

DRAFT

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 7 MAY 2025

Councillors Present: Alan Macro (Chairman), Richard Somner (Vice-Chairman), Jeremy Cottam, Paul Kander, Justin Pemberton, Vicky Poole and Clive Taylor

Also Present: Dawn Bond, Sam Chiverton, Gareth Dowding, Thomas Radbourne, Lewis Richards, Simon Till

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

PART I

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Alan Macro declared that he had been lobbied by both the applicant and the Parish Council and had also queried a particular aspect of the car parking provision on 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.

3. Schedule of Planning Applications

(1) 25/00062/FUL, Crown House, 1A High Street, Theale

Councillor Alan Macro opened the item by explaining that he was both the Ward Member for the application and also Chairman of the Committee. As such he wanted to avoid the risk that as Chairman he might have to use a casting or deciding vote on this matter. Councillor Macro therefore decided that he would stand down as Chairman for the hearing of this application with the Committee's Vice-Chairman, Councillor Richard Somner, taking his place.

(Councillor Richard Somner in the Chair)

1. The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4(1)) concerning Planning Application 25/00062/FUL in respect of a proposed change of use from offices to ground floor commercial use (Use Class Sui Generis (Hot-Food Takeaway), plus first and second floor residential use comprising 3x 1-bed studios and 1x 2-bed flat. External alterations, plus access, parking and landscaping situated at Crown House, 1A High Street, Theale, Reading, RG7 5AH.

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 7 MAY 2025 - MINUTES

2. Lewis Richards (Planning Officer) introduced the report to Members, which took account of all the relevant policy considerations and other material planning considerations. In conclusion the report detailed that the proposal was acceptable in planning terms and officers recommended that the Development Manager be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the conditions outlined in the main and update reports.
3. The Chairman asked Gareth Dowding (Principal Engineer) if he had any observations relating to the application. He advised he had none at that time.
4. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Councillor Rob Gallop and Councillor Di Hughes, Parish Council representatives, Mr Steve Brown, agent, and Councillor Alan Macro, Ward Member, addressed the Committee on this application.

Parish Council Representation

5. Councillors Gallop and Hughes addressed the Committee. This representation can be viewed on the recording: (10:32)

https://www.youtube.com/live/98Mmn_5PVyw?t=632s

Member Questions to the Parish Council

6. Members asked questions of clarification and were given the following responses:
 - Councillor Hughes advised that regular near misses were reported on this section of the road. To date no major incidents had been reported. She advised that reduced visibility caused by people parking outside the nearby Co-op created a number of trips and hazards. She advised that there was a roadworks sign erected by the contractor who had restricted the zebra crossing outside the development which resulted in a number of complaints around visibility.

Applicant/Agent Representation

7. Mr Brown addressed the Committee. This representation can be viewed on the recording: (17:33)

https://www.youtube.com/live/98Mmn_5PVyw?t=1053s

Member Questions to the Applicant/Agent

8. Members asked questions of clarification and were given the following responses:
 - The number of people employed was to be determined by the needs of the end user but it was anticipated that proposed usage was likely to create three to four full time equivalent jobs as well as jobs during the construction phase.
 - This building had its own dedicated approach to the rear for parking and as such deliveries were able to be facilitated away from the high street. Additionally, as this was likely to be a small takeaway, large-scale deliveries were not anticipated at the site.
 - The owner had attempted to market the building to find an office use as a going concern. The area had a significant oversupply of office space when compared to requirements and as such there was no market.

Ward Member Representation

9. Councillor Macro addressed the Committee. This representation can be viewed on the recording: (26:07)

https://www.youtube.com/live/98Mmn_5PVyw?t=1567s

Member Questions to the Ward Member

10. Members did not have any questions of clarification.

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 7 MAY 2025 - MINUTES

Member Questions to Officers

11. Members asked questions of clarification and were given the following responses:

- Simon Till (Development Control Team Leader) informed Members that Theale commercial area remained largely similar in the forthcoming Local Plan and the site was located within this. It was not however located within the area's primary shopping frontage. As a result there was no policy conflict in granting the site primary usage as a fast food takeaway.
- Mr Till confirmed that an area being designated as a primary shopping frontage preserved an area for retail meaning a takeaway being placed within it would contravene policy. As this proposal was not within this designated area this application was not contravening policy.
- Mr Till advised a condition requiring deliveries to the rear of the property had been considered by officers and he did not object to one being placed should the Committee have felt minded to include a condition to ensure there was a delivery plan in place.
- Mr Till informed Members that the areas designated for retail and shopping frontage had taken a similar form pre-2012. He advised the forthcoming Local Plan changed them slightly but not in respect to this application.
- Mr Dowding noted that no accidents had been reported in the last two years and one had been reported in the last three years. He advised that individuals breaking parking regulations was a matter for enforcement officers and that there were many parking areas elsewhere in Theale.
- Mr Dowding confirmed that the area was a 20 mile per hour zone and that the area had recently undergone an initiative concerning this. He advised that compliance of this was very good.

Debate

12. Councillor Jeremy Cottam opened the debate by advising that the consideration of whether there were too many takeaways was a commercial one and not for the Planning Committee to define. He was concerned about the deliveries to the restaurant and felt a condition preventing the property from being able to receive deliveries to the front was imperative.
13. Councillor Vicky Poole advised that she was sympathetic on the delivery issue noting that she had faced similar issues within her ward. She was supportive of a condition that specified how deliveries were to be conducted. She also felt that there was benefit to a condition limiting the way in which food was to be cooked and prepared at the property as well as restrictions on delivery time. She was in favour of the application on balance. She noted the concerns regarding parking but felt that many of the people living within Theale were likely to walk to work. She felt it was important to have more developments within walking distance of Theale railway station, something which recent developments had trended against.
14. Councillor Paul Kander was largely in favour of the application. He argued that the proposal would generate business and revenue in the area as well as deliver high quality housing to the area especially given that it was within walking distance to the local train station. He felt there was sufficient car parking to the rear that was able to accommodate deliveries to the proposed fast-food takeaway. He highlighted that there were already restrictions in place with regard to deliveries and that it was going to be a challenge to place even more stringent restrictions on this, however, was supportive of restrictions on where deliveries could happen. He noted that the issue

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 7 MAY 2025 - MINUTES

of illegal parking came down to peoples' attitudes and that unless enforcement officers were constantly patrolling the area there was little that could be done to prevent people illegally parking.

15. Councillor Macro noted that deliveries were concerning although that area was in the control of Fishers which meant that the burden brought about by deliveries may have fallen to employees rather than the public. His main concern was safety with people potentially parking on the zig zags and obscuring the view of the zebra crossing. He also felt that people delivering on behalf of food delivery apps were likely to park outside and obscure traffic.
16. Councillor Justin Pemberton shared the road safety concerns that had been raised by other Members and was largely in agreement with several of the comments that had been made. He highlighted that there were a number of schools within the Church Street vicinity of Theale, where high school and primary students were likely to be walking in the vicinity of the high street, so had a huge amount of sympathy for the points that were being raised. However, he felt that, from a planning perspective, he could see little recourse to reject this application. He argued that the authority could not tell people where to park their cars and that this was a legal matter. He noted that not everyone was going to be taking their car and that it was indeterminate how significant a problem this was likely to be. Councillor Pemberton was supportive of a condition around delivery restrictions and deferred to the planning officer as to the form of wording that said condition should take. He noted that the only statutory consultee to object was the Parish Council, he particularly felt that the lack of an objection from the environmental health team was significant as it demonstrated they did not have significant concern around noise and odour.
17. Councillor Clive Taylor shared concerns around road safety. He felt that this was a difficult decision noting that it was an on-balance planning decision. He was concerned about the number of takeaway units on the high street noting that this was a problem that was shared in his ward which he felt could lead to increases in anti-social behaviour. He felt that an additional takeaway could have been of minor harm to the vitality of the centre as it could reduce the diversity of the non-retail offering. He questioned the need for another takeaway in the area and was inclined to oppose the application.
18. Councillor Richard Somner noted that there was a West Berkshire car park in the area which was regularly patrolled by the enforcement team who patrolled the areas around car parks as well as the car parks themselves. He felt it was important to note that if the Committee was minded to approve this application, it was worth taking the matter up with officers to ascertain how this could be taken forward to address the concerns of local residents.
19. Councillor Macro advised that he had been in touch with enforcement officers on the issues with double yellow lines, however the issue with zig zags would be down to the police.
20. Councillor Poole proposed to accept Officer's recommendation and grant planning permission subject to the conditions listed in the main report and update report with an additional condition requiring that before the hot food takeaway usage could commence, details would be provided around delivery arrangements for incoming and outgoing deliveries to demonstrate how those would be received to the building using the rear access. This was seconded by Councillor Kander.

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE - 7 MAY 2025 - MINUTES

21. The Chairman invited Members of the Committee to vote on the proposal by Councillor Poole, seconded by Councillor Kander, to grant planning permission. At the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that the Development Manager be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the conditions in the main report and update report with an additional condition requiring that before the hot food takeaway usage could commence, details would be provided around delivery arrangements for incoming and outgoing deliveries to demonstrate how those would be received to the building using the rear access.

(The meeting commenced at 18:30 and closed at 19:26)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature