

# DRAFT

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

## DISTRICT PLANNING COMMITTEE

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 8 JULY 2020

**Councillors Present:** Phil Barnett, Dennis Benneyworth, Hilary Cole, Carlyne Culver, Clive Hooker (Chairman), Alan Law (Vice-Chairman), Royce Longton, Ross Mackinnon, Alan Macro, Andy Moore (Substitute) (In place of Tony Vickers) and Graham Pask

**Also Present:** Michael Butler (Principal Planning Officer), Bob Dray (Principal Planning Officer), Paul Goddard (Team Leader - Highways Development Control), Carolyn Richardson (Civil Contingencies Manager), Shiraz Sheikh (Legal Services Manager) and Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer)

**Apologies:** Councillor Tony Vickers

#### PART I

#### 3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 4 March 2020 and 14 May 2020 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 4. Declarations of Interest

All Members of the Committee declared an interest in Agenda Item 4(1), 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.

#### 5. Schedule of Planning Applications

##### (1) Application No. & Parish: 19/01063/COMIND Land to the South of Ravenswing Farm, Tadley

*(All Members of the Committee declared that they had all been lobbied by email from residents in the surrounding area and had also been contacted by representatives from Lidl. 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 Clive Hooker also confirmed that he had been lobbied by Members of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. 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.)*

*(Councillors Ross Mackinnon, Alan Law, Alan Macro and Royce Longton declared a personal and non-prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest in Application 4(1) due to the fact that they had been in attendance at the Eastern Area Planning Committee meeting on 4 December 2019 when the item had been approved. They confirmed that they would listen to all representations made at the District Planning Committee with an open mind before coming to a decision. As their interest was personal and not prejudicial*

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*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(1)) concerning Planning Application 19/01063/COMIND in respect of land to the south of Ravenswing Farm, Tadley for the erection of Class A1 Foodstore, car parking, access and landscaping.

Michael Butler, Planning Officer, introduced the report and confirmed that on 4 December 2019 the Eastern Area Planning Committee (EAPC) had considered the application for full planning permission for the erection of a new freestanding discount food store. The store was proposed on a greenfield site, outside of any defined settlement boundary, on land immediately adjacent to the district administrative boundary, adjacent to the urban area of Tadley. The applicant was Lidl UK. The Officer recommendation had been to refuse planning permission on the grounds that it would be clearly contrary to adopted policy to protect the wider countryside in the district, it would have a harmful visual impact, and the emergency plan prepared by the applicant was not acceptable, in the light of the proximity of the application site to the licenced nuclear facility at AWE Aldermaston.

Members of the EAPC had been impressed by the extremely high local levels of support for such a new discount food store in the Tadley/Aldermaston area, which in their view was a clear indication of the significant local retail need for such a store. They also considered that if the application were to be approved and trade, it would, in the light of the continuing need to reduce levels of carbon dioxide production, reduce many private vehicle trips from local residents to discount food stores in Newbury, Reading and Basingstoke. They also considered that, whilst inevitably the store would have some localised visual impact, this would not be harmful in the wider context of the urban area of Tadley and indeed the AWE itself. In addition, regard was had to the additional employment created by the store and other economic benefits. They also agreed with Officers that any harmful retail impact (if any) would be contained only to the local Sainsbury's store, but that the scheme would not harm the future vitality or viability of Tadley itself.

The Committee had, however, been concerned about the apparent lack of a satisfactory emergency lockdown plan at the store, should a radiation emergency occur at AWE Aldermaston, in the light of the requirements of Policy CS8 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006 in relation to impacts of development on off-site emergency planning around AWE. The applicant was requested by the Committee to improve this emergency plan prior to the District Planning meeting. Officers had succeeded in achieving this, in liaison with the applicant's agents. The applicants had now produced nine revised versions of the emergency plan, and the current version was now much improved upon the original one presented to EAPC on the 4 December 2019. Whilst there remained some outstanding detailed points within the latest revision of the plan which had been raised by the AWE Off-Site Emergency Planning Group, Officers were now content that that there was a high degree of certainty that they could be resolved under the remit of a planning condition before any development took place. Therefore, it could now be concluded that the development was capable of complying with Policy CS8 subject to a condition to secure the final approval and implementation of the emergency plan. It was important for the Committee to also be aware that any permission, if granted, would not be personal to Lidl, so in the event that another retailer were to occupy the store the emergency plan requirements would apply to any other operator, and the condition allowed for necessary revisions to be agreed.

Since the last application had been heard by EAPC the Council had received additional representations to the proposal. An additional 95 were in support and so the total at the

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time of writing was 999 in support. The matters raised were similar to those raised previously, although a number did note that in their opinion the need for an emergency plan was not well based. An additional 22 objections had been received making the total 86 in objection. Again most of these were based upon points that had previously been raised, including the traffic implications, the view that there was no need for a new store, and the loss of a greenfield site.

Since the EAPC meeting, the applicants had submitted further revised plans which showed an emergency only access from the site onto the Silchester Road. This formed part of the updated emergency plan and sought to ensure that in the event of an incident at the AWE, the main A340 route to the west of the site would not be unduly congested by traffic exiting the store, which could impede any responding blue light service vehicles. Consultation had been undertaken on these plans. No objections had been raised on the introduction of this access from any parties including Hampshire County Council Highways (Silchester Road was within their administrative responsibility). Aldermaston Parish Council had not objected either. No further specific public comments had been received specifically regarding this new access. The Committee noted that this access would only be used in the case of an emergency and not for general use, or indeed any routine servicing.

The Planning Officer stated that the principle of development was not accepted as the application site was located on a greenfield site outside of any defined settlement boundary and conflicted with Policies ADPP1 and ADPP6 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 in terms of the overriding need to protect the open countryside from urban growth.

The Officer's view was that the presence of such a major new store on the greenfield site to the north of Silchester Road would be harmful and should not be permitted on the grounds of visual and landscape impact. This was a large building with a high level of external lighting and the commercial activity on this site would impact the local environment.

No specific retail reasons had been included in the reasons for refusal as the lack of retail need could not be added in since this was now no longer a test in the NPPF and would therefore not be upheld at any potential appeal. There would be some impact on the Sainsbury's store but it was felt that an additional food store would not affect the viability of Tadley.

In terms of Highway issues some concerns remained regarding car parking levels and traffic impact on the A340 southbound, it was considered that the concerns were not sufficient to raise any objections.

The update sheet mentioned that the applicant had also undertaken a separate consultation exercise and had resulted in an online petition which had been highlighted in the brochure sent out by the applicant to Committee Members. Committee Members had also received emails of support from Councillors from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, one of whom was the Leader of the Council. A letter of support had also been received from Councillor Vaux of Tadley Town Council.

Paul Goddard, Highways Officer, referred to paragraph 6.20 of the report and the fact that the A340 was under the jurisdiction of West Berkshire Council whereas the Silchester Road was in Hampshire. He had consequently been liaising with Highways colleagues in Hampshire County Council. The Highways Officer confirmed that he was content with the access onto the A340 as it complied with standards. The junction model had not required a turn right lane into the site but Officers felt that it might be beneficial. The applicants were proposing an emergency access onto Silchester Road and Officers

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from West Berkshire Council and Hampshire County Council were therefore content with the proposed layout of the access. However, there were concerns about the level of parking as it did not meet the current standards albeit that they were somewhat outdated and were maximum provisions. The applicant had provided data from surveys of other Lidl stores in the south which all showed a lesser parking demand than what was proposed. It was therefore felt that on balance the parking levels were acceptable and it would be difficult to argue that there was insufficient car parking proposed for the store.

Highways Officers were also content with the site layout including facilities for deliveries. The Trip Rate Information Computer System (TRICS) was a database of traffic surveys including retail stores and provided projected total traffic generation from the proposal. There was already a lot of traffic on the A340 but the proposed store would generate an additional 37 vehicle movements along the A340 during the afternoon peak. There was some concern about the junctions to the south and traffic at the Sainsbury's junction was already an issue and this proposal would add to that although it was not considered that the impact would be so severe to warrant an objection to the application.

In conclusion while some concerns remained in respect of car parking levels and traffic impact on the A340 southbound, it was considered that the concerns were not sufficient to raise objection. This was having regard to the advice on these matters in the NPPF which stated that planning applications should only be refused if the impact on the local network was severe.

Carolyn Richardson, Service Manager - Emergency Planning, stated that this had been a challenging application to deal with. There was the duty to ensure compliance and to ensure that public health was protected. The application site was 600m from AWE and was situated in the Inner Consultation Zone. The inner zone, under policy CS8 in the Core Strategy, mandated consultation with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) for all planning applications with were either residential or where one or more additional person might live, work or shop. The ONR had a holding objection to the proposal in the absence of a bespoke Emergency Action Plan being agreed for the site. Each application in the inner zone was considered on its own merits. The applicant could put forward a mitigating Emergency Action Plan as it was a commercial unit. There had been several iterations of the plan to date and a number of agencies had been consulted to ensure that it was fit for purpose. Since the Eastern Area Planning Committee meeting in December a considerable amount of work had been undertaken on the Action Plan and it was nearing completion. There was a risk and that was why an Emergency Action Plan was required to ensure that a safe system of work was in place for staff and customers.

Members of the EAPC had resolved to approve the application contrary to the recommendation of Officers. Owing to the conflict with the development plan, the implications for the determination of similar future applications across the district, and the high public interest, the Development Control Manager had referred the application to be determined by the District Planning Committee.

In accordance with the Extraordinary Council resolution, written submissions had been received from Sue Brown (Objector), Alec Bray, Allan Follett, Andrew and Sarah Ramsay, Catherine Wilde, Derek Kerkhoff, Eileen Walsh, Grace Jones, James Harris, Margaret Lightbody, N.A. Dodson, Phillip Channing and Wendy Batteson (Supporters) and James Mitchell (Applicant).

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

### **Objector Representation:**

The written submission from Sue Brown was read out as follows:

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Sue Brown was not against this store being built in Tadley. However, she did have grave concerns around the traffic. The road was not wide enough to have a dedicated right turn off the A340. There had been a recent accident opposite where the entrance to the store would be with the air ambulance having to attend. If traffic had to queue this would impact at the traffic lights on the junction of Franklin Avenue, Pamber Heath Road and the A340. Any queue on the left hand side of the road would impact on traffic at the lights at the Falcon triangle, again causing chaos. Obviously this would all then affect the smaller roads in Tadley. Either queues would make it extremely difficult for emergency ambulances to get to the doctor's surgery in Franklin Avenue or for the fire service to leave from their building again in Franklin Avenue.

Having attended their presentation, she knew a traffic survey had been undertaken. However, she did not think they understood the amount of traffic that AWE produced particularly in the late afternoon or that from local business. There were a lot of large lorries/delivery vehicles passing through on the A340. There was also the school run to consider.

She hoped the Committee would take her views into consideration.

### **Supporters Representations:**

A summary of the 12 written submissions received in support of the application was read out as follows. It was noted that Members of the Committee had received a copy of the full submissions provided by each of the Supporters:

- The store would provide more jobs and would bring associated economic benefits.
- It would help to address the monopoly, and lack of competition, of Sainsbury's in the town.
- The visual impact point was not well founded: the area was urbanised in any event, by the proximity to the AWE. The proposed landscaping would reduce the harm anyway.
- Only a small portion of a greenfield site would be taken up as the location plan showed.
- It was unfortunate that the location of the store was so close to the Council boundary. Most Tadley residents who would benefit from the store do not live in the West Berkshire district.
- The local population will benefit from a discount food store: Tadley was an area of relative deprivation.
- The Covid-19 crisis had brought into focus the benefits of having good local facilities in communities in easy reach of the population.
- Tadley had grown in recent years and so needed better shopping facilities. Much new housing had been permitted on both sides of the County boundary.
- The location was sustainable: shoppers would be able to walk to the store rather than drive - good for the environment and good for those without cars.
- The location would assist local health and wellbeing of residents.
- It would mean residents would not need to travel further afield to shops in Reading, Basingstoke and Newbury, so reducing carbon production. And less road congestion further afield.
- It was not believed that traffic congestion on the A340 would be a problem as these impacts were worse at peak times due to AWE, but locals would know this and so avoid those times to shop at the store.
- Site location was effectively part of the town centre already now.

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- The store would improve the wider economic vitality and viability of Tadley town centre.
- It was not understood why the officers were objecting to the application, given the significant benefits which would arise, although it was noted that the recommendation was one of balanced refusal.
- The site was well served by public transport.
- We cannot afford to turn this considerable investment down in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- How can AWE public safety issues be important when there was so much housing already around the site?
- Other premises did not have emergency procedures in place in relation to AWE.
- In the highly unlikely event of a radiation leak, the risk would be in the form of Alpha particles which were only an internal hazard if inhaled, ingested or injected.
- Sainsbury's had run out of food during the Covid crisis which might happen again so we should be prepared.
- The store would provide more choice, at lower prices.
- After the Covid-19 pandemic many more people would work from home so traffic during peak times would be lower in any event.

### **Applicant/Agent Representation:**

As Members would be aware the proposal before you this evening had been approved by the Eastern Area Committee in December last year.

Mr Mitchell had provided the brochure sent to Eastern Area Members prior to that meeting which I trust was helpful as a reminder to Eastern Area Members and especially the other Members of the Committee.

Since that time Lidl had continued to work with Officers to further enhance the scheme ahead of the determination tonight. In advance of this meeting he had provided a further brochure summarising those improvements which he hoped Members had found useful.

The changes had enabled the previous reason for refusal concerning the lack of an acceptable emergency plan to be removed. The emergency action plan was confirmed as being agreeable with final details secured by condition. As part of this revised plan we had introduced an emergency only vehicle exit to Silchester Road to be used in the event of an emergency at AWE avoiding exiting traffic obstructing blue light services on Aldermaston Road.

At the time of the Eastern Area meeting there had been demonstrable large-scale support for the application. This has continued to grow since with a further 261 people supporting through Lidl's consultation exercise taking the total number to 5,531 (93.92% in favour). A further 229 personal letters of support had been sent to the Council taking the total to 1,141 (92.09% in favour). Crucially only 40 people (0.68%) in Lidl's consultation and 26 (2.1%) in the Council's consultation raised objections on the grounds the Officer had cited as reasons for refusal.

It seemed that the public believed the benefits of the scheme significantly outweighed the proposed reasons for refusal when judged on balance.

In conclusion these proposals:

- Created 40 new jobs recruited locally with potential for career progression.
- Provided much needed choice and competition

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- Would claw back some of the £81m of expenditure lost to other centres making Tadley more sustainable in its own right.
- Provided a CIL contribution in excess of £350,000.
- Offered biodiversity benefits with the retention of trees and hedgerows and 38 new trees planted to assist in screening the development.
- Offered solar panels, provided electric vehicle charging points, was zero carbon and was highly sustainable with 280T of carbon saved by reduction of car journeys.
- Were supported by many, many thousands of local residents who craved the benefits the scheme would offer.

The scheme had evolved and improved beyond recognition through the course of the application. We trust the Planning Committee would now weigh the myriad of benefits in the planning balance.

Mr Mitchell sincerely hoped that Members would confirm the Eastern Area Committee resolution and grant permission for the scheme allowing Lidl to deliver this new facility for Tadley which would be in keeping with the exceptional levels of public support.

Thanks for taking the time to consider my comments.

### **Ward Member Representations:**

Councillor Dominic Boeck, in addressing the Committee as Ward Member, confirmed that since Lidl started their public consultation he had received a large number of comments in relation to proposal – a large number for the proposal and some against. In general the majority of residents who were in favour of the application were from the Tadley area while those objecting tended to live further afield. Representations for the plan far outweighed those against and almost all of them asked him to support the application so that they had a choice in where they shopped for their daily essentials.

As things stood Tadley residents, some of which were in the Aldermaston Ward, had only one choice of supermarket unless they were able and prepared to travel to Basingstoke, Reading or Newbury if they wanted to shop at a lower cost. Many wanted to be able to shop at a retailer where their money would go further without having to spend the time and money getting there. He asked Members in this case to listen particularly carefully to the residents he represented and their neighbours when they asked for the Council's support. Most people were lucky enough to be able to exercise their choice of where to shop because of where they lived, where they worked or how they shopped. For many of the residents of Tadley the supermarket was less of a one shop stop and more of the only shop.

### **Member Questions to Officers:**

Councillor Hilary Cole noted that some of the comments from the Supporters made reference to the fact that some of the other premises within the inner zone did not have an Emergency Action Plan in place and she asked whether that was the case. Carolyn Richardson confirmed that any planning applications that had come forward to her that were permitted applications and requested to have an emergency plan did have them if they had gone ahead. Unfortunately several of these applications, and Sainsbury's was one of them, had been approved historically prior to the current process being put in place. So, in summary not all of them did have a plan in place but the Council would certainly encourage all premises within the inner zone to adopt one.

Councillor Alan Macro confirmed that he had received over 300 e-mails in relation to this application and that the Committee should not be taking account of the volume of e-mails

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but the points raised within them. He referred to one e-mail he had received in particular from the Leader of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council who had stated that if the application had been in located in their area it would have received approval. The Planning Officer made it clear that volume of representations was not a material consideration in terms of pure numbers but the issues which had been raised would be as long as they related to planning matters and Members needed to be aware of that in making their decision. The Planning Officer was not aware of any formal resolution from a Basingstoke and Deane Committee saying that they would support this application and nor from an Officer level. Their response had simply stated that they raised no objections in relation to the application.

Councillor Andy Moore noted that it had been mentioned that the population of Tadley had grown significantly and he asked if anyone knew the figures and how recently. The Planning Officer was not aware of current population or growth figures but this Council had granted relatively new permissions and there had been recent appeals decisions for additional substantial housing development in the Tadley/Aldermaston area over the last 10 years.

Councillor Alan Law mentioned the sequential test for retail applications and the fact that there was no reference to that in the report. The Planning Officer referred to paragraph 6.16 the issue of sequential tests was mentioned there and in particular the last sentence which stated that 'Officers were satisfied that the sequential test was met in this proposal so no retail reason for refusal was recommended on this basis'. This was a very unusual site, if the sequential test was compared in relation to the Council's own settlements within its district this application would certainly fail, however, taking a pragmatic approach, the nearest settlement was quite clearly Tadley, albeit not in West Berkshire district, and in terms of the sequential test it was within 300m of the edge of the centre of Tadley. The Planning Officer confirmed that he had considered including a reason for refusal on that basis, however, he was certain in advising that if the application was refused on that basis then it would not be a good ground for refusal at appeal.

Councillor Carolyn Culver also referred to paragraph 6.16 and noted that the site had not been allocated for new retail space in the District Local Plan. She wondered where the nearest brownfield sites which might have been allocated for retail space were in relation to the current application. The Planning Officer responded that he could not answer that question without doing some research but the nearest brownfield sites in terms of this application would fall in Basingstoke and Deane Borough area and would therefore not be in West Berkshire's planning remit. Bob Dray added that Aldermaston Village was recognised in West Berkshire's policies as a local centre along with Woolhampton but within the neighbouring Development Plan for Basingstoke and Deane Tadley did have its own town centre commercial area which was similar to what West Berkshire had in CS11. The Chairman recalled in the comments by the applicant if there was a brownfield site in the area they would have considered it over the greenfield site.

Councillor Dennis Benneyworth asked should any weight at all be placed on an old approval for development some time ago as referred to in paragraph 2.1 planning history. Approval had been given in 2000 for an indoor sports hall, playing fields etc. The Planning Officer responded that that had been an outline application and had not implemented as no reserve matters application had been submitted. It had lapsed in 2005. Councillor Benneyworth also asked about the parking – was it not the case that the parking requirements were a maximum and the proposed parking fell within the current guidelines. The Highways Officer confirmed that that was correct but the Council's parking standards were outdated and needed updating soon. Knowing how popular this type of store was the aim had been to get the parking provision as high as possible.



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Councillor Graham Pask asked if we could effectively rule out the fact that there were suitable brownfield sites within the town centre of Tadley which could have been suitable. The Planning Officer replied that he was familiar with the Reading Warehouse site in the centre of Tadley. However, considering the normal format of discount retail stores and the lack of parking on that site and indeed its poor location close to other residential properties he could fully understand why the applicant had not considered it to be a suitable site due to their trading format.

Councillor Phil Barnett said that many people who used Lidl's stores were not always shopping for their weekly shop and some just popped in for specialised items by cycling or walking. When analysing traffic movements had the Highway's Officer taken into consideration that not everyone would arrive by vehicle other than possibly a motorcycle. The Highway's Officer said yes all movements to and from the store were considered. It was hoped that considering how sustainable this location was that many people visiting the store would walk or cycle or use the public transport. There was a bus that passed the site every half an hour or so.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon noted that it had been stated that the lack of a finalised Emergency Plan was not a reason for refusal. He also referred to the A1 retail permission that was being applied for and asked for confirmation that that was not necessarily discount food stores but a wider class of retail. The Planning Officer responded that when Officers had taken the application to the Eastern Area Planning Committee in December they had not been satisfied with the quality and integrity of the lockdown plan proposed by the applicant and therefore the update sheet had included that as an additional reason for refusal had the Committee refused the application. What had been clear was that through considerable efforts of the applicant they had now produced an the action plan which, although might not be absolutely perfect, if approved it was capable of being conditioned whereas before it was not been capable of being conditioned and therefore Planning Officers were now not recommending refusal on that basis. Should the Committee be minded to approve the application the Planning Officer referred to the conditions set out in Appendix 4 on page 50 of the agenda and in particular to Condition 25 Range of Goods/Lines. By applying that condition no more than 3,500 lines automatically meant that the premises would be a discount food store. Other general stores like Sainsbury's would have over 20,000 lines.

Councillor Royce Longton asked for confirmation that Sainsbury's had developed a satisfactory emergency plan in relation to the proximity of AWE. The Emergency Planning Officer replied that the Sainsbury's store had been built before the process had come into being so actually there was no legal requirement through the planning process to put in place an emergency plan. The store was also situated in the Basingstoke and Deane area. However, the Council did actively encourage through health and safety at work and through the emergency planning process for all premises to have plans and it did have a responsibility to ensure that people who worked and shopped in the store were safe. She could not say for sure whether they did or did not have a plan in place but if they did not then they should have.

### **Debate:**

In considering the above application Councillor Graham Pask made reference to the Parish boundary – to the one side of the line was Tadley and on the other side was Aldermaston. It was because of the line on the map that West Berkshire was considering an application that seemed from the vast number of representations that Councillor Pask had received to be desired mostly by members of the public leaving around Tadley, Baughurst and Pamber Heath. He confirmed that he had been a Member of West Berkshire Council for a long time and it was a plan led authority. He wished that

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applications could be determined on the level of support or objection as determining this application would be so much easier. When looking at the Local Plan he felt that the Committee needed to be certain, if they were minded to approve the application, whether this would create a precedent in West Berkshire. 75% of West Berkshire was in the AONB and that could therefore be discounted. However, he referred to the more urbanised areas of West Berkshire and wondered if approved whether that would create a precedent against the Local Plan. He agreed that the Reading Warehouse brownfield site would not be suitable. Councillor Pask referred to page 27 paragraph 6.16 which referred to sequential tests and the fact that basically town centre usage should be first be directed towards a centre, then edge of centre (within 300m) then out of centre and then elsewhere. The application site was some 200m from the centre of Tadley and therefore that met the test as it was close enough to Tadley. In terms of the nuclear arguments a lot of work had been undertaken by the applicant to ensure public safety. The real argument was whether this application should be allowed on a green field and whether there were extenuating circumstances. The second reason for refusal on page 31 of the agenda stated that the application would be harmful to both local visual amenity and to the wider landscape character/setting of the urban built form of Tadley. The Committee needed to consider if the application would improve or outweigh the balance or the harm of the urbanised edge. Councillor Pask felt that what balanced out to some extent was the Co2 reduction, the convenience and the commercial impact. On balance he felt that a case could be made to justify accepting the application as there would be benefits and it would not create a precedent in relation to the rest of West Berkshire.

Councillor Phil Barnett stated that it was refreshing to receive so many representations - the majority of which had been personal views rather than a generic letter. This application whilst outside the settlement boundary and should be considered in the light of 2020 and the objectives in relation to Climate Change, on the Council and the country at large, where encouragement to travel minimal distances to shop should be at the forefront of all of us. The Government also encouraged choice which was currently not an option with only one supermarket having a monopoly. In terms of this application Councillor Barnett asked if the Council should follow its own policy or whether it should look at community needs or less long distance travel in order to shop. The Council had been in a similar position before when considering the Vodafone application and if the same stance had been taken in the past Vodafone headquarters would never have been built. It went through on a majority of one and he was proud to have voted in favour as it had been a great asset for jobs and the area. Another application which was outside the Settlement Boundary was the Falkland Surgery at Wash Common. Again this provided great community benefit and had been further enhanced by other buildings around it. This application was the same – extra local jobs, cutting down on carbon emissions and giving local choice and he would be supporting the application.

Councillor Alan Macro disagreed with Councillor Barnett. West Berkshire was a plan led authority and therefore it should not build outside the Settlement Boundary or in the open countryside. There was also a national policy which stated that the countryside should be valued in its own right. Sometimes the benefits of a development outweighed that but not with a supermarket. Councillor Law referred to the sequential test earlier and Councillor Macro had found a retail and planning document which did contain a sequential test but did not contain the Reading Warehouse site which was up for sale at the time. He had asked about that at the Eastern Area Planning Committee but had not received a satisfactory answer. In respect of the Impact Study it had not gone as far as Mortimer and he felt that the Budgen's supermarket would be affected as it was only one and a half miles away. The e-mails had referred to a lack of competition, lack of choice and also mentioned the problems with lockdown during the virus. One of the benefits of lockdown had been an increase in on-line shopping and some on-line suppliers were willing to price

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match with supermarkets such as Lidl so that should manage to keep prices low. He was concerned about if there was an emergency at AWE as there had been incidents in the past. It was a real issue and the prevailing wind meant that if there was a radiation leak from AWE it was most likely to go eastwards and cover Tadley. If this did happen and there was a lockdown for 24-48 hours and people were separated from their families it could cause distress.

Councillor Alan Law felt that the application was contrary to policy and that had been accepted. He was concerned about the precedent as if Members were minded to approve the application then there would need to be exceptional circumstances. Councillor Law could not find any exceptional circumstances that would allow him to approve the application. The lobbying from local residents had argued the need for a store in Tadley and he agreed with that view but he just felt that it was not appropriate on this site. It was noted that one Member from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council was quoted as saying that the application would have been approved if it had been in his borough. In that case why did the applicant not look for a green field site in Tadley itself? It was not just the fact that the approval of the application would set a precedent West Berkshire would also be losing a green field site. He referred to the plan on page 59 of the agenda which demonstrated that the application site was surrounded by green fields and any development on that site would encourage other development. A significant number of people had objected to the application due to the visual impact and amenity harm. Concerns had been raised about the increase of traffic and no analysis had been undertaken in relation to the carbon emissions and therefore any claim that they would be reduced was subjective. Councillor Alan Law proposed acceptance of the Officer recommendation.

Councillor Hilary Cole respected the views of the Eastern Area Planning Committee but did not agree with their decision. Just because the site was not in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty did not mean that it was not important. The site did lie within the inner protection zone which was a concern. The planning permission, if granted, would also not be personal to Lidl and there would be nothing to stop another shop using it for a different purpose. It was necessary to balance the commitment to planning policy against the economic and environmental arguments but she was of the opinion that they did not outweigh the Council's policies. There was no point in having a Local Plan if it was not taken into account when determining an application. As well as a large number of representations in support of the application here had also been strong objections raised. She therefore seconded Councillor Law's proposal to accept the Officer recommendation of approval.

At the vote the motion was carried with nine voting in favour of the Officer recommendation for refusal and three voting against.

**RESOLVED that** the Head of Development and Planning be authorised to refuse planning permission for the following reasons:

1. The application site is located on a greenfield site outside of any defined settlement boundary as identified in the statutory development plan. Accordingly, to the proposal conflicts with Policies ADPP1 and ADPP6 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, and is unacceptable having regard to the overriding need to protect the open countryside from urban growth. This is consistent with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The development of this substantial retail store, at this prominent location in terms of public visibility close to main thoroughfares, with the associated access, hard surfacing, car parking and external lighting, will be harmful to both local visual amenity and be harmful to the wider landscape character and setting of the urban built form of

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Tadley. The application conflicts with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS18 (in terms of the loss of green infrastructure) and Policy CS19 (in terms of landscape and visual harm) of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026. The application is accordingly unacceptable, notwithstanding the proposed additional landscaping around the application site.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.12pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....