman referred to the letter to the Planning Department from Englefield Estate, which was referenced in the update report and made their view on the application very clear. He quoted that the letter stated 'the estate would include the management of the planting within the lease arrangements for the car park'.
- Regarding the footway and disabled access, fundamentally at the current time there was no method for someone who was unable to climb the footbridge to access the Basingstoke platform. The proposal would allow people to cross at the road bridge.
- Regarding the proposed gradient and width of the footway, the footway would be wider and gradient less than the existing footway to the village.
- Regarding drainage, Pro Vision had submitted an amended drainage strategy on 3rd August to address concerns about flooding raised by the Local Flooding Authority (LFA). Councillor Bridgman highlighted the additional areas now included within the strategy. If this still did not allay concerns by the LFA, then the suggestion was that a condition be added requiring submission of a drainage strategy prior to commencement of development.

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- Finally regarding the footway into Mortimer Station, Councillor Bridgman drew attention to page two of the update sheet, which was a statement by the agent Pro Vision that ‘The footway access into the existing Mortimer station access will not reduce carriageway width.’
- In conclusion Councillor Bridgman reminded everyone that Mortimer was a Rural Service Centre and so was Burghfield, which was adjacent and relied on Mortimer for rail travel. The idea that the application was contrary to the NDP was ludicrous in Councillor Bridgman’s opinion. It was a project that was imbedded in the NDP and strongly supported by the consultation that proceeded it. The proposal had been supported by 90% of those that responded to the consultation. It was also passed at a referendum by a significant majority and over 50% turnout.
- Councillor Bridgman suggested that people should be encouraged to use rail travel rather than car travel. Great Western Railway (GWR) were trying to increase usage and this proposal would encourage people to park their car and use rail travel rather than driving.
- Councillor Bridgman had regularly stated during Committee meetings that West Berkshire Council should pride itself on being a policy led Planning Authority. Urban development in the countryside was often accepted if it complied with policy. The recent decision on 104 dwellings in Theale was granted permission because it was within the NPD. Although it was on an identified site, Theale Green Primary School, which was also granted planning permission was not as it was outside the settlement boundary however, it was granted permission because it complied with policy and there was an identified need. He felt that the proposal in question would have a less urbanising effect.
- The proposal was completely in accordance with policy, it was wanted by the village and promoted by the Parish Council. To refuse the application would undermine the process of the NDP.

Member Questions to the Ward Member:

Councillor Alan Macro referred to the previous appeal decision and noted it had mentioned a mini bus service had been running from the village to the station. Councillor Macro asked if this service, which had been heavily used, was still operating. Councillor Bridgman confirmed that there was currently no public transport from the village to the station. There was one bus a week from Beechhill in to Reading. The bus from Mortimer to Reading went in the other direction so there was no transport access to the station.

Councillor Macro asked if there was a reason why the service had stopped. Councillor Bridgman confirmed that he did not have an answer on this. He had not used the service as he was able to walk to the station.

Councillor Mackinnon queried if any alternative sites for the car park had been considered. Councillor Bridgman stated that no other sites had been put forward through the Parish Council. There was a potential site elsewhere but the difficulty was that it had been put forward for housing and it was objected to. Recently there had been nothing to suggest that this other site might be used for the car park. Councillor Bridgman raised two comments relating to the other site. Firstly it would still have involved a planning application for a car park for 150 spaces and therefore if that was the issue with the current application, then the other site would receive the same objection. Secondly the other site would not resolve concerns regarding access to the Basingstoke platform. Fundamentally the engagement that the Parish Council had undertaken had been with Englefield Estate, who were supportive of the application and was why the land had been put forward. The orientation of the new proposal compared to the 2008 application was

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different due to the landscaping and the plan to place a footway over the road bridge. It was possible that a further application could come forward if the current one was refused however, Members needed to make a decision based on the proposal in front of them and Councillor Bridgman did not want to see Mortimer denied the car park that it required because of the prospect of another application, which might not arise.

Councillor Jo Stewart was interested in the quality of life, in particular paragraphs 6.38 and 6.39 within the report, which detailed lighting. She noted that details on lighting had not been submitted as part of the application and asked Councillor Bridgman if he thought there would be an impact on residents living along Station Road from potential lighting used within the car park and light from headlights. Councillor Bridgman stated that he did not have details on lighting proposed for the scheme however, Mortimer was known as a dark village. This had been endorsed in the NDP and only low level lighting would be accepted unless there was a safety issue. Councillor Bridgman stated that if there was a safety issue he had no doubt this would be dealt with by the Parish Council.

Councillor Keith Woodhams referred to page 11 of the submission pack, which featured the submission from Pro Vision and that a new pedestrian footpath over the bridge was proposed, which would enable passengers to park either side, complete a return journey and safely return to their car via the road bridge as an alternative to the footbridge over the line. Councillor Woodman's asked Councillor Bridgman if he supported this paragraph. Councillor Bridgman reported that he had on occasion crossed the bridge on foot and this was not something he wished to repeat often due to it being unsafe. There was no safe way of getting from the Reading platform to the Basingstoke platform, if the footbridge was not used, which was also not a safe option in Councillor Bridgman's view. He agreed with the statement from Pro Vision referred to by Councillor Woodhams.

Councillor Geoff Mayes asked if the ending of the minibus service referred to earlier in discussions and the increase in the charges for the car park by Great Western Railway (GWR) increased the need for car parking off street. Councillor Bridgman stated that any reduction in public or private transport and changes in car parking charges was bound to have an impact. Councillor Bridgman did not think however, that these were the only reasons why the car park was necessary. He felt that the car park was necessary as shown by the evidence provided for the NDP and survey conducted as part of the planning application. Secondly Councillor Bridgman referred to GWR's evidence gathered from other sites and he felt that the Council should be encouraging people to use rail travel. Access to the station was primarily by car and if people were unable to park then this would cause displacement to other locations such as Green Park and would not reduce the number of cars on the road. Councillor Bridgman stated he would prefer it if people could drive to Mortimer and then get on a train.

Councillor Richard Somner raised a query regarding landscaping. He referred to paragraph 6.32 of the planning report and queried how the landscaping outside of the red line would be managed. Councillor Bridgman stated that he had spoken to the Estate Manager at Englefield Estate on this matter earlier in the day. He understood the Officers views regarding a Grampian condition. Councillor Bridgman felt that there were two options. Firstly, Englefield had expressed that they would be happy to see the red line moved to include the land subject to planting. Councillor Bridgman stated that the other option would be to have a S106 Agreement to ensure that the lease between GWR and Englefield Estate included provisions for the landscaping and its upkeep.

Councillor Law reminded Members that they needed to consider the plans in front of them and red lines could not be moved at this stage.

Councillor Tony Linden referred to the 2009 appeal decision that had been for a smaller site. Councillor Linden asked what the main differences were in the current application to

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the one that had been refused. Councillor Bridgman stated that the NDP had changed the ground rules and policy now supported the provision of a car park and therefore he felt that the proposal should be supported by the Council.

Councillor Law referred to paragraph 6.9 on page 39 of the report, which showed various zones around the station. The Parish Council had stated that there were regularly 25 cars parked away from the Station along Grazeley Road. Councillor Law queried which zone Grazeley Road was in. It was confirmed that Grazeley Road was in Zone 4. Councillor Bridgman referred to a photograph that was included within the lobby pack sent by the Parish Council within the deadline for information, which showed this more clearly. Sharon Armour stated that she had some concerns as she was uncertain whether all Members had seen the Lobby Pack. Some Members confirmed that they had either not seen or not opened the Lobby Pack.

Councillor Law referred back to his question and drew attention to 6.10 of the report, which detailed Zone 4, which was where Grazeley Road was located. The Parish Council said that there were often 25 cars parked in this area however, the Transport Assessment survey stated that this was around 10 vehicles so there seemed to be a contradiction in the information provided. Councillor Bridgman stated that he did not understand the reasons for the differences however, stated that he occasionally drove to that area and it was full and the verges were getting destroyed.

Questions to Officers

Councillor Mackinnon noted that Officers had claimed that 150 spaces seemed too many for the development and he queried what the basis for this opinion was. Mr Goddard considered 150 spaces to be too many because although a lot of data had been provided there was nothing proving that 150 spaces was the figure that was required. He would have expected the following questions to have been asked; if the car park was enlarged would you use it; how often would you use the car park and when would you use the car park. This would have helped the Highways Department determine what the parking accumulation would be. 150 spaces seemed somewhat arbitrary. Highways Officers were not objecting to increased parking on the site however, felt it needed to be justified.

Councillor Mackinnon noted that it was not that the data supported a particular number of spaces but that data had not been provided that supported the provision of 150 spaces. He stated that if he was to ask Mr Goddard how many spaces were justified he would not be able to provide an answer and Mr Goddard confirmed that this was correct.

Councillor Law queried the process of the application and that he would have expected a process of evaluation. There were many issues that were unclear including the data and matters such as lighting. There was also an inconsistency between the numbers in the traffic survey and numbers from the residents' survey. Councillor Law felt that Officers should have been asking the applicant for this information as part of the process to clarify the issues raised and he queried if this had been done. Ms Mather reported that Officers assessed what was presented to them by the applicant. Planning Officers had carried out their own assessment and had hoped for input from Transport Policy however, this had not been forthcoming. Transport Policy could have also assessed the level of need. Ms Mather confirmed therefore that additional information had not been requested. Regarding lighting, this could be conditioned. Councillor Law noted that there was not sufficient information on traffic capacity, parking capacity and lighting for Officers to make a recommendation. Ms Mather confirmed that Officers had only been able to assess what was presented to them. Councillor Law felt that if all the data had been available a different recommendation might have been reached.

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Councillor Macro reported that in 2019 there was a planning application for Lidl in Tadley and a lot of the landscaping had been outside of the red line. The recommendation from Officers had been if Members were minded to approve the application then the applicant would be invited to sign a S106 Agreement for the landscaping and maintenance. He queried if the same could be applied to the current application and if so if it would alleviate concerns about landscaping and the impact on the rural aspect of the area. Ms Mather confirmed that a S106 Agreement could be used however, there would be legal fees involved for the applicant. It was however, not felt that this would be sufficient to overcome the impact on the landscape as there were still concerns regarding the size of the development; the amount of parking being required along with screening concerns. Councillor Law asked if Officers would normally ask applicants to provide a blue line. Ms Mather only recalled the red line being discussed and highlighted the applicant was not the same as the landowner in this case. A blue line would mean that a condition could be applied.

Mr David Pearson, Development Control Team Leader, stated that he was very concerned about the level of information that was unclear. For a number of reasons and in the interest of those supporting or objecting to the application it was important that there was a fair hearing. Mr Pearson felt that there were a number of matters that required attention before Members could make a decision. Mr Pearson felt that the item should be deferred until further information could be obtained including on the lighting issue; information justifying why 150 spaces were required and also so that any additional landscaping conditions could be referred to the landscaping consultant. If these areas were conditioned at this stage, Mr Pearson stressed that they could end up with a scheme that was quite different from the original proposal. He therefore did not feel that using conditions was appropriate.

Councillor Tony Linden stated that he had a question in reference to the one he had asked Councillor Bridgman, firstly the difference between the 2008 application and the current one and secondly how much weight should be given to the NDP. Ms Mather confirmed that the appeal decision pre-dated the Council's Core Strategy, it also pre-dated the NDP. It would have been considered under the policies applicable at that time. There was difference in the 2008 scheme in that it was orientated alongside Station Road rather than along the boundary with the railway. It was also for 100 spaces rather than 150. Regarding the NDP, this was one part of the whole framework of policies that needed to be considered.

Debate:

Councillor Richard Somner stated that he supported the statement made by Mr Pearson. Councillor Somner asked for clarification on traffic lights, as he could not find detail on how these would be funded if the proposal was approved. He also referred to the earlier conversation regarding zones and Grazeley Road. He had looked on Google Maps and as far as he could see, anyone parking on Grazeley Road would be parking over the other side of the A33 and would have a considerable walk to the station. For a matter of clarity, Councillor Somner thought that the road being referred to was the road that went to Grazeley Road called The Street. It was confirmed that this was correct.

In reference to Councillor Somner's question regarding the funding of traffic lights, Mr Goddard confirmed that as far as he was aware this was something that would be funded by the applicant or Great Western Railway and not something that would be funded by the Highway Authority.

Councillor Woodhams recalled hearing that 110 homes were proposed for the area. He asked if this was true. He commented that if the item was to be deferred then this should

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be taking in to consideration. Councillor Law confirmed that this was part of the DPD Local Plan and was going through the planning application process.

Due to insufficient information across key areas Councillor Nassar Kessell proposed that the application be deferred. This was seconded by Councillor Woodhams and at the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that the planning application shall be deferred.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.58 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature