

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2021

Councillors Present: Jeremy Cottam (Substitute) (In place of Keith Woodhams), Alan Law, Tony Linden, Royce Longton, Alan Macro (Vice-Chairman), Graham Pask (Chairman) and Richard Somner

Also Present: Jessica Bailiss (Policy Officer (Executive Support)), Gareth Dowding (Principal Engineer - Traffic & Road Safety), Bob Dray (Development Control Team Leader), Kim Maher (Solicitor) and Shiraz Sheikh (Service Lead - Legal & Democratic)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Ross Mackinnon, Councillor Geoff Mayes and Councillor Keith Woodhams

PART I

25. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2021 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

27. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under-mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as contained in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the [Local Government \(Access to Information\)\(Variation\) Order 2006](#). [Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers](#).

28. Supplemental item regarding agenda item 6(1) - planning application for land at Lawrences Lane, Thatcham (21/02112/FUL)

(Paragraph 1 – information relating to an individual)

(Paragraph 2 – information identifying an individual)

The Eastern Area Planning Committee considered an exempt report (Agenda Item five) relating to planning application 21/02112/FUL.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report.

29. Schedule of Planning Applications

(1) Application No. & Parish: 21/02112/FUL - land at Lawrences Lane, Thatcham

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 6(1)) concerning Planning Application 21/02112/FUL in respect of the change of use to 7 no. Gypsy/Traveller pitches

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021 - MINUTES

comprising 7 no. static caravans, 7 no. day rooms, 7 no. touring caravans and associated works.

Mr Bob Dray, Planning Officer, introduced the report to Members and highlighted the key points. The Officer recommendation was for refusal and the reasons were set out under section eight of the report.

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Mr Simon Pike and Mr Richard Crumly, Town Council representatives, Mr Bernard Clark, Adjacent Parish Council representative and Councillor Lee Dillon, Ward Member, addressed the Committee on this application.

Parish Council Representation:

- Mr Simon Pike and Mr Richard Crumly (Thatcham Town Council) in addressing the Committee raised the following points:
- Mr Pike reported that he was the Chairman of the Highways and Planning Committee of Thatcham Town Council. Thatcham Town Council had objected to the application and its concerns fell in to three categories, including the location of the site; deficiencies in the planning application and community cohesion.
- The site was outside of the settlement boundary and was outside of the settlement boundary for the proposed local plan. It was within the open countryside, which separated Thatcham and Cold Ash.
- A planning application for permission in principle had been submitted for land on the opposite side of Lawrences Lane, which might have been prompted by the unauthorised development.
- The Council had also previously objected to the conversion of livery stables on the adjacent land for residential use.
- Lawrences Lane was extensively used by walkers and cyclists. The Town Council had supported the Active Travel Proposal for the lane by West Berkshire Council (WBC). Thatcham town Council felt that the lane was unsuitable for motor traffic. The traffic generated by the site if approved would be hazardous to walkers and cyclists.
- The improvements required by the West Berkshire Council's (WBC) Highways Development Control Department to the access to the site, if the application was approved would destroy the rural character of the site and southern end of the lane.
- The documentation for the application included only site plans and elevations of the proposed buildings. There was no information included on the construction of the buildings, sewerage, surfaces of the driveways or management of surface water. Thatcham Town Council's Highways and Planning Committee expected to be able to review all of these elements when considering an application.
- Thatcham Town Council had declared a climate emergency and therefore it was expected that all developments should be to a high environmental standard. There was no information included in the application so that this could be assessed.
- Thatcham Town Council endorsed the view of the Highways Department in that each plot should have a vehicle charging point.
- Regarding community cohesion, WBC had received nearly 300 letters of objection to the application. Many of these had been prompted due to the contravention of planning laws and regulations during the construction and occupation of the site.

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021 - MINUTES

Residents were therefore concerned that in future there might be other unlawful activities.

- Thatcham Town Council urged the Committee to refuse the application.
- Mr Crumly stated that he was present to support Councillor Pike with any questions that might be raised.

Member Questions to the Parish Council:

There were no questions raised by Members.

Adjacent Parish Council Representation:

Mr Bernard Clark (Cold Ash Parish Council) in addressing the Committee raised the following points:

- Mr Clark praised and thanked WBC on behalf of Cold Ash Parish Council for its speed and cleverness in responding to the unexpected application.
- Cold Ash had talked to the Highways Department and others regarding Lawrences Lane and what a joy it could be to the community. The Lane was within the countryside and joined Cold Ash to Thatcham. It was a narrow lane that it was not sensible to drive down as two cars were unable to pass each other.
- Discussion that had taken place regarding the lane included turning it in to a cycle way or for use by horse riders or rambblers.
- After crossing a road at the top of the Lawrences Lane, it connected to Bucklebury Common, an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which consisted of 18 miles of magnificent walk ways and bridleways.
- Mr Clark stressed that the Parish Council's point was just how positive Lawrences Lane could be for the area. This would however, be completely destroyed if the development was approved. Cold Ash Parish Council felt that Lawrences Lane should be made a non-road area. This would suit the community; the 300 objectors and all the others who enjoyed the countryside.
- Mr Clark asked the Committee to imagine how the community must have felt when it was discovered that the development was taking place without permission or warning.
- Mr Clark concluded that Cold Ash strongly objected to the proposal. The Parish Council understood that the Gypsy and Traveller Community needed places to settle however, it was felt that WBC had satisfied this need.
- Mr Clark felt that it was an opportunity to propose that Lawrences Lane should become pedestrian use only for generations to come.

Members Questions to the Adjacent Parish Council:

There were no questions raised by Members.

Ward Member Representation:

Councillor Lee Dillon in addressing the Committee raised the following points:

- Councillor Dillon supported the overall recommendation from Officers that the application should be refused.
- Council Dillon stated that he wished to cover in more detail the principle of development and nature of the lane. He also wished to talk about community cohesion.

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021 - MINUTES

- Councillor Dillon supported all of the concerns raised regarding drainage given the town's history of flooding.
- Regarding the principle of development and the nature of Lawrences Lane, the site itself was outside of the settlement boundary and sat on a quiet country lane.
- Lawrences Lane had recently been consulted on as a new Active Travel Route with one way access. This had been widely supported by the community and importantly predated the application and the development that had taken place on the bank holiday weekend.
- Any further development on Lawrences Lane would cause too much traffic to make the community supported scheme viable. It would result in the lane having to be opened back up for southern access to the application site, whereas the proposed Active Travel Scheme would close it up and make it one way.
- As voiced by Mr Pike, the proposal would prevent Lawrences Lane becoming a Rambler's paradise.
- Councillor Dillon stated that Members would have noted from the site visit that wet banks had needed to be climbed to move out of the way of vehicles using the lane. He asked the Committee to imagine how much work would be required to make the lane safe. This would change the nature of the lane and the weight of vehicles using the lane would cause further damage.
- Councillor Dillon stated that it was hoped that local views regarding the lane, prior to the current application, would be taken into account. If the development went ahead the community's wish would cease.
- Regarding community cohesion, Councillor Dillon stated that he had looked at the LGA's guide on building cohesive communities. It talked about the role of Councillors and stated that as leaders of local places they were in the best place to understand local areas, the local challenges and any specific cohesion issues and feed this into the vision for the area. Councillor Dillon stated that this was the role he was undertaking and he was advocating on behalf of his constituents.
- Since the issue of the application had arisen, Councillor Dillon had been heavily involved in supporting the community through the local Whatsapp group by responding to questions and concerns. In 17 years as a Councillor he had never felt such a large concern from residents over a single planning application.
- Councillor Dillon noted the number of objections and that no-one had wished to make a representation at the Committee. He queried if this was because there had not been an open and transparent approach when the application was first started.
- The action WBC had taken through the courts also stressed the concerns over further works and this was because a quiet rural lane was deliberately targeted over a bank holiday weekend to build the site. It was the view of many that this was done because agencies had less ability to respond over a bank holiday. Local residents had been confused, fearful and angry that a country lane had become gridlocked with heavy machinery with work being undertaken late into the night with no consideration given for local residents.
- Councillor Dillon stated that residents had also asked him to state that it was their belief that the site had not been in full occupation for any prolonged period of time and it was believed that it was being presented to the Council in this way to improve the chances of approval.

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021 - MINUTES

- Councillor Dillon asked for it to be recorded in the minutes that the response to one resident at the site visit was 'we can park on his drive way instead'. This did nothing to help community cohesion.
- The previous actions on the site had left residents very concerned for ongoing community cohesion.
- In summary Councillor Dillon stated that the proposal was completely inappropriate for the size of the lane, being outside of the settlement boundary. Any highways work would change the lane's nature. The inaccurate plans and the approach taken by the landowners had resulted in negative community cohesion. He urged the Committee to reject the application.

Member Questions to the Ward Member:

There were no questions raised by Members.

Member Questions to Officers

Councillor Jeremy Cottam raised a number of points/questions for Officers including why did the Highways Authority feel Lawrences Lane was an unsafe access for pedestrians and vehicles; were there concerns about possible contaminants that might be in the materials of the site; would water 'run-off' from the site contribute to flooding in the local area including the lane and local neighbourhood; what sanitation was proposed for the site as he had not noted any details on this; the street scene was often considered in the first instance and he was concerned about the fortress style impact of the proposal on the countryside, which would involve fencing the whole way around and finally Councillor Cottam queried if Officers were aware if there was any passing places along Lawrences Lane.

The Chairman asked if Mr Dray could cover the drainage, sanitation and potential contamination issues raised by Councillor Cottam and Mr Gareth Dowding (Principal Engineer) to comment on the Highways issues. Mr Dray reported that in respect to contaminants there was no evidence of pre-existing contamination. Regarding whether contaminations had been found on the site since development had commenced, Officers did not have this information. He expected that this was something that could be covered under conditions if the Committee were minded to grant permission.

Regarding Councillor Cottam's question on surface water run-off, Mr Dray reported that there were no in principle objections in terms of flood risk. The site was in flood zone one and was not in a critical drainage area. Drainage engineers had suggested that any concerns could be dealt with using conditions. Officers were not comfortable recommending a condition at the current time based on the fact that the application was partly retrospective and it was unknown what changes would be required to the layout of the development. This had formed one of the reasons for refusal in the Officer's report.

Mr Dray referred to Councillor Cottam's question regarding services to the site and stated that the information that had been provided was set out on page 64 of the report and detailed that this would be in the form of septic tanks. There was no reason why this could not be achieved and it was an area that was normally dealt with using conditions.

Regarding Councillor Cottam's question regarding the street scene and the timber fencing, Mr Dray reported that the visual impact had been taken into account when forming the recommendation.

Mr Dowding provided a response to Councillor Cottam's question regarding why the Highway's department considered the highways element of the application to be unsafe. Mr Dowding reported that the lane was very narrow and did not facilitate two vehicles passing in opposite directions. To make the lane safe opportunities for vehicles to pass

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021 - MINUTES

each other would be required. The lane was also unsafe for pedestrians as there was no secure pedestrian link. Currently pedestrians had to step on to the verge to allow vehicles to pass.

Regarding Councillor Cottam's question about passing places, Mr Dowding stated that the late information submitted did show a passing place and track plots. The information received had been reviewed and it was not considered to be up to the acceptable standard. Additional work would be required to provide acceptable passing places. It was confirmed that there were no existing passing places along Lawrences Lane.

Councillor Macro noted in the report that it was detailed that for the proposal to be considered acceptable at least one passing place would need to be provided that was 12m long. He queried if 12m would be long enough for a vehicle towing a large touring caravan. Mr Dowding confirmed that 12m was the minimum length for a passing place and it was highlighted in the report that 12m would be the minimum length required. It would need to be ensured that a vehicle towing could pass another vehicle towing in the opposite direction and therefore the passing place might need to be longer than 12m and provide tapers at each end.

Councillor Alan Law drew attention to paragraph 6.85 on page 56 of the report regarding intentional unauthorised development. It was clear from the conclusion that the development was an intentional unauthorised development and the policy was clear that this placed weight against granting planning permission. Councillor Law queried how much weight in the Officer's recommendation to refuse planning permission, had related to this point. Mr Dray confirmed that this would not be a determinative reason on its own; however he had listed four areas within the report where harm had already been caused relating to the policy referred to by Councillor Law. This included the impact on the trees; drainage issues experienced; the absence of an archaeological watching brief proposal and finally the development had undermined community cohesion. These areas had added significant weight in this instance.

Councillor Law raised a question regarding local need and supply. It was clear from the report that there was a five year land supply for pitches and therefore no further sites required in the short term. Councillor Law however, noted that there was a long term need up until 2038 and 12 further sites were required. He noted that paragraph 6.25 stated that this application would contribute positively to meeting the overall need. Councillor Law queried if Officers were confident that the long term shortfall of 12 sites would be addressed through the Local Plan. Bryan Lyttle reported that the Local Plan was based on an up to date Gypsy and Traveller needs assessment. The Local Plan Review Regulation 18 clearly stated what the Council's policy would be going forward. It was recognised that that there would be a shortfall towards the end of the period of the Local Plan and this would be addressed in future Local Plan updates.

Debate:

Councillor Richard Somner stated that he would abstain from voting due to briefings within his portfolio connected to the others aspects. He would take part in the debate on the item but would not take part in the vote.

Councillor Cottam stated that he considered the application to be unsafe, not just for the local community but for those who would live on the site. It was not suitable for children to walk along the lane unaided and it was felt a pavement would be required if the proposal was approved. Towing vehicles would be using the lane and therefore a passing point was required and not just within the southerly section of the lane. Councillor Cottam stated that he avoided using the lane because it was dangerous and

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021 - MINUTES

there was poor visibility. It had become a rat run for delivery vehicles. Councillor Cottam was concerned for the safety of the community and anyone else using the lane.

Councillor Cottam stated that he was also concerned regarding flooding on the site. He had witnessed the floods in Thatcham and the suffering this had caused. Mitigation and reservoirs had been put in place to prevent this happening again however, the proposal could cause a localised issue for the lane and surrounding properties.

Councillor Law referred to the site visit and felt that it had been interesting to see how rural the lane was. Councillor Law commented that the Officer's report was very comprehensive and all the points were covered including the positive and negative aspects of the proposal. Councillor Law queried what the reaction would be if the proposal was not for a Gypsy and Traveller site but rather a number of houses and he felt that a number of the reasons for refusal were also very valid in this context, particularly regarding highways and the setting. Councillor Law stated that he was leaning towards supporting the Officer's recommendation.

Councillor Macro commended the quality of the Officer's report. Councillor Macro agreed with the points raised by the Ward Member and Town and Parish Councils. Councillor Macro referred to the point raised by Councillor Law and stated that if that application had been for a normal caravan site, the comments from those objecting to the proposal would have been very similar. Councillor Macro felt that it was an unsuitable site for a caravan site and he was particularly concerned about the effect of caravan's being towed along a narrow lane with or without a passing place, on pedestrians and cyclists. Councillor Macro was minded to not support the application.

Councillor Cottam confirmed that he supported Councillor Law's comments. The development had been harmful to the site and this should be a material consideration because both the ecology and environment had been ignored.

Councillor Richard Somner echoed comments regarding the quality of the report and the concerns raised. He referred to a point raised by Councillor Law on within paragraph 6.15 on page 45 of the report, which detailed that the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) and stated that planning authorities should very strictly limit new traveller site development in open countryside that was away from existing settlements. Councillor Somner stated that proposals outside of the settlement boundary had historically been rejected by the Committee, including well designed applications. The current proposal was noted as 'outside but close to the settlement boundary' and in his view it needed to be in the open countryside. He acknowledged that each application should be considered on its own merits however, the current proposal was close to an existing settlement and was not in open countryside.

Councillor Cottam proposed that the recommendation by Officers to refuse planning permission be supported. This was seconded by Councillor Macro. The Chairman invited the Committee to vote on the proposal by Councillor Cottam, seconded by Councillor Macro and at the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that the Service Director – Development & Regulation be authorised to refuse planning permission for the following reasons:

1. Inaccurate drawings

The submitted drawings include the following inaccuracies:

- a) There are conflicting measurement annotations on drawing number 001 09/08/2021 Rev 1:1 (plans and elevations of day rooms): the title states 800m x 400m whereas the plan dimensions are 8000mm x 4000mm.
- b) The size and shape of plots 6 and 7 as built deviate from the proposed

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021 - MINUTES

site plans, as the boundary location between the two is markedly different.

- c) The site plan does not show the two stable buildings that have been erected on plots 1 and 5, and no elevations or plans have been provided.

2. Principle of development (CS7)

According to Policy ADPP1, the scale and density of development will be related to the site's accessibility, character and surroundings. Only appropriate limited development in the countryside (outside of the defined settlement boundaries) will be allowed, focused on addressing identified needs and maintaining a strong rural economy. Policy CS7 (Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople) is the principal development management policy for this proposed development. It states that to meet the identified need for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople pitches within the District, the Council will make appropriate provision through the identification of sites within the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD. For the purpose of considering planning applications relating to sites not identified in the relevant DPD, Policy CS7 gives nine criteria which must be satisfied for sites outside settlement boundaries.

The provision of additional pitches at the application site would contribute positively to meeting the overall need in West Berkshire. However, for the reasons elaborated below, the proposed development fails to comply with Policy CS7 because it does not comply with the following criteria:

- a) Safe and easy access to major roads and public transport services;
- b) The possibility of the integrated co-existence between the site and the settled community, including adequate levels of privacy and residential amenity both within the site and with neighbouring occupiers;
- c) The compatibility of the use with the surrounding land use, including potential disturbance from vehicular movements...;
- d) Will not materially harm the physical and visual character of the area;
- e) Where applicable have regard for the character and policies affecting the North Wessex Downs AONB.

The proposed development also fails to comply with the following criteria of Policy TS3 (Detailed Planning Considerations for Travellers Sites):

- a) Provide an integrated water supply and drainage strategy in advance of development to ensure the provision of adequate and appropriate infrastructure for water supply and waste water, both on and off site. Development will be occupied in line with this strategy. All sites that are not connected to the mains sewerage system will ensure there are no deleterious effects to Special Area of Conservation (SACs) and river and wetland Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
- b) Include appropriate landscaping proposals, retaining and incorporating key elements of landscape character into the site design.
- c) Demonstrate that surface water will be managed in a sustainable manner through the implementation of Sustainable Drainage Methods

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021 - MINUTES

(SuDS).

- d) Identify measures to be provided to mitigate the impact of development on the local road network....
- e) Provide an extended phase 1 habitat survey together with further detailed surveys arising from that as necessary. Appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures will need to be implemented, to ensure any protected species are not adversely affected.
- f) Provide appropriate mitigation to offset impact on key species and habitats through appropriate buffering, on-site mitigation and off-site compensation measures.

Consequently, the application conflicts with Policies ADPP1 and CS7 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, Policy TS3 of the Housing Site Allocations DPD 2006-2026, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Planning Policy for Travellers Sites. The intentional unauthorised development undertaken is also contrary to national policy set out in the DCLG Chief Planning Officer letter dated 31st August 2015, and the associated Ministerial Statement to Parliament on 17th December 2015.

3. **Substandard road**

The proposal would generate additional traffic on Lawrences Lane, which is sub-standard in respect of road width and would result in the increased risk of accidents to road users. This would be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policies CS7, CS13 and CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026.

4. **Substandard pedestrian access**

The proposal would generate additional pedestrian traffic on Lawrences Lane which is sub-standard in respect of road width, lighting and security and would result in the increased risk of accidents to road users. This would be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CS7, CS13 and CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, Policy LTP3 of the Local Transport Plan for West Berkshire 2011-2026, and the Council's declared Climate Change Emergency.

5. **Landscape and visual amenity**

The application site is located in a sensitive rural location within open countryside to the north of Thatcham that forms part of the setting of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Lawrences Lane is an unclassified, narrow and winding, rural road that connects Thatcham and Cold Ash. It is locally valued as a recreational route for pedestrians and cyclists, as demonstrated by recent proposals to restrict motor vehicle traffic and create a quiet route for recreational access to the countryside.

The West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment (2019) includes the land within the Cold Ash Woodland and Heathland Mosaic (WH4) character area. The area is dominated by an east-west orientated, heathland ridge and characterised by varied topography, from flat plateau area to steeply

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021 - MINUTES

undulating slopes. It provides a rural setting to the adjacent towns of Thatcham and Newbury and also in containing settlement within the area and contributing to the rural character. Open farmland on lower slopes contributes to a sense of separation between the elevated character area and the towns of Thatcham and Newbury in the valley below. The strong network of public rights of way, the extensive areas of open access land, and the proximity of these to the settlements of Newbury and Thatcham give the character area a high recreational value.

The proposed development would detract from the landscape character of the area as the characteristics of the development are consistent with identified detractors in the LCA. Firstly, the development would extend development further up Lawrences Lane, thereby decreasing the separation between settlements and eroding the transition between settlement and countryside. This is contrary to the area's landscape strategy which seeks to avoid extended linear development along roads, which creates a more developed character.

The proposed development also has an adverse visual impact through the introduction of fencing and the siting of caravans on the land. Whilst the visual impact is localised to the stretch of Lawrences Lane outside the application site, and some distance glimpsed views further up Lawrences Lane and from the public footpath to the east, the visible development is nevertheless a detracting feature in the landscape.

The propensity of the development to introduce additional traffic, including occasional larger vehicles, would further detract from the landscape character of the area. Heavy traffic on narrow rural lanes is another recognised detractor within this landscape character area. The Council's draft proposals to restrict access for vehicles to create quiet routes for access to the countryside demonstrates that this is a key issue along Lawrences Lane, and increases the weight that should be given to this consideration. The increased traffic generated by the development would be inconsistent with these draft proposals, which are another element of the landscape strategy for the area.

The application is therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CS14 and CS19, the West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment (2019), and the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan and Position Statement on Setting.

6. Amenity

According to Policy CS14, new development must demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that makes a positive contribution to the quality of life in West Berkshire. Paragraph 127 of the NPPF states planning decisions should ensure that developments create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. Consequently, all development should be designed in a way to avoid any unacceptable harm to neighbouring living conditions. Specific to traveller sites, Policy CS7 also seeks to consider the compatibility of the use with the surrounding land use, including potential disturbance from vehicular movements.

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021 - MINUTES

Concerns have been raised regarding the vehicle movements associated with the unauthorised development that has taken place to date. Whilst the frequency of vehicle movements after construction is likely to be less, the nature of a caravan is that it is mobile and capable of being moved. It is considered that any movements of caravans (either towed or carried) along Lawrences Lane is likely to have a noticeable impact on neighbouring amenity, particularly in place where it is necessary to navigate the more narrow and winding sections of the road. From a perspective of safeguarding neighbouring residential amenity, there is considered to be an adverse effect on neighbouring amenity in this respect. This application is therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policies CS7 and CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026.

7. Drainage

The site is located within Flood Zone 1, which indicates a low risk of fluvial (river) flooding. It is also not within any critical drainage area identified by the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the district. As minor development, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is not required by Policy CS16, and there are no fundamental policy objections to the development on grounds of flood risk. However, Policy CS16 states that on all development sites, surface water will be managed in a sustainable manner through the implementation of Sustainable Drainage Methods (SuDS) in accordance with best practice and the proposed national standards and to provide attenuation to greenfield run-off rates and volumes, for all new development and re-development and provide other benefits where possible such as water quality, biodiversity and amenity. The application is not accompanied by any drainage strategy to indicate how the development could comply with Policy CS16. Whilst detailed specifications may be reserved for consideration by condition, the key principles of a drainage strategy are required before any planning permission can be granted. The application is contrary to Policy CS16, the Council's adopted Sustainable Drainage SPD, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. Green infrastructure

Green infrastructure (GI) is the network of multi-functional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes, and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities. For the purposes of the Core Strategy, green infrastructure is defined as including (amongst others): natural and semi-natural green spaces (including woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grassland; and green corridors (including rights of way). According to Policy CS18, the district's green infrastructure will be protected and enhanced. Developments resulting in the loss of green infrastructure or harm to its use or enjoyment by the public will not be permitted. Where exceptionally it is agreed that an area of green infrastructure can be lost a new one of equal or greater size and standard will be required to be provided in an accessible location close by.

As open grassland (before the development commenced), the application site comprised green infrastructure. This GI has been lost without replacement, contrary to Policy CS18. There has also been tree loss associated with the development, as elaborated below. Overall, there is a net loss of green infrastructure as a result of the proposed development, contrary to Policy

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021 - MINUTES

CS18.

9. Trees

Whilst the application site does not contain any tree preservation orders (TPOs) and is not within a conservation area, there are many trees around the perimeter of the site that collectively make a positive contribution to the street scene and character of the area. The site is bounded to the north and west by old hedge on a bank, parts of which seem to have been removed to facilitate the erection of fencing. Other direct impacts that have been noted include at least one HGV was parked very close to a Hazel stool, and excavations have been made around individual trees on the site to facilitate the localised levelling and surfacing of land.

The parking of vehicles, laying of aggregate and compaction of the soil close to the boundary hedge will negatively impact the root protection area of the trees within it. There are other trees on the eastern side which will also be affected by increased vehicle movements into and out of the site. These factors have caused and will lead to further loss of trees, thereby negatively impacting on local amenity, and no mitigation measures are proposed. In the absence of an acceptable Arboricultural Method Statement and remediation, and a proposed site layout that responds accordingly, the proposal will result in an unacceptable threat to the sustainability of trees that contribute to the landscape character of the area, and damage that would lead to decline is unacceptable because tree loss would impact on local amenity. The application is therefore contrary to Policies CS14, CS17, CS18 and CS19, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.46 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature