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WESTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2025

Councillors Present: Clive Hooker (Vice-Chairman), Adrian Abbs, Antony Amirtharaj, Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines, Tony Vickers and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Sharon Armour (Legal Services Manager), Paul Goddard (Team Leader - Highways Development Control) and Debra Inston (Principal Conservation & Design Officer), Bob Dray (Development Manager), Matthew Shepherd (Principal Planning Officer), Russell Davidson (Senior Public Protection Officer), Paul Bacchus (Principal Engineer), Thomas Radbourne (Clerk), Sam Chiverton (Zoom Host), Jenny Rae (Principal Waste Officer), Daniel Phelan (Economic Development Officer).

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Phil Barnett and Councillor Paul Dick

PART I

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Billy Drummond declared an interest in Agenda Item 3(1) by virtue of the fact that he had discussed the application at Newbury Town Council. Although he had been present when the application was discussed, he indicated that he would consider the application afresh. As his interest was personal and not a prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in debate and vote on the matter.

Councillors Adrian Abbs, Nigel Foot, Howard Woollaston, Dennis Benneyworth, Denise Gaines, Antony Amirtharaj, and Clive Hooker, declared that they had been lobbied on item 3(1) on the agenda.

Councillor Nigel Foot declared an interest in Agenda Item 3(1) by virtue of the fact that he was a Newbury Town Councillor and the Heritage Champion for West Berkshire Council. As his interest was personal and not a prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in debate and vote on the matter.

Councillor Tony Vickers declared an interest in Agenda item 3(1) by virtue of the fact that he was a member of Newbury Town Council's Planning and Highways Committee. He had abstained from voting on the matter and indicated he would consider the application afresh. As his interest was personal and not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in debate and vote on the matter.

The Committee suspended Standing Orders to extend speaking time to 10 minutes for each group of speakers.

2. Schedule of Planning Applications

(1) 25/00391/FULMAJ Newbury Town Council

1. The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 3(1)) concerning Planning Application 25/00391/FULMAJ in respect of Full planning permission for the

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redevelopment of the Kennet Centre comprising the partial demolition of the existing building on site and the development of new residential dwellings (Use Class C3) and resident's ancillary facilities; commercial floorspace (Class E (a, b, c, d, e, f, and g)); access, parking, and cycle parking; landscaping and open space; sustainable energy installations; associated works, and alterations to the retained Vue Cinema block and additional floor to multi storey car park. The Mall, The Kennet Centre, Newbury, RG14 5EN

2. Mr Matthew Shepherd, Principal 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, and provided that a Section 106 Agreement had been completed within six months (or such longer period that may be authorised by the Development Manager, in consultation with the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Western Area Planning Committee).
3. Or, if the Section 106 Agreement was not completed, to delegate to the Development Manager to refuse planning permission.
4. The Chairman asked Mr Paul Goddard, Highways Development Control Team Leader, if he had any observations relating to the application.
5. Mr Goddard gave a presentation to the Committee, and highlighted the following points:
 - He raised no concerns regarding traffic generation, as traffic levels were expected to be lower than the historic peaks of the Kennet Centre. Construction traffic would be managed by a condition.
 - The proposal for 557 spaces (80 on-site and 477 in the multi-storey car park with an added floor) was compliant with standards and considered sufficient. Surveys from the previous application showed the existing car park was underutilised, and it was calculated that over 250 spaces would remain available on a busy Saturday.
 - A fire appliance could access all areas of the development within the required distances.
 - The application included new traffic signal junctions, resurfacing, a two-way cycle route on Bartholomew Street, a £70,000 contribution to improve pedestrian routes to the Market Street multi-storey car park as a precaution, and a comprehensive travel plan.
6. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Mr Roger Hunneman, Town Council representative, Mr Richard Tait, objector, Mr Hugo Haig, Ms Sarah Ballantyne-Way and Mr Richard Farley, applicant/agent, and Councillor Louise Sturgess, Ward Member addressed the Committee on this application.

Parish/Town Council Representation

7. Mr Hunneman addressed the Committee. The full representation can be viewed here:

[Special Western Area Planning Committee 10 September 2025 – Recording](#)

Member Questions to the Parish/Town Council

8. Members did not have any questions of clarification.

Objector Representation

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9. Mr Tait addressed the Committee. The full representation can be viewed here:

[Special Western Area Planning Committee 10 September 2025 – Recording](#)

Member Questions to the Objector

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

- Mr Tait clarified that the development would add a barrier for people travelling north-south through the town, where there was already an imbalance of footfall.

Agent Representation

11. Mr Haig addressed the Committee. The full representation can be viewed here:

[Special Western Area Planning Committee 10 September 2025 – Recording](#)

Member Questions to the Agent

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

- Mr Haig expressed disappointment on the loss of permeability due to 'secure by design' requirements, particularly with the required gate height of 1.8 metres, but explained the restrictions were mainly in the northern courtyards. He stated he would welcome a relaxation of the condition.
- He confirmed that the existing retail tenants in the Kennet Centre were on subsidised low rent.
- It was clarified that the current arrangement for The Globe public house to use the car park deck to store bins was informal and not a legal right, and that under the new scheme, they would have to place their bins in the street.
- Regarding a question on whether there was scope to reduce the height of the six-storey buildings on Market Street or set them back. Mr Haig explained the design rose in height towards the south in order to clad the car park and cinema, and that render had been used to break up the massing. He also confirmed that the large vertical lettering on the buildings could be altered.
- A private waste management system was designed from the outset as it was the only solution that would work with the heritage-led design and its constraints. Residents would pay for this via a service charge, which Mr Haig argued would be affordable due to the critical mass of residents.
- Heating would be provided by ground source heat pumps.
- Regarding a question on whether the service management could be handed over to a residents' association in the future, Mr Haig responded that, if they could, they would.
- Recycling would be provided by Veolia under a private commercial arrangement.

Ward Member Representation

13. Councillor Louise Sturgess addressed the Committee. The full representation can be viewed here:

[Special Western Area Planning Committee 10 September 2025 – Recording](#)

Member Questions to the Ward Member

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

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- Given her concerns about the buildings' height and the Committee's inability to alter the plans, Councillor Sturgess stated it was a balanced decision for the Committee to make.

The Committee reinstated Standing orders.

Member Questions to Officers

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

- It was acknowledged there would be negative impacts during construction, but Officers stated that the overall economic benefit from construction and operation was very significant.
- Regarding a question about the lack of public access to approximately half of the development, Officers explained that the current Kennet Centre was not accessible 24/7 and the proposed restrictions were based on advice from Thames Valley Police to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. The Development Manager, Bob Dray, added that Condition 39 reserved the details of the Access Security Strategy, allowing for further exploration of the precise controls.
- Ground source heat pumps would be secured via the Section 106 agreement and conditions, and non-compliance would be subject to enforcement action.
- The Principal Drainage Engineer addressing SuDS confirmed that climate change had been considered, but the applicant had not met all the requirements he would expect.
- The statutory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was a legal requirement.
- Officers understood the agreement between the Globe and the Kennet Centre regarding bin storage was a private arrangement and was not a planning matter.
- Regarding a question on the £35,000 BID contribution, and whether more could be sought to mitigate impacts on surrounding businesses, Officers explained this figure was based on projects the BID had already identified for funding.
- All 557 spaces in the multi-storey car park would be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Extensive surveys showed that even on a busy Saturday, there would be a surplus of over 250 spaces for residents and shoppers, with improvements to the nearby Market Street car park acting as a fail-safe. Officers gave assurances that the multi-storey car park would remain largely operational during construction.
- In clarification to his objection to the drainage strategy, the Principal Drainage Engineer gave a detailed response, stating that the proposal failed to meet the new national standards for discharge rates from brownfield sites. He was disappointed that heritage considerations had "trumped" a technical requirement. He also expressed significant concern about the buildability of the proposed SuDS features, as the design was high-level and lacked detail, with many elements deferred to a later stage.
- In response to a question for examples of private waste collection on large developments, the Principal Waste Officer cited one development of 23 properties in Calcot, which was not of the scale of the proposed development. There had been no issues, but residents felt they were "double paying" through Council Tax and a service charge.
- Officers confirmed that the Construction Management Plan could be brought back to the Committee for consideration. The service management was a matter of

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private property law and could not be controlled by condition. On the impact on schools and medical infrastructure, officers confirmed this would be covered by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payment.

- Regarding a question on whether any further condition could alleviate the concerns raised by the Principal Drainage Engineer, Officers stated that the proposed drainage condition was as robust as it could be, but the Principal Drainage Engineer reiterated his concern that the proposed scheme might not be buildable.
- The Principal Drainage Engineer agreed that the proposal would be an improvement on the drainage on the existing site. He added that the alternative to meet the discharge rate would be a pumping station, which was a far less desirable solution.
- Officers acknowledged the conflict with Policy SP15 and the housing mix, but explained that in the planning balance, the proposed housing mix was considered acceptable due to factors of viability, the need for high density, and the constraints of the brownfield site.
- Regarding a question on whether there was available retail space in the town for the 20 tenants who would be displaced, Officers confirmed that a recent study showed 41 vacant units, 15 of which were under offer or undergoing maintenance in the town centre.
- Construction impact. There were conditions which would be used along with highways in order to phase the construction to keep the town as open as possible. These conditions could be referred to Committee at the appropriate time.
- The new development would be excluded from applying for residents' parking permits, as was correct under Policy DM44.
- Fire appliances and refuse vehicles could access much of the site, removal firms would have to use appropriately sized vehicles and some furniture might need to be carried over certain distances.
- The area-wide traffic model used for the traffic assessment was based on pre-COVID surveys and included all traffic on the network, including that associated with Parkway.

Debate

16. Councillor Abbs opened the debate. He expressed surprise at the number of objections that had been received on the application. While relieved the previous scheme had failed, he remained concerned about the economic impact on the town, the creation of a "good neighbour" relationship with existing businesses, and the poor housing mix. He stated he was leaning towards approval but felt extra conditions were needed to ensure the town was not negatively impacted.
17. Councillor Vickers stated that as a local resident, he had no problems with the conservation aspects or height. He welcomed the water reduction measures in Condition 49, which would help the foul water sewage system. He had no concerns about parking, believing the reduction in office workers was permanent and that the future of the town centre was in the service sector, not retail. His main issues were permeability and waste management, which he felt could be addressed through the noted conditions. He saw no reason to refuse the application.

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18. Councillor Amirtharaj described the development as a massive project that would change Newbury for the next 100 years. He commended the applicant's efforts and saw it as a good development overall, but with flaws that needed to be addressed through robust conditions, particularly regarding public access and ensuring the Construction Management Plan returned to the Committee. He stated he would support the application if these conditions were included.
19. Councillor Gaines felt the Kennet Centre was already "divorced" from the rest of the town and that this application would help enhance the recent regeneration of Bartholomew Street. She was concerned about the lack of affordable housing and the housing mix but was also concerned by the drainage officer's objection. However, she praised the structure, design, and greening of the scheme and was minded to support it.
20. Councillor Benneyworth believed that the Kennet Centre was a vital part of the town, and it was currently a sad remnant of what it once was. While he understood the officers' concerns regarding SuDS, refuse, and affordable housing, he felt the overall scheme was a vast improvement on the previous one and was minded to approve it.
21. Councillor Woollaston agreed that retail had changed and town centres needed to concentrate their offer. He felt the current shopping centre was "dead". He had supported the previous application thinking it was the best they would get but, on reflection, he believed this scheme was now the best they would ever get.
22. Councillor Foot noted that the Newbury Society broadly supported the scheme as a great improvement. He praised the degree of care in the design and believed that, if built out correctly, it could be an attraction for Newbury and would enhance the conservation area. He was minded to support the application.
23. Councillor Drummond agreed with most of the statements made by other Members of the Committee. He believed the application was better than the previous application and was minded to approve the application.
24. Councillor Howard Woollaston proposed to accept Officer's recommendation and grant planning permission subject to the conditions listed in the main report and update report. This was seconded by Councillor Tony Vickers
25. The Chairman invited Members of the Committee to vote on the proposal by Councillor Woollaston, seconded by Councillor Vickers, to grant planning permission. At the vote the motion was carried.

Subject to the conditions listed in the main report and update report:

RESOLVED that the Development Manager be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the prior completion of a Section 106 planning obligation within six months of the date of the resolution (or a later date if agreed by the Development Manager in consultation with the Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman) to secure the planning obligations set out in the report, and subject to the conditions as set out in Section 8 of the report and the update sheet, with minor and inconsequential amendments to the conditions being authorised to be made by the Development Manager in consultation with the Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman of the Western Area Planning Committee.

In the event that the Section 106 planning obligation was not completed within the specified timeframe, the Development Manager be authorised to refuse the application for the reasons listed in the report.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 8.10 pm)

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CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature