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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, 28 OCTOBER 2020

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

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

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Jeremy Cottam

PART I

25. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26th August were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

Application No. & Parish: 20/01134/HOUSE, Page 8, third paragraph: The questions raised by Councillor Somner to be included under questions to officers rather within the debate.

26. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ross Mackinnon declared an interest in Agenda Item 4(1), but reported that, as his interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon declared an interest in Agenda Item 4(2), but reported that, as his interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

All Members of the Committee declared an interest in Agenda Item 4(2), but reported that, as their interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, they determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

27. Schedule of Planning Applications

(1) **Application No. & Parish: 20/01480/FUL - Glenvale Nurseries, Hungerford Lane, Bradfield Southend**

Councillor Ross Mackinnon declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(1) by virtue of the fact that he had been lobbied on the item. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.)

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The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4(1)) concerning Planning Application 20/01480/FUL in respect of the demolition of an existing outbuilding and polytunnels and erection of a building in flexible use for storage or distribution (Use Class B8) and/or for any light industrial process within Use Class E, with associated access track and parking area.

Ms Sarah Melton, Senior Planning Officer, gave a detailed presentation on the application and highlighted the key points.

Removal of Speaking Rights

As resolved at the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 29 April 2020, public speaking rights were removed for virtual Council meetings. This right was replaced with the ability to make written submissions. This decision was 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.

The above changes to speaking rights were subsequently amended at the Council meeting on 10 September 2020. It was agreed that parties making written submissions in relation to a planning application would be invited to attend the Remote Meeting of the Planning Committee to answer any questions that Members of the Committee might wish to ask in order to seek clarification on any part of their statement.

In accordance with the Extraordinary Council resolution, written submissions relating to this application were received from Gareth Osborn, Jim Forrester, Charles Romaine (joint submission on behalf of multiple named objectors), Peter Neal, Rebecca Neal and Meg Nelson, objectors, and Duncan and Helen Varley and Sophie Berry, applicants and agent.

Objector Submission Summary:

The written summarised submission from Gareth Osborn, Jim Forrester, Charles Romaine (joint submission on behalf of multiple named objectors), Peter Neal, Rebecca Neal and Meg Nelson, was read out as follows:

- The development is outside of a defined settlement boundary and within the AONB. There has been no demonstrated need for the development as to justify development in this location.
- The existing mixed-use site will be significantly reduced by the units and the dominating 100m access road, reducing its ability/flexibility to operate as a viable rural business in the future.
- The site is not within a sustainable or accessible location which is contrary to all planning policies. The proposal scheme as a whole is contrary to the Development Plan.
- Industrial uses should be directed to Protected Employment Areas. There are existing vacant farm buildings that could be used instead of the proposal scheme.
- The investment into the infrastructure required for the development will ensure that the units will be expensive to rent for potential occupiers, and will make the proposal commercially unviable in terms of construction.
- Previous housing development applications on this site have been refused by Members. If one considers the form of the current application it has all of the on-site facilities that were part of the original proposal for a multi-house cul-de-sac; namely an access road, street lighting, the necessity to provide a proper sewage system to deal with the four extra toilets, electric car charging facilities and even four double garages. The only thing missing, so far, is the houses.
- Glenvale's main business activities, generating the typical background noise, have always been conducted at the Northern part of Glenvale. At residences in the

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south, these background noise levels have always been perceived to be low. Temporary structures (polytunnels) used for horticulture are proposed to be replaced with a permanent building undertaking light industrial activities and a 100m access road, with the consequential adverse impact on the residential amenity. There is no protection for neighbour residents against the proposed B8 element.

- Following advice from Stuart Michael Associates, we understand that it is standard practice for an applicant seeking planning permission for B8 use in close proximity to residential uses to undertake a Noise Impact Assessment, following which the Council can then consider the findings, and then impose noise restrictions if applicable. Should a Noise Impact Assessment not be provided by an applicant for B8 use, the Council can still impose noise restrictions. We note that the Applicant has not undertaken an NIA. In the absence of any NIA, following advice from Stuart Michael Associates, we request that the following conditions be imposed on the B8/Class E use units:
 - *“Noise generated from the site should not exceed the British Standard and WHO guideline levels of 35 dB (LAeq,T) in living rooms and bedrooms (resting conditions) during the daytime to protect existing residents amenity. External noise levels should not exceed 50 dB during the daytime to maintain existing private amenity to adjacent residences in accordance with British Standards and WHO Guidelines.”*

Member Questions to the Objector:

(Mr Gareth Osborn was in attendance to answer questions)

Councillor Ross Mackinnon noted that it had been stated that there was no proven demand for the facility. Councillor Mackinnon felt that this was an issue for the applicant and not a reason to refuse planning permission. The applicant was taking a risk in applying for planning permission and therefore Councillor Mackinnon queried if Mr Osborn felt that the applicant would agree with the statement made about demand.

Mr Osborn stated that the demand for the units was a significant consideration given the site was within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and impacted upon Policy CS9. The Travellers Rest development was in close proximity to the application site, which had 31 industrial units of a similar size and many of which were vacant. Mr Osborn had once been a board member of the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and therefore understood some of the issues associated with demand for small buildings in locations of a similar nature. There were already 31 units in close proximity to the site with a fair degree of vacancies. Therefore Mr Osborn felt that it was possible that the demand was unproven. Demand in his view was a key element of the application, particularly as the site was within the AONB.

Applicant/Agent Submission:

The written submission from Mr and Mrs Varley (Applicant) and Sophie Berry (Agent) was read out as follows:

- Glenvale Nurseries has traded in this rural location for over 40 years. The applicants have owned Glenvale Nurseries for over 16 years and have experienced a considerable decline in turnover over the last 7 years, and even more so during the current pandemic. There is an obvious need to diversify the existing business through more efficient use of the application site. You will be aware of previous unsuccessful applications which sought a solution through housing. The loss of a rural business was previously resisted by the committee

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and this encouraged the applicants, who are determined for their business to survive, to proceed with the current proposal to diversify the existing use.

- The current proposal for the creation of units for rental will not only supplement the income of Glenvale Nurseries but it will meet an evidenced demand for the shortfall of such units in the area, whilst giving the rural economy a much needed boost during this uncertain time. Such diversification is supported by both national and local policy.
- Gabrielle Mancini, West Berkshire Council Economic Development Officer, has been supportive of the proposal and encouraged use of the Thames Valley Hub, who has provided days of expertise to assist the applicants in developing their proposal. They have also been successful in attracting the support of the Rural Payments Agency, who encourage diversification of rural businesses in this area through the creation of units, such as those proposed, through the allocation of European funds. The ultimate success of the funding application relies on whether planning permission is granted today and, with the UK leaving the EU, this is the last round of funding available.
- Previously, it was considered that a house in the car park would be too prominent. The current proposal therefore logically seeks to replace buildings that are present already on the site which, through more efficient use of land, means Glenvale Nurseries is able to continue trading. Every effort has been made to be respectful to the surrounding area and neighbours and all requests made by the Council, including removing B1, adjusting the building position, hours of operation and changes to the vehicle access have all been met positively.
- Prospective tenants, complement the existing operation and include landscapers, gardeners, and a beauty product business. Currently trades using Glenvale, load vehicles daily from the polytunnels on an unrestricted basis. Any permission granted will be restricted to ensure no adverse harm to neighbouring amenity.
- The committee wished to avoid the loss of the existing business and the applicants are hopeful that members will therefore recognise the need to diversify in this way, especially in the current economic climate, where rural businesses are struggling to survive, and give the applicants and their prospective tenants a chance to adapt to current circumstances and thrive.

Member Questions to the Applicant/Agent:

(Mr and Mrs Varley (Applicant) and Sophie Berry (Agent) were in attendance to answer questions)

Councillor Jo Stewart asked Mr and Mrs Varley if the lights included as part of the plans were skylights and it was confirmed that this was correct.

Secondly, Councillor Stewart queried current vehicle usage in the area where the units were proposed, to try and gain an idea of the noise being generated. Mrs Varley confirmed the current vehicles accessing the site included forklifts, lorries, vans, flatbed lorries including landscapers, and builders. The area was accessed multiple times throughout the day. Mr Varley highlighted however, that movements were currently restricted due to Covid-19.

Councillor Graham Pask stated that he had a question for Mr and Mrs Varley. The objector had made a comment regarding a Noise Impact Statement and he asked why one had not been carried out. Mrs Varley stated that the business was currently closed due to Covid-19 and therefore any assessment of the site would have given a false representation.

Councillor Alan Law stated that he had a question for the Agent. He referred to section 6.10 of the report, which stated that there was no definite end user identified for the

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development. Councillor Law therefore queried where the evidence was of an identified need. Ms Sophie Berry stated that the applicant had received a lot of interest from potential businesses that could use the units however, because they had not yet been built, there were not currently any contracts in place and therefore this would be subject to planning permission being granted. The identified need could also be found in the Council's documentation and the report under section seven, Planning Balance and Conclusion.

Ward Member Representation:

Councillor Ross Mackinnon, speaking as Ward Member, raised the following points:

- Mr and Ms Varley had approached him about the application previously however, as a Member of the Committee he had explained that he could not pre-judge the application. He therefore would not be speaking for or against the application and wanted to hear views from both Officers and other Members of the Committee.
- He felt that the letters in support and against the application were balanced.

Member Questions to the Ward Member:

There were no questions from Members for the Ward Member.

Member Questions to Officers:

Councillor Law referred to section 6.3 of the report where the arguments were outlined relating to policy. It detailed that you could have appropriate limited development in the countryside if needs were identified and it helped to retain a strong rural economy. However, in 6.10 of the report the Officer stated that there was no definite end use identified for the development and went on to state that it had the potential to accommodate start-up businesses. Councillor Law asked if there had been any evidence of an identified need provided.

Ms Sarah Melton explained that during the application process the applicant had submitted a heavily redacted statement of potential users. This had been redacted to such an extent that it had not been possible to take it into consideration when assessing the application and this had been made clear to the applicant.

Regarding the need, Ms Melton referred to section 6.18 of the report, which included the detail on the supportive consultation response from the Council's Economic Development Officer. The Economic Development Officer had stated that there was need for such a facility. The Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership had also indicated that there was not sufficient availability of such units. Mr Bob Dray added that ADDP1 was a strategic policy, which guided other policies in the plan. Therefore the assessment of the application had also included Policy CS9 and CS10.

Councillor Graham Pask explained that he knew the site well as Bradfield had once been part of his own Ward and Bucklebury, which he still represented, was immediately to the south of the application site. Councillor Pask drew Members' attention to Page 33 of the report, which showed one of the block plans of the site. The plan showed the building development to the east and also clearly car parking to the south of this. The property to the west of this was called Bird Care Cottage and it stood adjacent to the site, which was currently accessed by private cars with electric charging points and car parking. There would be a marked change in the type of noise if the development went ahead and Councillor Pask referred to the applicant's answer to the earlier question regarding the use of fork lift trucks. Councillor Pask stated that he had read all of the conditions however, sought assurance from the Planning Officer that hours of working and other noise mitigation measures had been taken into account to manage a different level of noise that would occur if planning permission was granted. This needed to include hours

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of operation and not just during the construction phase. Lighting was also another issue that required consideration.

Mr Dray reported that there were a suite of conditions recommended, which would restrict hours of working to certain times of the day. Conditions had been applied to ensure any industrial processes or storage must be retained within the building. The residual impact would be incidental movements to and from the site. It was an existing premises and the worst case scenario already permissible also had to be considered. An additional condition had been included within the update report requesting a noise mitigation scheme. There would be a change to the use however it would remain commercial in nature. Conditions were also included regarding soft and hard landscaping.

Councillor Pask reiterated the issue that the site was within the AONB where skies were dark, particularly during the winter months. The units, if granted permission, would require a degree of lighting. Care needed to be taken within the AONB and therefore Councillor Pask sought reassurance that any lighting would be low level as the current horticultural use would have little to no lighting requirement. Mr Dray reported that condition 15 requested that a lighting strategy be produced. There was a lighting engineers technical specification document which set out levels of lighting appropriate for certain areas and the AONB was of the highest sensitivity.

Councillor Tony Linden raised a question about the Use Order Class E and referred to section 6.38 of the report, which detailed 'light industrial'. In the past this had also included office buildings and Councillor Linden queried if this was the case. Ms Melton reported that Use Class E accounted for a number of previous uses and was combined. The description of the applications specifically said 'light industrial' under Use Class E and it would therefore be restricted to this. Mr Dray added that condition 17 limited what the development could be used for.

Councillor Alan Macro noted that the applicant had stated that the turnover of the nursery had declined over the years and Covid-19 was adding further pressure. Councillor Macro was concerned that in the future this business could return and lead to further development of the site. He queried, if approved, if the development would set a precedent for more development on the site. Councillor Macro also noted that drainage on the site used a septic tank however was aware that it was a ground water redaction zone. He asked if Thames Water had been informed of this when consulted on the application.

Ms Melton referred to Councillor Macro's query about setting a precedent and stated that every planning application must be assessed on its own merits. Regarding the issue of drainage, Thames Water had provided an informative condition to be added and also condition five of the report included details on foul sewage. Councillor Macro further questioned if it would be difficult to resist further development of the site if planning permission was granted and Mr Dray stated that Officers and Members had to focus on the application before them. In Mr Dray's view the application would not set a precedent however, any future application would be assessed.

Debate:

Councillor Mackinnon stated that he liked the application from an economic development point of view. He understood the concerns raised by Mr Osborn however, overall he felt the development would be positive for Bradfield and the surrounding area. He had listened to comments from Officers and felt that impact on amenity could be sufficiently managed and had been covered by conditions. On balance Councillor Mackinnon stated that he was minded to support the application.

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Councillor Pask concurred with Councillor Mackinnon. The planning history for the site was varied. It was already used for commercial purposes of a horticultural/agricultural nature. He had been reassured by Officers that amenities of neighbouring properties were fully protected. Councillor Pask was minded to support the application in line with the Officer recommendation. He was however, concerned regarding the significant change in the type of use of the site that would involve vehicles travelling to the bottom of the site, which were not necessarily owned by the site owner.

Councillor Stewart stated that she had a similar view to Councillors Pask and Mackinnon regarding the application. Councillor Stewart had been concerned about lighting however, with conditions and the fact that it had been confirmed that these would be skylights, Councillor Stewart did not feel this should be an issue. One remaining area of uncertainty was around the number of vehicles that would be operating potentially all at the same time on the site. The applicant had worked with Officers to find the best route however, Councillor Stewart was not certain how this would operate in practice. Councillor Law concurred with this concern.

Ms Melton reassured Members on this point due to the scale of the site proposed. There would be four units and each one would be 34 square metres, which was approximately the size of a double garage. Mr Dray stated that there were figures under the Highways section 6.31 of the report. Mr Dray added that any adverse impacts that prejudiced neighbouring health may also fall into the remit of Environmental Health.

Mr Paul Goddard commented that there was a transport statement that was submitted with the planning application. The existing nursery use caused varying levels of vehicle movements throughout the year. It was estimated that during winter months there were 20 vehicles movements per day and in the summer this could be double. The proposal would generate less than the winter movements of 20 per day for the nursery as it would generate about 17 vehicles movements and therefore traffic levels would reduce.

Councillor Keith Woodhams proposed that Members support the Officer's recommendation to grant planning permission and this was seconded by Councillor Linden. At the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that the Head of Development and Planning be authorised to grant planning permission, subject to the following conditions:

1. Commencement of development

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. Approved plans

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and documents listed below:

- Proposed Elevations, reference RAC/8816/4, received 14/07/2020;
- Proposed Site Plan, reference RAC/8816/3 Rev2, received 11/09/2020.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning.

3. Construction method statement (prior approval)

No development shall take place until a Construction Method Statement has

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been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The statement shall provide for:

- (a) The parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
- (b) Loading and unloading of plant and materials;
- (c) Storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
- (d) Erection and maintenance of security hoarding including any decorative displays and/or facilities for public viewing;
- (e) Wheel washing facilities;
- (f) Measures to control dust, dirt, noise, vibrations, odours, surface water run-off, and pests/vermin during construction;
- (g) A scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works;

Thereafter the demolition and construction works shall incorporate and be undertaken in accordance with the approved statement.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of adjoining land uses and occupiers, and in the interests of highway safety. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CS13 and CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, and Policies OVS.5, OVS.6 and TRANS.1 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007). A pre-commencement condition is required because the CMS must be adhered to during all demolition and construction operations.

4. **Spoil (prior approval)**

No development shall take place until details of how all spoil arising from the development will be used and/or disposed have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall:

Show where any spoil to remain on the site will be deposited;

Show the resultant ground levels for spoil deposited on the site (compared to existing ground levels);

Include measures to remove all spoil from the site (that is not to be deposited);

Include timescales for the depositing/removal of spoil.

All spoil arising from the development shall be used and/or disposed of in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure appropriate disposal of spoil from the development and to ensure that ground levels are not raised in order to protect the character and amenity of the area. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026. A pre-commencement condition is required because spoil may arise throughout development.

5. **Foul sewage**

No development shall take place until details of how foul sewage is to be disposed of have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include pre-treatment measures (e.g. oil interceptors) to prevent the release of pollutants. Thereafter no unit shall be first occupied until the foul sewage disposal measures have been provided in

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accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure appropriate disposal of foul sewage, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policy CS5 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026. A pre-commencement condition is required because insufficient information accompanies the application and such measures may need to be incorporated into early building operations.

6. Hours of work (construction/demolition)

No demolition or construction works shall take place outside the following hours, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

7:30am to 6:00pm Mondays to Fridays;

8:30am to 1:00pm Saturdays;

No work shall be carried out at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026.

7. Schedule of materials

The construction of the building hereby permitted shall not take place until a schedule of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Samples of materials shall be made available upon request. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external materials respond to local character. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), and Supplementary Planning Document Quality Design (June 2006).

8. BREEAM

The building hereby permitted shall achieve an "Excellent" rating under BREEAM (or any such equivalent national measure of sustainable building which replaces that scheme). The building shall not be occupied until a final Certificate has been issued certifying that BREEAM (or any such equivalent national measure of sustainable building which replaces that scheme) rating of "Excellent" has been achieved for the development, has been issued and a copy has been provided to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the development contributes to sustainable construction. This condition is imposed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS15 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and Supplementary Planning Document Quality Design (June 2006).

9. Site access

No unit shall be first occupied until the site access road to the site from Hungerford Lane has been completed in accordance with the approved details.

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Reason: The timely completion of the site accesses is necessary to ensure safe and suitable access for all. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policy CS13 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026.

10. **Parking and turning**

No unit shall be first occupied until the vehicle parking and turning spaces have been completed in accordance with the approved plans (including any surfacing arrangements and marking out). Thereafter the parking and turning spaces shall be kept available for parking and manoeuvring at all times.

Reason: To ensure the development is provided with adequate parking facilities, in order to reduce the likelihood of roadside parking that would adversely affect road safety and the flow of traffic. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS13 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, and Policy TRANS.1 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1992-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

11. **Cycle parking/storage**

No unit shall be first occupied until the cycle parking/storage facilities have been provided in accordance with the approved drawings. Thereafter the facilities shall be maintained and kept available for that purpose at all times.

Reason: To ensure the provision of cycle parking/storage facilities in order to encourage the use of cycles and reduce reliance on private motor vehicles. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS13 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, Policy TRANS.1 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1992-2006 (Saved Policies 2007), Quality Design SPD, and the Council's Cycle and Motorcycle Advice and Standards for New Development (November 2014).

12. **Electric vehicle charging points**

No unit shall be first occupied until electric vehicle charging points have been provided in accordance with the approved plans. Thereafter, the charging points shall be maintained, and kept available and operational for electric vehicles at all times.

Reason: To secure the provision of charging points to encourage the use of electric vehicles. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS13 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, and Policy TRANS.1 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1992-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

13. **Hard landscaping (prior approval)**

No unit hereby permitted shall be occupied until the hard landscaping of the site has been completed in accordance with a hard landscaping scheme that has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The hard landscaping scheme shall include details of any boundary treatments (e.g. walls, fences) and hard surfaced areas (e.g. driveways, paths, patios, decking) to be provided as part of the development.

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Reason: A comprehensive hard landscaping scheme is an essential element in the detailed design of the development, and is therefore necessary to ensure the development achieves a high standard of design. These details must be approved before the dwellings are occupied because insufficient information has been submitted with the application, and it is necessary to ensure that the scheme is of a high standard. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), and Quality Design SPD.

14. Soft landscaping (prior approval)

No unit shall be occupied until a detailed soft landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The soft landscaping scheme shall include detailed plans, planting and retention schedule, programme of works, and any other supporting information. All soft landscaping works shall be completed in accordance with the approved soft landscaping scheme within the first planting season following completion of building operations / first occupation of any new unit (whichever occurs first). Any trees, shrubs, plants or hedges planted in accordance with the approved scheme which are removed, die, or become diseased or become seriously damaged within five years of completion of this completion of the approved soft landscaping scheme shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees, shrubs or hedges of a similar size and species to that originally approved.

Reason: A comprehensive soft landscaping scheme is an essential element in the detailed design of the development, and is therefore necessary to ensure the development achieves a high standard of design. These details must be approved before the dwellings are occupied because insufficient information has been submitted with the application, and it is necessary to ensure that the scheme is of a high standard. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CS14, CS17, CS18 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), and Quality Design SPD.

15. Lighting strategy (prior approval)

No external lighting shall be installed within the application site until a lighting strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall include a plan to show the location of any lighting, and specifications all lighting to ensure that levels are designed within the limitations of Environmental Lighting Zone 1, as described by the Institute of Lighting Engineers. No external lighting shall be installed within the application site except in accordance with the above strategy.

Reason: To conserve the dark night skies of the North Wessex Downs AONB. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-24, and Policies CS17 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026.

16. No extractor units, ducts, plant

Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3 of the Town and Country Planning

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(General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that Order with or without modification), no extractor units, ducts or other mechanical plant shall be fixed to the external faces of the building without planning permission being granted by the Local Planning Authority on an application made for that purpose.

Reason: In the interest of local amenity. This condition is imposed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and Policies OVS5 and OVS6 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

17. Permitted uses

The units hereby permitted shall be used for storage or distribution purposes (Use Class B8) and/or for any light industrial process within Use Class E (being a use which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit). The units shall not be used for any other purpose, including any other purpose in Use Class E of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) (or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification). This restriction shall apply notwithstanding any provisions in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

Reason: Any other use may not be acceptable on the site, having regard to surrounding uses and its rural location. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies ADPP1, ADPP5, CS9, CS10, CS11, CS13 and CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), and Policies OVS.5, OVS.6 and TRANS.1 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

18. Customer opening hours

The premises hereby permitted shall not be open to customers outside of the following hours:

Mondays to Fridays: 08:30 to 18:00

Saturdays: 09:00 to 13:00

Sundays and public holidays: closed

Reason: To safeguard the living conditions of surrounding occupiers. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and Policy OVS.6 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

19. Operating hours (machinery/processes)

No machinery shall be operated, and no industrial processes shall take place, outside of the following hours:

Mondays to Fridays: 08:30 to 17:00

Saturdays: 09:00 to 13:00

Sundays and public holidays: no operating

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Reason: To safeguard the living conditions of surrounding occupiers. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and Policy OVS.6 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

20. **Delivery hours**

No deliveries shall be taken at or despatched from the site outside the following hours:

Mondays to Fridays: 08:30 to 18:00

Saturdays: 09:00 to 13:00

Sundays and public holidays: no deliveries

Reason: To safeguard the living conditions of surrounding occupiers. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and Policy OVS.6 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

21. **No industrial processes outside**

No industrial processes [as defined by The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)] shall take place outside of the building hereby permitted.

Reason: To safeguard the living conditions of surrounding occupiers. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and Policy OVS.6 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

22. **No external storage**

No materials, goods, plant, machinery, products, equipment, vehicles, storage containers or waste containers shall be stored, processed, repaired, operated or displayed in the open land on the site.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity. This condition is imposed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026).

23. **Noise Assessment**

A scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, which specifies the provisions to be made for the control of noise emanating from the site. The scheme shall include an assessment of the prevailing background sound level and calculation of noise levels that are not to be exceeded beyond the boundary of the premises. Thereafter, the use shall not commence until the approved scheme has been fully implemented. Mitigation measures installed/implemented shall be retained and maintained thereafter.

Reason: To safeguard the living conditions of surrounding occupiers. This

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condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and Policy OVS.6 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

Informatives

1. Statement under Article 35(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 Revision and Representations

This decision has been made in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development having regard to Development Plan policies and available guidance to secure high quality appropriate development. In this application whilst there has been a need to balance conflicting considerations, the local planning authority has worked proactively with the applicant to secure and accept what is considered to be a development which improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

2. Damage to footways, cycleways and verges

The attention of the applicant is drawn to the Berkshire Act, 1986, Part II, Clause 9, which enables the Highway Authority to recover the costs of repairing damage to the footway, cycleway or grass verge, arising during building operations.

3. Damage to the carriageway

The attention of the applicant is drawn to the Highways Act, 1980, which enables the Highway Authority to recover expenses due to extraordinary traffic.

4. Industrial processes

For clarity on the permitted uses defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), any industrial process permitted under Class E must be a use which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit. An "industrial process" as a process for or incidental to any of the following purposes:—

- (a) the making of any article or part of any article (including a ship or vessel, or a film, video or sound recording);
- (b) the altering, repairing, maintaining, ornamenting, finishing, cleaning, washing, packing, canning, adapting for sale, breaking up or demolition of any article; or
- (c) the getting, dressing or treatment of minerals;

in the course of any trade or business other than agriculture, and other than a use carried out in or adjacent to a mine or quarry.

- 5.** There are water mains crossing or close to your development. Thames Water do NOT permit the building over or construction within 3m of water mains. If you're planning significant works near our mains (within 3m) we'll need to check that your development doesn't reduce capacity, limit repair or maintenance activities during and after construction, or inhibit the services we provide in any other way. The applicant is advised to read our guide working near or diverting our pipes.
<https://developers.thameswater.co.uk/Developing-a-large-site/Planning-your->

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[development/Working-near-or-diverting-our-pipes](https://developers.thameswater.co.uk/Developing-a-large-site/Planning-your-development/Working-near-or-diverting-our-pipes)

6. The proposed development is located within 15m of our underground water assets and as such we would like the following informative attached to any approval granted. The proposed development is located within 15m of Thames Waters underground assets, as such the development could cause the assets to fail if appropriate measures are not taken. Please read our guide 'working near our assets' to ensure your workings are in line with the necessary processes you need to follow if you're considering working above or near our pipes or other structures. <https://developers.thameswater.co.uk/Developing-a-large-site/Planning-your-development/Working-near-or-diverting-our-pipes>. Should you require further information please contact Thames Water. Email: developer.services@thameswater.co.uk
7. The applicant is advised that their development boundary falls within a Source Protection Zone for groundwater abstraction. These zones may be at particular risk from polluting activities on or below the land surface. To prevent pollution, the Environment Agency and Thames Water (or other local water undertaker) will use a tiered, risk-based approach to regulate activities that may impact groundwater resources. The applicant is encouraged to read the Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection (available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/groundwater-protection-position-statements>) and may wish to discuss the implication for their development with a suitably qualified environmental consultant.

28. **Application No. & Parish: 20/00674/FUL - Land to the South east of Mortimer Station, Station Road, Mortimer**

(Councillor Ross Mackinnon declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(2) by virtue of the fact that he had been lobbied on the item. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.)

(All Members of the Committee declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(2) 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.)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4(2)) concerning Planning Application 20/00674/FUL in respect of the change of use of land and construction of a 150 space car park with alterations to the highway, landscaping and associated works.

Mrs Lydia Mather, Senior Planning Officer, gave a detailed presentation on the application and planning report. Key points included:

- Planning Officers were recommending refusal and the main concerns were the number of spaces proposed, road safety over the bridge and landscape impact.
- Since the application last came to Committee in August 2020 the issues identified including lighting had been advised to the applicant. Additional information had been submitted including a new red line, including the landscaping; a technical note on parking and Great Western Railway (GWR) design and electrical specifications.

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- Mrs Mather showed slides providing a parking count and extracts from the Statement of Community Involvement. Although there was demand for more parking at Mortimer Station it was difficult to assess from the information the actual additional spaces required.
- Highways continued to have safety concerns regarding the safety of the footpath over the bridge due to the steepness of the gradient and separation distance from vehicles.
- It was agreed that there was a need for additional car parking spaces, it was the size and scale that was not considered justifiable.

Removal of Speaking Rights:

As resolved at the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 29 April 2020, public speaking rights were removed for virtual Council meetings. This right was replaced with the ability to make written submissions. This decision was 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.

The above changes to speaking rights were subsequently amended at the Council meeting on 10 September 2020. It was agreed that parties making written submissions in relation to a planning application would be invited to attend the Remote Meeting of the Planning Committee to answer any questions that Members of the Committee might wish to ask in order to seek clarification on any part of their statement.

In accordance with the Extraordinary Council resolution, written submissions relating to this application were received from Mr Mike Dennett, Parish Council, J and R Clatworthy, Chris Bridges, M&D Developments and Mr D A Rootham, objectors, Tom Pierpoint, supporter, and Katherine Miles, agent.

Parish Council Submission:

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

- SMPC fully supports this application for an additional 150 space car-park at Mortimer Station. The application derives from the strong local wish for increased station parking, evidenced over a long period with full support from GWR and Englefield Estate.
- This is an adopted Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) project. In the NDP questionnaire 1006 people (92%) endorsed station car-park enlargement. This was the highest single response in a lengthy questionnaire resulting in Policy IS3: "extension to the station car-parking will be promoted and encouraged". SMPC is fulfilling the wishes of the community in this application.
- Our Statement of Community Involvement shows we involve Mortimer residents in line with the Localism Act 2011. The Community Needs survey 2018 attracted 494 responses with overwhelming support for increased and improved station parking:
 - 410 (83%) - current parking provision poor or very poor
 - 377 (76%) - would travel by train more if parking more accessible
 - 438 (87%) - train use would increase with improved parking
- Note the survey was only carried out within Mortimer, probably capturing a third of the possible catchment of Mortimer station. The survey did not account for the 110 new homes since granted permission.
- Analysis of the results establishes the need for 150 new parking spaces which is endorsed by GWR.

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- West Berks Core Strategy 2012 - Area Delivery Plan P6 Identifies “poor transport connections of the East Kennet Valley” ... “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”. This application is clearly consistent with this WBC policy so, please, can we see some partnership?
- Increasing capacity at Mortimer station also supports CS13 – “Improve travel choice and facilitate sustainable travel particularly... between... main urban areas and rural service centres”. Mortimer is a Rural Service Centre.
- The parking shortage has led to dangerous parking along Grazeley Road (up to 25 cars) eroding verges and along The Street towards St. Mary’s School exacerbating significant dropoff/pickup issues, generating continued complaints to SMPC and WBC.
- The village centre is over a mile from the station with no public transport link. The steep hill means walking to and from the station is impossible for many. This project will maximise the number and condition of those able to travel by rail. Of course, some disabled will still not be able to travel alone. But the new arrangements will allow for anyone to be dropped off and picked up on both sides, a great improvement.
- SMPC would not put forward proposals significantly detrimental to our landscape. We are confident that the extensive planting proposed will within a short time result in the car-park being largely invisible from all directions. Car-park lighting will be exclusively low-level, motion-activated and not obtrusive elsewhere. We note that the WBC landscaping consultant is based in Cumbria and did not visit the site whereas ours is local and did.
- SMPC urges councillors to support this application to give Mortimer residents what they have strongly requested.

Member Questions to the Parish Council:

(Mr Mike Dennett was in attendance to answer questions)

Councillor Ross Mackinnon raised a question for Mr Dennett regarding the objections raised, particularly the lack of consultation and asked Mr Dennett if he had any comments.

Mr Dennett was unable to answer questions at this point of the meeting due to technical issues.

Objector Submission Summary:

The written summarised submission from J and R Clatworthy, Chris Bridges, M & G Developments and Mr D A Rootham, was read out as follows:

Mr & Mrs Clatworthy

- The site is greenfield and on agricultural land, has had permission refused, involves additional works to the highway and a listed bridge, and damages the environment.
- SMPC has not disclosed to residents that there is an alternative site.
- There is no right to a parking space for rail travellers, and statements about having to drive to Reading increasing their carbon footprint have chosen not to use Mere Oak park and ride.
- No supporter has identified themselves as disabled. The view that some disabled access is better than none would not be supported by those who have to use it. They would choose the safe facilities at Green Park station. The road safety of the proposed pedestrian footpath would be a disaster.

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- There is no evidential basis for the proposed number of car parking spaces, it is based on crystal ball gazing. A maximum of an additional 76 spaces would suffice as outlined by Highways.
- Recent government announcements about removal of rail franchises calls into question GWR's ability to fund the project.

Mr Bridges

- The road safety is questionable with the addition of an access the other side of a high crest of the bridge gives no view of oncoming traffic and requires management by a traffic light system with up to 200 cars per hour passing at peak times to access and exit the two parking areas either side of the bridge.
- Major works needs to be done on safe local and wider infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians to encourage more walking and cycling, for example Thatcham's bespoke cycle routes, to connect communities with their railway stations and/or with Mere Oak park and ride. The proposal encourages car usage, drawing in from a larger catchment area putting more strain on country roads.
- Isn't the floodlighting and CCTV cameras needed on a greenfield site for the proposal contrary to SM NDP not to have street lighting? Why is it right to impose it on some residents?
- Extending the existing car park for a trial period by entering into an agreement with Jewells Yard owners which would utilise a brownfield site and maybe some of the land adjoining the station car park which is low agricultural use. This would test if parking increases and reveal how many travellers are prepared to pay the parking fee.

Mr Rootham

- The volume of traffic raises concern about how delivery vehicles will be able to park outside my gate.

M&G Developments

- The proposal amounts to a gross intrusion into open countryside and issues including highway safety. A lobby pack details an alternative site. SMPC did not withdraw their application having stated they would once lease terms had been agreed with GWR for the alternative site, which they have for 35 years.
- The SM NDP sets out that options will be investigated for the additional Station parking. This has not openly taken place with contact on the alternative site rebuffed by SMPC.
- The alternative site does not require public funding, extensive highway or listed bridge works and is not in open countryside.

Member Questions to the Objectors:

(Mr Mike Jones (M&G Developments), J and R Clatworthy and Chris Bridges were in attendance to answer question)

Councillor Graham Pask stated that he had a question for Mr Jones from M&G Developments. There had been mention of an alternative site and Councillor Pask asked for clarification on the location of this. Mr Jones reported that the site M&G Developments wished to promote was immediately adjacent to the existing car park. It was the natural extension to the railway car park and would not involve extensive work or be an intrusion on the open countryside. During discussions with Great Western Railway (GWR) it had been made clear to M&G Developments that this was the preferred location on many grounds. A pre-app had been lodged back in the summer and a favourable response had

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been received. Mr Jones was concerned that the current application could go ahead without Members of the Committee having knowledge of a more realistic option.

Councillor Mackinnon noted that Mr Jones had said that the Parish Council had rebuffed the proposals from M&G Developments for the alternative site. Councillor Mackinnon asked if M&G Developments had been invited to address the Parish Council in November 2019, January 2020 and March 2020 and if so queried how they had been rebuffed. Mr Jones responded that M&G Developments' proposal had first been brought to the attention of the Parish Council in 2016, whilst the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) was being developed. Mr Jones stated that the Parish Council had not engaged with M&G Developments at this point. The NDP required consultation to take place and for alternative sites to be considered however, Mr Jones confirmed that neither the landowner nor planning consultants had been approached. When consultation had begun on the current application site, engagement only took place because M&G Developments had chosen to attend Parish Council meetings and not because they were individually approached.

Councillor Mackinnon further noted that it had been stated that the Parish Council were in breach of their NDP because other options had not been openly investigated. Councillor Mackinnon asked if the NDP required the Parish Council to openly investigate options or just investigate options. Councillor Mackinnon had been reliably informed that the Parish Council had investigated more than one option. Councillor Law felt that this was a more suitable question for Officers and the Ward Member. Mr Jones stated that whether this investigation had happened in public or in private, no-one involved in the alternative site had been approached.

Councillor Mackinnon stated that he had a question for Mr and Mrs Clatworthy. He noted in their submission they had stated that the Parish Council had failed to reveal that there was an alternative site. Councillor Mackinnon asked if public consultations had not been held where this would have been raised. Mrs Clatworthy confirmed that public consultations had taken place regarding the current application site however, no information had been provided on alternatives sites.

Member Questions to the Parish Council:

(Mr Mike Dennett was in attendance to answer questions)

Mr Dennett had noted Councillor Mackinnon's question asking if the Parish Council had consulted. The Parish Council had consulted very widely on the NDP through Parish Council meetings and events held in the library. A questionnaire had also been sent out.

Councillor Law stated that the Parish Council had been accused of only consulting on the one site and asked Mr Dennett to comment. Mr Dennett stated that the Parish Council first heard about the possible alternative site in August 2016, just after public examination of the NDP. Bell and Cornwall had written to the Council offering the site however, the plan had incorporated 12 houses as well as the parking. The site was outside of the settlement boundary and therefore it not been deemed appropriate. The Parish Council had heard from Bell and Cornwall again in July 2019 and this time a smaller development was proposed however, because the plan still incorporated six houses it was against the NDP. First communications from M&G Developments (who took over from Bell and Cornwall) was in October 2019 and by this time £30k had already been spent on the current application and M&G Developments had not provided a detailed proposal.

Supporter Submission:

The written submission from Mr Tom Pierpoint (GWR) was read out as follows:

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- Since 2005, Mortimer station has seen significantly lower growth in passenger numbers than the industry average. Existing car parking at the station is at capacity, with rail users parking on-street near the station. These factors strongly suggest the lack of available parking is suppressing growth in rail use and limiting the station's role in the local transport network.
- GWR continue to pursue a car park expansion at Mortimer Station. To summarise from my previous letter:
- GWR consider that the 2018 Community Survey demonstrates there is significant suppressed demand for rail travel in the catchment of Mortimer Station, sufficient to justify the 150-space additional car park.
- Since 2004/5 passenger use of Mortimer Station increased by just 3%, compared to 95% across the industry and 39% at Bramley.
- There are comparable GWR stations where expanding car parks close to capacity has unlocked suppressed growth e.g. Kingham: 125 more spaces increased passenger numbers by 47%.
- Recently introduced additional services on the Reading to Basingstoke line and the introduction of 4-car trains to replace the existing 2 and 3 car trains, provide additional passenger capacity.
- Regarding the Case Officer's report:
 - The number of car parking spaces at Newbury and Theale Stations referred to as comparable to those proposed for Mortimer, are incorrect. Upon completion of the Market Street Development, Newbury Station will have 460 spaces, not 200 with Theale increasing to just over 300 spaces not 215. 201 spaces at Mortimer would not, therefore, put the station on par with Newbury and Theale. Being over a mile from the centre of Mortimer, the station increases the relative need for car and cycle parking.
 - The Case Officer's report also refers to station passenger numbers, which I quoted in my previous letter to demonstrate that growth in passenger numbers at Mortimer had been considerably less than the industry average over the last 15 years. The ORR station usage estimates are publically available at <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage/> which can be used to verify the statements summarised above.
 - In 6.24 the report disputes that a lack of car parking is constraining use of the railway. Kingham and Hanborough, however, are clear examples of car park capacity constraining demand and the lack of passenger growth at Mortimer along with the full car park indicate that it is a similar scenario.
 - Section 6.51 refers to lighting and CCTV. GWR seeks to meet the Park Mark standard for our car parks to ensure passengers safety. The GWR Design Guide specifies that *consideration must be made to minimise light pollution for neighbouring properties* and that *8M lighting columns are the maximum height*, not the standard height. Through the next stages of project design, GWR and SMPC would develop a lighting and CCTV design that is appropriate for the environment and therefore we maintain that an appropriate design can be secured by condition.
- GWR continues to support expanded car parking provision at Mortimer Station and believe that the 150-space expansion is justified, not only by the existing suppressed demand but also to meet future growth.

Member Questions to the Supporters:

(Mr Neil Kiley was in attendance to answer questions on behalf of Mr Pierpoint)

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Councillor Alan Macro noted that it had been stated that Theale Station car park would be increased to 300 spaces however, Councillor Macro was aware that this had only been agreed in principle and asked for a status update. Neil Kiley was unable to provide an answer to this question because he did not work for GWR.

Agent's Submission:

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

- Officers accept the need for 76 additional spaces but would not support development due to landscape concerns. Officers have no solution to meet the need despite clear policy support:
 - Core Strategy Policy ADDP6: *"Improvements to the accessibility of Mortimer railway station will be sought...This will be taken forward through partnership working."*
 - Local Transport Plan Paragraph 6.6.5: *"the Council will...improve car parking at rail stations in the area"*.
- SMPC commenced work on its NDP in 2015. The single biggest issue for the community was the lack of car-parking at Mortimer Station raised by 92% or 1006 respondents leading to Policy IS3 which supports the expansion of the car-park at the Station.
- An independent survey in Mortimer demonstrated overwhelmingly that at least 150 more spaces were needed. GWR fully support this 150-space proposal because:
 - Rail travel from Mortimer (currently 175,000 annual journeys and only 51 spaces) is being significantly suppressed by parking limitations.
 - Similar rural stations have greater parking capacity and have seen a growth in rail travel as a result.
- In August Officers stated that: "the commercial needs of the operator becomes a material consideration, as does the needs of Mortimer residents".
- The Council has approved 110 homes in Mortimer and more than 250 in Burghfield. Approved Travel Plans promote use of Mortimer station, further increasing demand. 17% of survey respondents were daily users equating to at least 146 daily users from these new homes alone.
- Mere oak is useful for off-peak journeys to Reading etc but there are delays up to 30minutes for traffic from Mortimer/Burghfield at rush-hour and is no help for passengers to Basingstoke.
- Even if Grazeley ever goes ahead, GWR state that with the opening of Green Park station there will be no station built at Grazeley.
- A pedestrian footpath over the road-bridge is proposed. Manual for Streets states gradients should *"ideally be no more than 5%, although topography or other circumstances may make this difficult to achieve"*. The inclusive mobility standards state *"an 8% slope is the maximum that may be used"*. This footpath is an improvement to accessibility over a relatively short distance and within the tolerances of guidance. The kerb height of 125mm can be provided.
- A landscaping scheme will minimise the visual effect of the car-park. Existing hedgerow will be maintained at a height not less than 3.5metres. The car-park will be almost invisible from the road and there are no public footpaths from which walkers could see it. The car-park is well screened from the station by dense existing trees and hedging along the back of the Basingstoke platform. The landscaping is now within the red line.

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- SMPC has worked closely with GWR and Englefield Estate (the landowner) to procure the studies and reports on Need, Landscape, Highways, Drainage, Trees, and Ecology to deal with concerns of West Berkshire planners.
- The Council states it supports sustainable travel initiatives – the need for the development outweighs any harm and the Committee should support this application to fulfil the NDP objective and wishes of the community.

Member Questions to the Agent:

(Ms Katherine Miles was in attendance to answer questions)

There were no questions from Members.

Ward Member Representation:

Councillor Graham Bridgman, speaking as Ward Member, raised the following points:

- The three issues stated for investigation by David Pearson when the application was last considered by the Committee in August 2020 were now only two as the issue of lighting had been resolved. The remaining issues were identified need, landscaping plus the issue of the footway.
- Regarding the number of car parking spaces, Highways had stated that the proposal would put Mortimer on a par with Newbury and Theale. This had however, been stated as incorrect by GWR.
- The Highways approach to the demand did not properly take account of the GWR evidence under 6.17 of the report, regarding the potential for expansion in passenger numbers, if more parking was made available.
- Councillor Bridgman suggested that GWR would not be prepared to fund a 150 space car park (or 170 in the M&G proposal) if it was not justified.
- Regarding landscaping the main issue had been the red line. This had now been redrawn to include landscaping.
- Regarding the footway, in the latest report under 6.71 and 6.72 the Officer continued to refer to a proposed kerb height of 50mm but seeking a height of 125mm. Pro Vision in a letter to the Council had made it clear that a kerb of 125mm could be provided and therefore this issue had been addressed.
- Regarding the gradient, currently a disabled person would have no way of accessing the Basingstoke platform. The proposal would improve this situation by enabling some people with a disability to access the platform and therefore it was better than what was currently in place. More generally, Councillor Bridgman commented that currently it was not the gradient of the bridge that prevented people crossing on foot but rather the vehicles.
- Councillor Bridgman referred to the identified need for Theale and stated that Mortimer was larger than Theale. If Burghfield common was also accounted for, then it was nearly three times the size of Theale. Theale had a station within walking distance of most of the village and would soon have a car park for 300 cars. Councillor Bridgman did not think it was unreasonable for Mortimer to have a station parking facility with 201 spaces.
- Regarding the landscaping, Officers continued to refer to an over urbanisation impact. Councillor Bridgman reminded Members that Theale Primary School was outside of the settlement boundary and had not been objected to by Officers due to its urbanising impact.

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- Councillor Bridgman referred to a comment by M&G Developments and stated that if and when they came forward with an application it was likely that it would be supported. However, there was no application from M&G Developments and Councillor Bridgman did not want to see the wishes of the people of Mortimer, that were set out in the NDP, ignored.
- To conclude Councillor Bridgman summarised that the proposal was in the NDP, was wanted by the village and promoted by the Parish Council. Councillor Bridgman could see little point in asking communities to take charge of local planning, if when they did it was ignored.

Member Questions to the Ward Member:

Councillor Graham Pask asked what the difference was between the current application and the one that had been refused at appeal. Councillor Bridgman stated that firstly the orientation was different, as previously it was positioned alongside Station Road and now it was at right angles and positioned away from Station Road. The landscaping mitigated the site considerably. Secondly the large difference was that the proposal was a NDP policy. Regarding comments on urbanisation, Councillor Bridgman reminded Members that the village of Mortimer had voted in favour of the application. He accepted that the M&G Developments' site might provide an alternative to the urbanisation of the current scheme however, no planning application had been put forward. Councillor Bridgman was fearful that the Committee could refuse the application and then no planning application would be submitted by M&G Developments. This would leave the village without a much needed facility.

Councillor Law reminded the Committee that the current application needed to be considered on its own merits.

Councillor Geoff Mayes stated that he had discussed this proposal with various local people. He felt that Councillor Bridgman was slightly off beat with some of his concerns. Councillor Mayes was very concerned about the bridge and the path over the bridge and he would raise this with Officers.

Member Questions to Officers:

Councillor Law asked Officers to clarify the position regarding the alternative site that had been mentioned. Councillor Law also asked Officers to comment on the safety of pedestrians using the bridge. It had been stated that Pro Vision had provided figures regarding the gradient, which had not been included within the report and Councillor Law sought clarity from Officers on this.

Regarding the alternative site, Lydia Mather confirmed that a pre-app had been received however, no formal application for the site had been received. In terms of history Lydia Mather confirmed that the pre-app had been for car parking only and not housing.

In response to Councillor Law's question about the bridge, Mr Paul Goddard stated that the Highways technical reason for refusal was detailed on page 69 of the report. At the previous Committee there had been two concerns raised, firstly the height of the kerb over the bridge and secondly the gradient which was 1/7 or 14%. Mr Goddard reported that the applicant was now prepared to provide a kerb that was 125mm in height. Paul Goddard had however, not received any amended plans or details to overcome this or the gradient issue. Acceptable gradients ranged between five and eight percent and some of the footway proposed was at a gradient of over 14%. When designing new infrastructure, Mr Goddard felt that it should comply with standards. It was possible that these issues could be overcome with amended plans. However as amended plans had not been submitted the reason for refusal on page 69 remained.

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Councillor Mayes stated that his main issue was with the bridge and traffic approaching from both the west and east. Peak hours were between three and four o'clock where there were about 200/250 vehicles per hour. If traffic lights were to be erected at the bridge, Councillor Mayes asked if this would cause traffic to back up causing problems accessing the entrance to the car park and the mini roundabout. Mr Goddard reported that the Highways Consultants working on behalf of the applicant had created a traffic model of the signals over the bridge using Linsig software and it had been confirmed that the system should work adequately and not cause traffic to queue. As reported previously however, Mr Goddard added a caveat because there was uncertainty as to how much traffic would travel to the area because there were no calculations conducted on the parking spaces required.

Councillor Mayes further questioned if Highways Officers had used data provided by the Beech Hill Survey. Mr Goddard reported that they had not because the Linsig was the applicant's model. Councillor Law queried if the Highway's Officer had reservations regarding the applicant's model. Paul Goddard confirmed that he had reservations because no-one had calculated the likely parking demand from the catchment areas.

Councillor Mackinnon referred to the table at the top of page 61 of the report, which detailed information on the passengers using the train station. He was surprised to see that only 60% of Mortimer district were within the catchment of Mortimer Station and asked Officers to clarify this. Councillor Mackinnon was also surprised to see the number of people in employment and felt that the assessment could be inaccurate. Mr Goddard reported that the assessment had been the best he was able to achieve to obtain a projected number of car parking spaces required. He had used information from the surveys. To respond to Councillor Mackinnon's question regarding Mortimer district, Mr Goddard confirmed that the census district information had been used and included the travel to work data. The Mortimer census district went up to Aldermaston Wharf and it was unlikely that people living there would use Mortimer Station. Therefore this was why only 60% of the district was within the Mortimer Station catchment. There were three census districts within the Mortimer Station catchment and Mr Goddard went on to explain the data within the table on page 61 in more detail. The survey had shown that for Mortimer 55% of people travelled to the station and left their cars in the car park, with the other 45% of people being dropped off. Population inflation had also been accounted for and had led to the conclusion that there was the need for 129 car parking spaces including the 53 or so already present. Officers were not opposed to additional parking at the station but the question was whether the numbers within the current proposal were justified and the site was in the right location.

Councillor Law asked for further clarification on Councillor Mackinnon's question as to whether leisure travel had been accounted for. Mr Goddard confirmed that 20% represented non employment/leisure travel.

Councillor Mackinnon referred to the Burghfield column on the table and queried those who did not travel daily. Mr Goddard stated that he tried to include these in the 20%. Questions asked in the Statement of Community Involvement had been very unclear. Councillor Mackinnon acknowledged that a lot of assumptions had been made.

Councillor Law reported that there were three issues. The first issue was conflicting reports on car parking capacity. Secondly landscaping had been an issue however, work had taken place on this. Thirdly there were conflicting views on pedestrian safety but it was possible that these could be addressed. Officers however, still had concerns.

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Debate:

Councillor Pask commented that it was a controversial planning application. He stated that normally if an application had been dismissed at appeal then consideration needed to be given as to why it had returned to Committee. For the current application this question had been answered by Councillor Bridgman. Councillor Pask felt that the application was a compromise. Members were often not aware of pre-app discussions and had to judge the application in front of them. The main potential issue was the narrowing of the road bridge in terms of safety. Councillor Pask was not concerned about the gradient. Many conflicting issues had been raised regarding the application. He did not feel that the application would have an urbanising effect as it would be protected by the landscape. Lighting and other issues could be conditioned. On balance Councillor Pask was leaning towards a positive conclusion on the application. If the Committee refused the application an alternative planning application might not come forward.

Councillor Pask added that the danger at the current site had not been mentioned. There was often a high level of on road car parking, which was dangerous. Councillor Pask was minded to approve the application at this stage.

Councillor Macro stated that his ward had been mentioned during discussions. Other potential sites for Theale Primary School had been ruled out due to the impact on the countryside. Regarding Theale Station, a bid had been submitted to improve the station including increasing the size of the car park and had been granted conditional approval subject to further modelling.

Councillor Macro referred to the applicant's calculations. He believed that only a third of the catchment area had been assessed and then multiplied by three. Councillor Macro felt that criticisms of the Officers calculations could also be aimed at the applicants. Councillor Macro expressed his discontent with the application. He was not in favour of the use of traffic lights and was concerned about the gradient as those with a physical disability could have a great deal of difficulty trying to use it. Councillor Macro had approached the site from the Swallowfield direction recently and felt that the proposal would have an urbanising effect from this direction. There would also be a 1.8m fence, which Councillor Macro felt would be intrusive along with the lighting which would impact on dark skies. Councillor Macro proposed that the Members support the Officer recommendation to refuse planning permission. This was seconded by Councillor Woodhams.

Councillor Mayes referred to the comment made by Councillor Pask regarding road side parking. This had increased when Network Rail implemented parking charges at the current car park. Secondly further car parking need could have been caused by the cancellation of the minibus service by West Berkshire Council and the Parish Council. A further car park would only generate money for Network Rail.

Councillor Stewart stated that she was in favour of the proposal. She had been divided regarding the number of spaces however, was no longer concerned about this. Regarding urbanisation there was already a station, car park and industrial park on the site and therefore Councillor Stewart was not overly concerned about this. Regarding the bridge, there was a similar set up in Burghfield and it allowed safer passage for passengers and therefore Councillor Stewart did not feel this was an issue but rather a positive point. Councillor Stewart concurred with the view of Councillor Pask in that she supported the application.

Councillor Royce Longton stated that there was a desperate need for increased parking spaces at the station. He would have preferred to see the car park built as an extension

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to what existed however, this had not been proposed and therefore he was in support of the present application.

Councillor Mackinnon concurred with Councillors Stewart and Longton. Mortimer Station was well known for being difficult to park at and this was off putting for commuters. On road parking was a serious issue and there was a desperate need for an increased parking facility. He noted the points raised about the footway and the bridge however, on balance he supported the proposal.

Councillor Law invited Members of the Committee to vote on the proposal by Councillor Macro, seconded by Councillor Woodhams and at the vote the motion was refused.

Councillor Pask proposed that the proposal be approved, against Officer recommendation including the following conditions and this was seconded by Councillor Stewart:

- Lighting to be kept to a minimal safe acceptable low level.
- A revised plan be submitted with a 125mm kerb on the bridge.
- The gradient be eased if possible.
- Landscaping to be carried out to minimise the impact of urbanisation.

Mrs Mather ran through further conditions that would need to be included within the application. Mr Dray added that the finalisation of conditions would be delegated to Officers if the proposal was approved. Regarding lighting Councillor Law stated that sensor lighting would not be acceptable for the location and he would prefer to see timed lighting.

Councillor Law asked Members of the Committee to vote on the motion proposed by Councillor Pask, seconded by Councillor Stewart and at the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that the Head of Development and Planning be authorised to grant planning permission, subject to conditions (delegated to officers).

29. **Appeal Decisions relating to Eastern Area Planning**

Members noted the outcome of appeal decisions relating to the Eastern Area.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.00 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature