

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE
4TH OCTOBER 2023

UPDATE REPORT

Item No: (3) **Application No:** 22/01953/FULD **Page No.** 59-81

Site: Reservoir (covered), Bishops Road, Tutts Clump, Reading

1. Registered Speakers

Please refer to List of Speakers provided under separate cover.

2. Additional Consultation Responses

No further responses received.

3. Planning Use Class

The application form advises that the existing use class of the floorspace as 'Other' specifying that it is a former reservoir and water pumping station.

It is considered that a site used for the operational purposes of a statutory water undertaker would be a Sui Generis use (a use that does not fall within any of the other use classes).

The proposal would change the use of the site to Use Class C3 (dwellinghouses).

4. Policy C1 of the Housing Site Allocations DPD

Please see copied on the next page the extract from the HSA DPD with the wording for Policy C1:

Policy C 1

Location of New Housing in the Countryside

There is a presumption in favour of development and redevelopment within the settlement boundaries of the following settlements:

Aldermaston	Donnington	Newbury
Aldermaston Wharf	East Garston	Pangbourne
Ashmore Green	East Ilsley	Peasemore
Beenham	Eastbury	Stockcross
Boxford	Eddington	Streatley
Bradfield	Enborne Row	Tadley/Pamber Heath
Bradfield Southend	Great Shefford	Thatcham
Brightwalton	Greenham	Theale
Brightwalton Green	Hampstead Norreys	Tidmarsh
Brimpton	Hermitage	Eastern Urban Area (Tilehurst, Calcot, Purley)
Burghfield	Hungerford	Upper Basildon
Burghfield Bridge	Kintbury	Upper Bucklebury
Burghfield Common	Lambourn	West Ilsley
Chieveley	Leckhampstead	Woolhampton
Cold Ash	Lower Basildon	Wickham
Compton	Mortimer	Yattendon
Curridge		

There will be a presumption against new residential development outside of the settlement boundaries. Exceptions to this are limited to rural exception housing schemes, conversion of redundant buildings, housing to accommodate rural workers, extension to or replacement of existing residential units and limited infill in settlements in the countryside with no defined settlement boundary. All proposals will need to satisfy the other policies in this section of the Plan.

In settlements in the countryside with no defined settlement boundary, limited infill development may be considered where:

- i. It is within a closely knit cluster of 10 or more existing dwellings adjacent to, or fronting an existing highway; and
- ii. The scale of development consists of infilling a small undeveloped plot commensurate with the scale and character of existing dwellings within an otherwise built up frontage; and
- iii. It does not extend the existing frontage; and
- iv. The plot size and spacing between dwellings is similar to adjacent properties and respects the rural character and street scene of the locality.

Planning permission will not be granted where a proposal harms or undermines the existing relationship of the settlement within the open countryside, where it does not contribute to the character and distinctiveness of a rural area, including the natural beauty of the AONB or where development would have an adverse cumulative impact on the environment or highway safety.

5. Interpretation of Policy C1

At the committee site visit clarification was sought on the difference between building line and frontage. "Frontage" is identified as the building elevation fronting, or addressing, a road and the land in between this elevation and the highway. In the case of Policy C1 it refers to a row of buildings fronting a highway, forming a broadly linear pattern of development. "Building line" is distinct from frontage and refers to an established line within a frontage that the built form is usually aligned to along a row of buildings. This policy considers frontage rather than the building line. The application is not being recommended for refusal due to the position of the dwelling in relation to the existing building line at Bishops Road. It is being recommended for refusal because it would extend the existing frontage of dwellings fronting the highway rather than being within that frontage, and therefore is contrary to points (i) and (iii) of the Policy.

The appeal decision for the previous application and the committee agenda report identifies the extension of the frontage. This is because the application site is positioned adjacent to an established built-up frontage (to the north) and by redeveloping the site this would extend the frontage towards Cock Lane to the south. It was identified that the existing application site was not part of the existing frontage due to the visual differences between the site and the linear residential dwellings to the north.

Furthermore, infill usually consists of a developing a plot in which there is development on either side. Criteria (i) advises that the plot is required to be within a closely knit cluster of 10 or more existing dwellings. The intervening road to the south and the land uses to south, east and west all demonstrate that it would not be within a closely knit cluster of 10 existing dwellings. This pattern of development was also identified as a reason why the proposal would extend the frontage.

6. Residential Development within the Surrounding Area

To the south of Cock Lane, and to the south-west of the application site is a recently constructed dwelling. This forms part of the Boot Farm. The dwelling was granted under permission 17/00149/FULD and a later section 73 permission 17/02736/FULD. The new dwelling replaced a temporary mobile home and was found to be acceptable in principle because it met an exception to Policy C1 of the HSA DPD. It met the exception of housing to accommodate rural workers in which as part of considerations, it is necessary for the applicant to provide evidence to demonstrate the need. A condition was applied to this permission so that the person occupying the dwelling is solely or mainly employed at Boot Farm Stables and Stud and could not be separated from the equestrian business.

The current application before the committee sought to demonstrate that the proposal meets the exception for limited infill development in Policy C1. However, it does not meet all the criteria for this and therefore does not meet the exception. No evidence is submitted to demonstrate that it would meet any of the other exceptions in the policy.

7. Updated Recommendation

It is recognised that there is support for the proposed development and that there would be benefits to redeveloping the site. However, it was demonstrated as part of the appeal for 22/00697/FULD that significant weight should be given to the conflict with the housing policies of the development plan for West Berkshire. This is due to the regard given to its consistency with the NPPF as well as housing need and supply considerations. The Inspector within their appeal decision concluded that the inappropriate location of the proposal and harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area attracted significant weight leading to the dismissal of the appeal. Similarly, it is considered that with this revised application the conflict with the development plan and harm to the rural character demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

The recommendation remains as set out in the agenda committee report.