Appeal Decision

Inquiry held on 10 & 11 September 2014 Site visit made on 10 September 2014

by L Rodgers B Eng (Hons) C Eng MICE MBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 13 October 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/A/14/2215542 Part of former Linpac site, Headley Road East, Woodley, Reading RG5 4HY

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
- The appeal is made by London & Cambridge Properties Real Estate Ltd against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
- The application Ref O/2013/0668, dated 6 March 2013, was refused by notice dated 3 October 2013.
- The development proposed is a residential development of up to 34 dwellings with associated access, car parking, open space and landscaping.

Decision

 The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a residential development of up to 34 dwellings with associated access, car parking, open space and landscaping at part of former Linpac site, Headley Road East, Woodley, Reading RG5 4HY in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref O/2013/0668, dated 6 March 2013, subject to the conditions laid out in Annex A.

Procedural matters

- 2. The application was submitted in outline with only access to be determined at this stage. Appearance, landscaping, layout and scale have been reserved for future determination and I have dealt with the appeal on that basis.
- 3. It was confirmed at the Inquiry that, other than in respect of the access shown on Drg. No. 13009 (B) 061, all drawings were illustrative only.
- 4. A planning obligation in the form of a Unilateral Undertaking made pursuant to s106 of the Town and Country Planning act 1990 and dated 10 September 2014 was put before the Inquiry¹. This forms a material consideration in my determination.

Main Issue

5. Although the Council refused the application for five reasons, it was formally confirmed at the Inquiry that the Council no longer wished to pursue refusal reasons 2, 3, 4 and 5 - concerning residential amenity, the character of the area and the failure to make provision for contributions towards infrastructure

¹ Inquiry document 4

and affordable housing. In light of this I consider that there is only one main issue to be addressed; the effect of the proposed development on the provision of employment land in the area.

Reasons

Background

- 6. The appeal site is part of the former Linpac site located to the south of Hadley Road East, Woodley. It is roughly rectangular in shape, extends to just less than 1.45 hectares and is bounded to the south by Viscount Way. Magal Engineering Ltd lies immediately to the west of the site and to the east is the remainder of the Linpac site (currently being developed for residential purposes) with Spitfire Way beyond.
- 7. The site is located in an urban area of Woodley identified as a 'major development location' in the adopted Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (CS). Neighbourhood land uses include both residential and employment. Employment land and buildings occupy areas to the East, West and North of Headley Road East, whilst land to the south of Viscount Way is in residential use. To the east of Spitfire Way are further residential properties and Lodden Vale Local Centre. The site is less than 1km east of Woodley Town Centre.
- 8. The site is relatively flat and was until recently occupied by a number of commercial buildings, since demolished. There is no landscaping within the site.
- 9. Outline planning permission was granted in May 2012 (O/2012/0320) for redevelopment of the whole Linpac site with a mixed use scheme comprising residential development of up to 79 dwellings and floor space for Use Class B1 (a, b and c) and the demolition of the existing buildings. The application form indicated that the B1 uses would be split equally between B1(a), (b) and (c) with just over 1000sqm of each. Subsequent permissions allowed the permitted development to progress in phases (VAR/2012/1867), increased the number of permitted dwellings to 93 (F/2013/1136) and allowed for the erection of a 3m boundary wall (F/2013/1384). An outline application to erect up to 34 dwellings in place of the B1 development was however refused. It is that application that is now the subject of this appeal.

The provision of employment land

- 10. Notwithstanding the range of policies identified in the Statement of Common Ground (SOCG), the remaining reason for refusal refers to only two policies. The first of these, CS Policy CP15 'Employment Development', makes it clear that any proposed changes of use from B1, B2 and B8 should not lead to an overall net loss of floor space in B Use within the Borough. The supporting text also notes that the "...... Employment Land Study indicates the current level of floorspace for industry and warehousing would need to rise by 51,000sqm to meet forecast employment growth in the Borough over the Plan period."
- 11. The approach to the measurement of 'overall net loss' in this context is not defined but the main parties agreed that any overall net loss of floor space should be measured by reference to a 2006 baseline. This approach is supported by the Wokingham Borough Council Employment Land Monitoring Report April 2013 March 2014 (ELMR) which, in its executive summary, notes that movements in the overall B Use floorspace have been measured in

- comparison to the Employment Monitoring Report baseline data which takes 31 March 2006 as setting the 'existing' B Use floor space in the Borough. I was given no reason to depart from this interpretation of the policy.
- 12. The second policy referred to is Policy TB11 of the Wokingham Borough Development Plan 'Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan' (2014)(MDD) entitled 'Core Employment Areas'. This policy states that Core Employment Areas (CEAs) are listed in CS Policy CP15. Although the supporting text goes on to note that the majority of employment growth will occur in the CEAs and on other identified employment sites it seems to me that in the context of this appeal Policy TB11 adds little of relevance to CS Policy CP15.
- 13. With respect to the 'no net loss' criterion, the agreed position paper produced by the main parties² notes that the 2013-14 ELMR shows a cumulative total increase of B class floorspace of 3,649sqm since the baseline of 2006. Although this is a significant reduction on the 29,689sqm increase recorded in the 2012-13 ELMR, I understand that this is largely a result of the loss of some 21,390 sqm on the Linpac site itself; in any event it is still the case that there has been no 'overall net loss'. Although the 2013-14 ELMR describes the position as being a 'modest net gain' it nevertheless seems to me that this is sufficient to meet the quantitative test embedded in CS Policy CP15.
- 14. With respect to future provision, the agreed position paper shows that the 2013-14 ELMR identifies a total of just over 88,000sqm of outstanding permissions (albeit that the bulk of this is due on four sites and is mainly office development) and further allocations of almost 114,000sqm. It also notes that, according to the ELMR, there are sufficient sites allocated in the MDD to meet the additional industry and warehousing identified as being required in the CS.
- 15. In summary, the most recent ELMR identifies that in terms of Policy CP15 there has been no overall net loss of floor space in B Use within the Borough and that the outstanding permissions and allocations are seen as sufficient to meet the employment growth needs of the Borough. Consequently I find that, in quantitative terms, the proposed development would not conflict with Policy CP15.
- 16. The Council, however, argues that meeting the quantitative test is not the end of the matter and that there is also a need to have regard to the qualitative position. In particular the Council maintains that as the 'no net loss' criterion is marginal and the situation finely balanced, it is easily capable of being outweighed by countervailing considerations including what is said to be the evidence of considerable demand and limited supply for the type of units which the appeal site could support.
- 17. To that end the Council points to the phrase in CS Policy CP15 that says "Provision will be made for a range of sizes, types, quality and locations of premises and sites in order to meet incubator/start up/move on, expansion and investment accommodation needs and having regard to the needs of specific sectors of the business community." The Council also refers to the supporting text at 4.70 which notes that "A good supply of a range of sizes, types and location of available sites and buildings is a pre-requisite to a thriving

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² Inquiry document 8 a)

economy" as well as to the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to ensure that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation (Para 7) and to make every effort to objectively identify and then meet, amongst other matters, the business needs of an area.

- 18. Although the Appellant argues that there is in fact no qualitative test within Policy CP15, to my mind there is a clear thrust in the policy framework towards employment development which seeks to recognise and satisfy the various needs of the business community in the overall economic interest. In that regard, providing for B1 office accommodation when the demand is for B2 general industrial accommodation may satisfy the policy in quantitative terms but would clearly not constitute good planning nor, in my view, would it accord with the overall thrust of the policy framework.
- 19. CS Paragraph 4.70 notes that the provision of a range of sizes, types and location of available sites and buildings will be monitored through the AMR (ie the ELMR). However, although Table 3 of the 2013-14 ELMR splits out B1, B2 and B8 uses (showing that B1 uses have increased from the baseline by some 8,567sqm and B8 uses by some 12,903sqm albeit tempered by a decrease in B2 uses of some 17,821 sqm) the ELMR otherwise contains limited information with which to monitor the sizes, types and locations of available sites and buildings.
- 20. As noted previously the Council does point out that some 99% of the 88,099sqm of outstanding permissions for B Uses is concentrated on four sites, all of which are said to be very different in character to the appeal site. As such, the Council maintains that they are not going to provide employment land for the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) likely to occupy the Woodley CEA and recognised as a crucial element of the economy³. That may be so. The Council nonetheless accepts that the make-up of the 8,567sqm increase in B1 uses over the 2006 baseline is unknown and the fact that a large proportion of the outstanding permissions are for a particular typology does not of itself establish that there is, or is likely to be, a deficiency in the provision of a range of sizes, types and location of available sites and buildings. Nor does it take account of the fact that the ELMR also identifies further site allocations. Although these in part are also said to be aimed at different types of usage, their quantum is considerably in excess of the identified need to meet forecast employment growth in the Borough over the Plan period.
- 21. Consequently the information provided through the ELMR does not convince me that use of the appeal site for residential purposes would materially compromise the provision of a range of employment sites and buildings sufficient to meet the needs of the various sectors of the business community. That said, whilst the ELMR is identified in CS Paragraph 4.70 as the means by which the provision of a range of sizes, types and location of available sites and buildings will be monitored, both the Council and the Appellant have put forward more detailed supply and demand analyses as part of the appeal.
- 22. Each of the submitted analyses uses the industry recognised 'Focus' database as its foundation but their outcomes and terminologies differ significantly. In terms of supply, the Council suggests that there is some 5,200sqm of 'comparable available space' within the competing areas whereas the Appellant

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³ Thames Valley Berkshire: Delivering national growth, locally. Strategic Economic Plan, 2015/16 – 2020/21

suggests that there is around 9,290sqm of 'light industrial floor space'. Notwithstanding the differing terminologies, the quantitative variations appear to arise largely from the parameters applied to the database searches. The agreed document put forward by the main parties⁴ notes that these parameters included the size of units to be assessed (the Council has looked at units of <5,000 sq ft; the Appellant <7,000 sq ft), the age of the units (the Council has looked at just new and modern space; the Appellant at all lettable units), the use classes (Council B1 and B8; Appellant B1) and the search areas analysed (the Council did not include North and West Reading). It is agreed between the parties that all of these parameters are matters of opinion.

- 23. With respect to demand, both parties have looked at take up rates using largely the same parameters that were applied to supply (although the Appellant also included larger units).
- 24. According to the Appellant there has been no light industrial take up in the Woodley area in the last three years and, in the wider search area of Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell, take up has gradually diminished from some 4,500sqm in 2009-10 to less than 3,000sqm in 2013-14. In light of this and the availability of 3 similarly sized units in the industrial area directly opposite the appeal site, the Appellant considers that there is currently an over supply of light industrial accommodation in both the immediate site vicinity and in the wider search area.
- 25. In contrast the Council states that the amount of space sold or let in the search area in the last two years amounts to just over 9,800sqm and that the recently built and comparable Anglo Industrial Park has only two of twenty-three units remaining to be sold or let. As such the Council maintains that there is significant demand within the area for commercial/industrial units of the type capable of being built on the appeal site. In addition the Council believes that given the take up rate over the last two years the available supply would be exhausted in two years or even earlier if rising demand is accounted for.
- 26. I find neither of the proffered analyses particularly helpful or compelling. Although both represent the professional opinions of their expert authors they are so divergent in terms of inputs that it is difficult to reconcile their outputs and whilst it is agreed that the inputs are largely matters of opinion, there has been little in the way of sensitivity testing of those inputs. For instance, whilst I accept the Council's view that the Appellant's inclusion of north and west Reading in the search area is unlikely to represent a reasonable alternative to the appeal site, as it would be too distant in travel terms, the effect of excluding that area on the Appellant's results and overall conclusions is unclear.
- 27. I also have some concerns as to the interpretation of the outputs; whilst the Council suggests that at the current take-up rate the supply of comparable units would be exhausted in two years or less, the Council also acknowledges that the occupiers likely to be interested in the type of space that could be constructed on the appeal site are most likely to already be located in the immediate or competing areas⁵. This suggests that churn in the competing area is likely to represent an appreciable proportion of the total transactions. Without further analysis as to the effects of such churn it seems to me that

⁴ Inquiry document 8 (b)

⁵ Kempton PoE eg Paragraphs 1.3, 6.1

little weight can be attached to the Council's view that the stock of comparable units would be quickly exhausted.

- 28. The Council suggests that its inclusion of more 'Focus' source data and the local knowledge and experience of its expert witness means that its evidence should attract more weight than that of the Appellant. However, even if I was to prefer the Council's evidence on supply and demand, in light of the concerns outlined above and the acknowledged difficulties in the interpretation of 'Focus' data it seems to me that it could attract no more than limited weight.
- 29. There is no doubt that residential use of the appeal site would reduce the supply and choice of employment land. Nevertheless, in light of the matters above I do not consider that there is clear or compelling evidence that any such reduction would be critical or lead to a 'qualitative' conflict with CS Policy CP15 or the wider policy framework.

Other matters

Viability

- 30. According to the viability appraisal submitted by the Appellant, developing the site for B1 use would result in a negative residual land value of around £0.5m whereas the Council's assessment is that a positive land value of around £0.5m would result.
- 31. These residual values are clearly dependent on the values assigned to the appraisal inputs in this case perhaps most notably the assumed rents, yields and finance costs. Moreover, the residual value calculation put forward by the parties as a sensitivity test⁶ shows that relatively small changes to the inputs can produce significant variations in the residual values. Nonetheless, given that the inputs represent the views of the parties' expert witnesses then, unless the inputs are demonstrably unreasonable, it seems to me that the most that can be gained from the appraisals is that the residual land value is likely to fall somewhere within the range encompassed by the calculations of the Appellant and Council.
- 32. The Council nevertheless argues that the local knowledge and experience of its expert witness, corroborated by the submitted 'Focus' data on rents, means that its evidence should be preferred. However, even if I was to accept the Council's figures on rent and yield the Council also acknowledges that no detailed evidence on finance rates was put before the Inquiry. Consequently there would still be scope for considerable variation in the residual land value.
- 33. In terms of NPPF Paragraph 22 the Council is also of the view that, irrespective of the differences between the two valuations, provided its inputs to the calculation are not themselves shown to be unreasonable there is a 'reasonable prospect' of the site coming forward for employment use. However, whilst I accept that a potentially positive residual value calculation may be an indicator that a site could come forward, it is clearly not determinative. Consideration also needs to be given to other factors.
- 34. In this case any commercial units would, as a result of the proximity of the residential units, experience some operational restrictions beyond those often found in other, less sensitive, locations. Whilst these restrictions are unlikely

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⁶ Inquiry document 8 d)

to be a barrier to occupation they are nevertheless likely to make the units less attractive to some potential tenants. In addition the Appellant maintained at the Inquiry that commercial conditions mean that very little development suited to SMEs is currently taking place anywhere in England. Whilst this statement was unsupported by substantive evidence and can be accorded little weight I am nonetheless conscious that Woodley is said by the Council to have around 40-50 comparable commercial units - whereas the appeal site could itself provide over 40 units. Even if, as the Council claims, there is currently a low vacancy rate in Woodley in the absence of a very clear demand, more or less doubling the number of similar units is not likely to be seen as an attractive commercial prospect. These factors all weigh against the prospects of the site coming forward for employment use.

- 35. Conversely, I was given no cogent evidence to show that the site had any particular problems that would make it inherently unsuitable or prohibitively expensive to develop for employment use and its location within the CEA and proximity to the existing industrial and commercial areas suggest that it is in an appropriate location for commercial development. The existing permission must also be an acknowledgement that a commercial development could satisfactorily coexist with the adjoining residential development. These matters support the view that there is a reasonable prospect of the site coming forward for employment use.
- 36. To my mind there is no conclusive evidence, and certainly nothing intrinsic about the site itself, to show that it could not be developed for employment purposes in the right commercial climate. In these circumstances I cannot conclude that there is 'no reasonable prospect' of the site coming forward for employment purposes. However, in light of the evidence put forward I consider it unlikely that the site would be developed for employment purposes in the near future.

Noise and disturbance

- 37. The Council's second reason for refusal stated that "It has not been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the local planning authority that the development would provide for an acceptable level of amenities for future occupants in terms of impacts of noise and vibration from the neighbouring 24 hour industrial site, and that in turn that this would not impact on the continued 24 hour operation and viability of the industrial site and the local employment that it provides.......".
- 38. However, following consideration of an updated report from the Appellant regarding noise monitoring and acoustic assessment of the site, the Council confirmed by letter dated 30 July 2014 that it was satisfied that issues in relation to noise and vibration had been addressed. In consequence, the Council withdrew its second reason for refusal. However, and notwithstanding the Council's position, concerns continued to be expressed on behalf of the adjoining industrial site (Magal Engineering Ltd) with respect to the proximity of the proposed residential development and the potential for complaints to arise in regard to noise and disturbance.
- 39. Despite these concerns, no cogent evidence was before the Inquiry to show that any noise and disturbance from the works would be material and even my site visit suggested that the engineering works were not the dominant noise source on the site. In light of the clarifications given at the Inquiry in response

- to my questions concerning the acoustic assessment I have no reason to doubt its conclusions including that the whole site can be developed for residential purposes and that suitable attenuation measures can be introduced to ensure that the development complies with the relevant standards.
- 40. Consequently, and subject to the imposition of conditions at the appropriate time to ensure provision of the required attenuation measures, I agree with the Council that an acceptable level of amenities could be provided for future residential occupiers.

Conditions

- 41. The Council has suggested a number of conditions that it considers would be appropriate in the event that I was minded to allow the appeal. I have considered those conditions in the light of the NPPF and the planning practice guidance.
- 42. The standard outline conditions limiting the life of the permission and setting out the requirements for the reserved matters would be required as, in respect of access, would a condition listing the appropriate application plan although I see no need for a condition requiring a statement of conformity with the design objectives set out in the Design and Access Statement.
- 43. In the interests of the area's character and appearance, conditions would be required to deal with finished floor and ground levels as well as the boundary treatments to be provided. In the interests of the living conditions of any future occupants of the proposed development the latter condition would, for the avoidance of doubt, need to ensure construction of the 3m wall to the western site boundary (as previously permitted under application Ref F/2013/1384).
- 44. Given the former commercial uses on the site a condition dealing with potential contamination would be required and in the interests of sustainability, conditions dealing with the provision of travel plans and the installation and maintenance of a sustainable drainage system would be necessary. In order to protect neighbouring amenity and highway safety during the construction phase, a condition dealing with matters such as site parking, deliveries and the provision of parking and turning areas would also be required as would a condition controlling the hours of work.
- 45. Although the Council has also suggested that conditions dealing with the provision and retention of parking and turning space, cycle storage and refuse facilities would be needed I consider that these matters could be more appropriately addressed at the time of any reserved matters submission. Given that the application is for 'up to 34 dwellings' I also consider that it would be premature to consider imposing the suggested condition withdrawing certain permitted development rights.
- 46. Whilst I see no other conditions as being required at this stage, in the event that the appeal is allowed the wording of some of the suggested conditions would need to be amended and in some cases the conditions would benefit from being combined or reconstituted.

s106 obligation

- 47. The Appellant has submitted a planning obligation in the form of a Unilateral Undertaking pursuant to s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (dated 10 September 2014). This obligation is intended to secure the provision of 30% of the total number of dwellings as affordable homes together with financial contributions towards such matters as highways, education, libraries and country parks and leisure. The obligation also makes provision for public open space to be constructed within the site. However, as that is dependent on a further agreement on or before submission of the reserved matters, I have not considered it further here or accorded it any weight. The Council raises no objection to the submitted obligation and the Appellant has not disputed the requested contributions.
- 48. CS Policy CP4 notes that planning permission will not be granted unless appropriate arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure, services, community and other facilities required for the development, taking account of the cumulative impact of schemes, are agreed. CS Policy CP5 requires that all residential proposals of at least 5 dwellings, or on a site of at least 0.16ha, provide for affordable housing where viable. I therefore consider that there is a clear policy basis for both the proposed contributions and the affordable housing.
- 49. The Council's Planning Advice Note 'Infrastructure Impact Mitigation, Contributions for New Development' sets out the Council's approach to the seeking of contributions, the financial contributions involved and their overarching justifications. Further site specific justifications for each contribution are set out in the Council's evidence. On the basis of the information set out in these site specific justifications I consider that the requested contributions have been shown to be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, would be directly related to it and would be fairly and reasonably related to it in scale and kind. The proposed affordable housing numbers accord with CS Policy CP5 and need for affordable housing has also been justified. In consequence I find that these obligations all meet the tests set out in the NPPF and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 and should be accorded significant weight.

Conclusions

- 50. I have found no quantitative conflict with CS Policy CP15. Despite accepting that consideration should also be given to 'qualitative' matters, use of the Council's declared monitoring tool (ELMR) does not show that any material deficiencies in terms of ensuring that provision is made for a range of sizes, types, qualities and locations. Even the more detailed analysis put forward by the Council does not convince me that use of the appeal site for residential purposes would materially undermine the policy. In consequence I also find no 'qualitative' conflict with CS Policy CP15.
- 51. NPPF Paragraph 49 is clear that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The proposed development would provide both market and affordable housing in a

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⁷ PoE Spurling: Appendix 17 (Highways), Appendix 18 (Education), Appendix 19 (Libraries), Appendix 20 (Countryside and Leisure)

⁽Countryside and Leisure)

8 PoE Spurling: Appendix 21 (Affordable Housing)

sustainable location. Although there is no dispute that the Council has a five year housing land supply, the SOCG nevertheless notes that there is an identified need for additional housing, including affordable housing, within Woodley and the wider area. Consequently I consider that the provision of housing, particularly affordable housing, should carry significant weight in favour of the development and would bring with it both social and economic benefits.

- 52. The loss of land designated for employment purposes may be regarded as both a social and an economic disbenefit. However, it is clear that the potential for such loss is envisaged by CS Policy CP15, albeit subject to certain safeguards. I am also conscious of CS Paragraph 4.71. This notes that "Through the creation of additional floorspace on existing and new sites, it will also be possible for the reuse of some existing employment sites for other uses. especially in those locations where there is a demand for other uses and/or a lack of demand for business uses without a net loss in employment floorspace. Such areas could include Molly Millars Industrial Estate and land on the south side of Headley Road, Woodley,"
- 53. Although the appeal site is clearly 'land on the south side of Headley Road. Woodley' the Council points out that the appeal site remained within the Woodley CEA throughout the MDD examination process and that the Inspector also thought it appropriate to allocate further employment land at Green Park9. In response the Appellant contends that as nobody asked for the appeal site to be removed - and it already had permission for employment uses - the Inspector was obliged to keep it within the CEA. Consequently the Appellant suggests that it cannot be inferred from the Inspector's conclusion on the soundness of the MDD that the appeal site was necessary to meet the overall employment need.
- 54. Whether or not the MDD Inspector explicitly considered the appeal site necessary to meet the overall employment need (although in that regard I note that Green Park is said to provide a different employment offer¹⁰ to the appeal site and as such this additional allocation is unlikely to indicate a deficiency in the type of employment development for which the appeal site may be suitable) there is no question that it remained within the CEA designation. Nonetheless, for the reasons explained above that does not, of itself, prevent development for other uses. Similarly, even though it has not been conclusively shown that site has 'no reasonable prospect' of coming forward for employment use that too does not necessarily prevent its development for other uses.
- 55. Consequently, even though some weight may be attached to the fact that the site remained in the recently adopted MDD and the fact that it might, at some stage, come forward for economic development, as I have found no material deficiencies in terms of employment land provision I consider that any economic and social disbenefits arising from the loss of employment land would be outweighed by the economic and social benefits of the proposed new housing.
- 56. There is no dispute that the proposed development would result in an environmental improvement to the existing cleared site (even though the

Spurling PoE 4.117

¹⁰ Eg Spurling PoE 4.78, 4.80, 4.101

Council points out that employment development would have a similar effect) and in consequence I consider that the proposed development should, in terms of NPPF Paragraph 7, be regarded as sustainable development.

- 57. NPPF Paragraph 14 is clear that the presumption in favour of sustainable development means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay. As I have found that the proposed development would be sustainable and would not conflict with the development plan, the NPPF constitutes a very weighty material consideration in favour of permission being granted.
- 58. For these reasons, and having had regard to all other matters before me including the lack of marketing information before the Inquiry, the predictions that rents will rise and the potential implications of the changes to Permitted Development Rights for B1 office space, I find nothing to materially alter my conclusion that, subject to the identified conditions above, the appeal should succeed.

Lloyd Rodgers

Inspector

APPEARANCES

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Mr Hugh Flanagan of Counsel Instructed by Matthew Tucker, Solicitor, Shared

Legal Solutions, Wokingham Borough Council

He called

Mr Malcolm Kempton

Dip (Est Man), FRICS,

Registered Valuer Mr John Spurling BSc (Hons), Dip TP, PG Dip

(Law), PG Dip (CMI),

MRTPI

Director, Kempton Carr Croft

Manager, Land Use and Transport Team,

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Council

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Mr Christopher Boyle of Queen's Instructed by D2 Planning

Counsel

He called

Mr David C Codling

Mr Desmond S Dunlop BA (Hons) MRTPI

BSc(Hons), MRICS

Director, Peter Brett Associates LLP

Managing Director D2 Planning Ltd

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED AT THE INQUIRY

- 1 Appearances for Wokingham Borough Council. Submitted by Mr Flanagan.
- 2 Statement of Common Ground.
- 3 Thames Valley Office Market Report 2003 (Appendix I to Mr Codling's PoE) Submitted by Mr Boyle.
- Signed Unilateral Undertaking. Submitted by Mr Boyle. 4
- 5 Opening Statement on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council. Submitted by Mr Flanagan
- 6 Curriculum Vitae for Malcolm Kempton. Submitted by Mr Flanagan.
- Suggested conditions. Submitted by Mr Flanagan 7
- Viability and employment bundle. Includes a) Comparison between 2012/13 and 2013/14 Employment Land Monitoring Reports b) Parameters of search comparisons c) Comparison of viability values d) Residual Calculation sensitivity test. Jointly submitted by Mr Flanagan and Mr Boyle.
- Application form O/2012/0320. Submitted by Mr Boyle.
- 10 Employment Land & Property Market Analysis: Consultant's brief. Submitted by Mr Flanagan.
- 11 Written answers to Inspector's questions on noise. Submitted by Mr Boyle.
- 12 Property Report (Commercial properties owned by appellant). March 2013. Submitted by Mr Boyle.
- LPA 7. Inspector's final report MDD DPD. Submitted by Mr Flanagan. 13
- LPA 27. Appeal Decision Farrs Lane, Stroud. Submitted by Mr Flanagan. 14
- 15 Closing submissions on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council. Submitted by Mr Flanagan

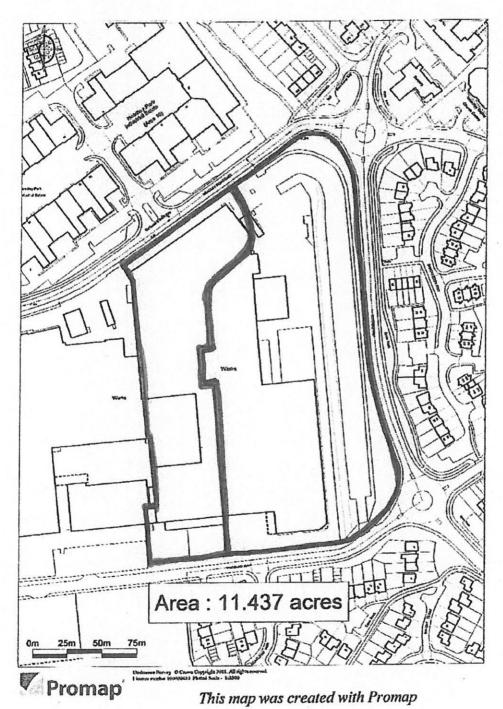
Annex A

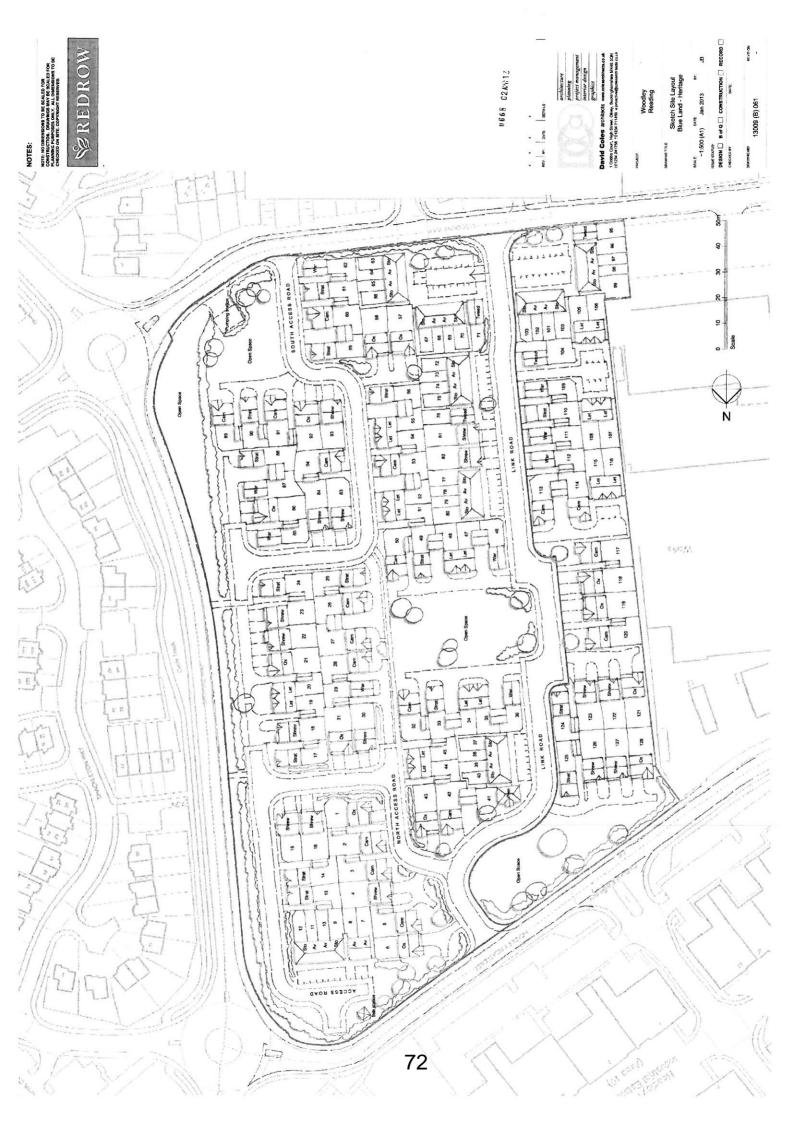
Conditions

- 1) Details of the appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale, (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before any development begins and the development shall be carried out as approved.
- 2) Application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority not later than three years from the date of this permission.
- 3) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than two years from the date of approval of the last of the reserved matters to be approved.
- 4) Insofar as it relates to access, the development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plan: Drg. No. 13009 (B) 061
- No development shall take place until a measured survey of the site and a plan prepared to scale of not less than 1:500 showing details of existing and proposed finished ground levels (in relation to a fixed datum point) and finished floor levels has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include the proposed grading of levels across the site including the levels and contours to be formed and shall show the relationship of any proposed mounding to any existing vegetation and the surrounding landform and road levels. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme.
- 6) No development shall take place until a scheme to deal with any contamination of the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall include an investigation and assessment to identify the extent of any contamination and the measures to be taken to remediate the site to render it suitable for the development hereby permitted. The site shall be remediated in accordance with the approved measures before development begins. If, during the course of development, any contamination is found which was not identified in the site investigation, development in that area shall be halted until measures and a timetable for remediation of the additional contamination have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Remediation shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved additional measures and timetable.
- 7) No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority a plan indicating the positions, design, materials and type of boundary treatments to be erected. The boundary treatments shall be completed in accordance with the approved details before the buildings are first occupied or in accordance with a timetable agreed in writing with the local planning authority. For the avoidance of doubt this condition encompasses the 3m wall to the western site boundary previously permitted under application Ref F/2013/1384.

- 8) No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority travel plans for the residential use hereby permitted. These travel plans shall include proposals to promote forms of transport to and from the site other than by the private car and shall incorporate a programme for implementation and provision for periodic reviews. The plans shall be implemented as approved.
- 9) Other than in accordance with this condition, no development shall take place until provision has been made within the site to accommodate all site operatives, visitors, construction vehicles, loading, off-loading, parking and turning, all in accordance with details first submitted to and agreed in writing by the LPA. The agreed provisions shall be retained and used at all times during the construction period.
- No development shall take place until drainage details, incorporating sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro-geological context of the development, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details to be submitted shall include a timetable for implementation of the scheme and shall demonstrate that the surface water run-off generated up to and including the 100 year critical storm with an allowance for climate change, will not exceed the run-off from the undeveloped site following corresponding rainfall. The drainage measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before any of the buildings hereby approved is first occupied.
- 11) Prior to the commencement of the development, details of the implementation, maintenance and management of the sustainable drainage scheme to be provided under the condition above shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Following implementation, the scheme shall thereafter be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details. Those details shall include a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public body or statutory undertaker, or any other arrangements to secure the operation of the sustainable drainage scheme throughout its lifetime.
- 12) No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of remediation, demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place outside 08:00 hours to 19:00 hours Mondays to Fridays and 08:30 hours to 13:00 hours on Saturdays, nor at any time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays.

Linpac Site Woodley







Administration

69-75 Boston Manor Road, Brentford TW8 9JJ Phone 020 8332 2000 Fax 020 8847 8677 info@luckings.co.uk www.luckings.co.uk

Transport Operations

The Excel Centre, Preston Street, Gorton M18 8DB
Phone 0845 603 8211
enquiries@luckings.co.uk
www.luckings.co.uk

David Wetherill Wokingham borough council P.O. Box 157 Shute end. Wokingham RG40 1WR

Dear Sirs

We wish to raise our objection to the planning application to build houses on the old bakery site, sltuated at the end of Viscount way and between Loddon bridge road.

We currently operate a distribution depot adjacent to the proposed site and have done for several years. Our business, and the site it operates from, falls under the sphere of influence of the Traffic Commissioner, included in which is the impact our operation has on others around us. Due to the nature of our business we currently operate 24 hours a day/7 days a week in both the internal and external areas of the site. We have all the appropriate permissions to do this, as well as operate the business more generally, including those required from Reading Borough Council. Further, there are many legal and regulatory requirements placed upon our business which require task to be taken on the vehicles at the time they come into the depot. This can entail a degree of noise at hours that many would consider to be unsociable. It is also right to say that recent legislative requirements, due to come into force in the next three months, relating to vehicles delivering to London, will involve even further testing of the vehicles than is currently the case, incorporating an 85+ decibel audible cyclist warning system test.

Given all of the above, we are firmly of the view that the above application is wholly inappropriate. The area simply isn't suitable for a residential development. Our concerns in relation to this are essentially two fold:

Firstly is in relation to our operation. If it were to be granted, and the site developed accordingly, it would impose significant difficulties on the ongoing operation of our business, irrespective of what warnings Reading Borough Council issued to any prospective residents. Given the current lawful existence of the business, the local jobs it provides and the length of time it has operated we consider that to be wholly unjust, disproportionate and inappropriate. If the site is developed as outlined in the application, and residents complain about noise issues, should they be upheld (which is a relatively low threshold), then the Traffic Commissioner has significant powers to curtail our operation. This is something which Reading Borough Council has no power to influence, irrespective of what warnings and conditions it issues in relation to a residential planning grant. Further, we do not accept the suggestion of a subsisting noise precedent locally, in respect of a residential development adjacent to a factory, as that comprises an entirely different operation, most especially as that business only undertakes any significant noise related activities within the demise of their buildings and at more conventional hours. It is a wholly dissimilar set of circumstances to the present one.

Secondly is our concern for any future residents on the proposed site. Quite simply the area as it stands, with its current use across various businesses is not congruous to residents living there peaceably. We are especially concerned with the apparent intention to place social

housing in the part of the proposed development situated closest to where our business operates. We do not believe that this area is suitable or appropriate for people to live.

In short, the legitimate interests of our business and those of any future residents cannot be collectively met. Either we will have our lawful business activities restricted to the point where the business may very well cease to be viable, or the residents will not have sufficient quality of life due to those activities. For those reasons we believe that this application is fundamentally flawed and should be refused outright.

I want Wokingham Council to understand and note our concerns in advance of any planning decision and also note that a copy of this letter will be lodged with our legal representatives in case of any litigation towards noise from this site raised by residents, so that it can be proved that our concerns were raised in full to you.

I look forward to any comments you wish to make.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Scanlon

Operations Director.

David Wetherill

From: Jeff Cahill <jeff@bdtltd.co.uk>

Sent: 16 March 2015 17:08
To: David Wetherill

Subject: Issues regarding the Operators licences BDT Transport - F/2014/2105

Follow Up Flag: Follow up Flag Status: Flagged

Hello David

Further to our conversation on Friday I detail below some key points regarding operators licencing for your perusal.

We currently hold an Operators Licence for 20 vehicles and 12 trailers, our 2 neighbours hold licences for 20 vehicles and 50 trailers and 19 vehicles and 12 trailers respectively so a total of 59 vehicles and 74 trailers. All of these licences have been granted on an unrestricted basis, that is to say we can operate our transport and warehouse facilities without any restriction 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. BDT currently average 4-5 truck movements a night (between 11pm and 5am) but this works out around 15 during the week and 20 out of hours at the weekend. Luckings are probably double that during their quiet season (which is now) with the majority of their movements being Saturday and Sunday before their capacity doubles again for their higher season Spring through to Christmas. Delivered, the new arrival, who were not around when this planning application was presented, operate from 5am Monday morning on a non stop 24 hour basis until around 2 pm on the following Saturday afternoon. In addition Luckings have added to their operation a container storage business, this involves taking containers to theatre breakdowns and getting them loaded for storage on site in Woodley. The trailer that loads and unloads them is extremely noisy with its cranes and when the containers are being stacked in piles it is another extremely noisy operation as the containers bang together when the one being stacked swings freely on the crane strings.

Our trucks will shortly be fitted with screaming left turn audible warnings for the safety of cyclists who continue to creep up the side of trucks turning left and hurting themselves, these are not cancellable and form part of our daily 15 minute walk around the vehicle checks, these will form a major part of the noise disturbance from our yard coupled with the reversing bleepers that will be turned on for the same period. As yet this noise has not been tested by the environmental site monitoring as we are not required to fit them for the next 2-3 months, thereafter they must be fitted for us to be able to deliver to our regular London places and we expect this ruling will be rolled out across the UK's Towns and Cities as the campaign gains momentum.

The noise from our operations will almost certainly result in complaints, firstly to the council and then, once they have learned the procedure, it would escalate to the Traffic Commissioner.

Our Operators licences can be curtailed at any time during the course of the 5 year period with any number of restrictions, and at the time of renewal they can be refused to grant the licence based on local complaints and objections.

The Traffic Commissioner will have to accept and consider the rights of the residents to a peaceful nights rest regardless of the fact that the transport operations are well established and they were aware of them when they bought their property. The other factor, of course, is that there are a number of Social houses to be allocated on this development who will have no choice but to be housed by all this noise, which in a way initially discriminates against the poorer and more vulnerable in our society. That they will have no choice will probably make them more determined to ensure we are given operating restrictions in order that they get a decent nights rest.

The biggest factor that will ensure that the Traffic Commissioners brings in operating restrictions, or the refusal to renew our licences on noise levels will be a Medical Certificate, as you will all be aware these are like the top trump card that wins all, one or more persons able to demonstrate that they have become unfit to work or are suffering ill health will bring a full stop to all of our night operations. This is not just scaremongering but reality, I have got our

transport law solicitor pulling together some actual cases where this has happened, although I doubt this will be before your Wednesday meeting.

As I have previously stated, I do not really care that there will be a development so close to us but I genuinely care for their rights as much as I do mine and my employees. I cannot see that it will be right to grant planning for a development so close to 59 vehicles and 74 trailers all capable of being used at any hour of the night and weekend, and equally it cannot be right that any existing business may be pushed into demise as a result of planning being granted too.

The resulting restrictions on my licence will be losing 40-50% of my customers as the person that takes over the night work will probably get all the day work too and the property that we have as a freehold property would be severely devalued, as I would have to sell it and move to protect my livelihood and that of my 65 employees (at an unaffordable cost of several hundreds of thousands of pounds), and any future company interested in buying it would have the same, if not more severe, restrictions applied to their operations too.

Whilst I cannot speak for Luckings and Delivered you will understand that their night operations are bigger than mine, therefore, the impact to them will be equally, if not worse, than that in my case.

The other factor mentioned at the planning meeting was that of the acoustic wall, it was mentioned that with the development of the old Linpac Site some 800 yards away that the solution to the noise there was a 3 metre acoustic wall and because that had been agreed it had set a precedent for future developments, we all disagree strongly with that assumption because the noise from the factory next door is constant and is from within the building of the factory so it's noise can be measured and shielded with an acoustic wall as the noise is behind a brick wall and never alternates or moves. Whereas all of the noise that occurs from the 3 working sites here is all outside and variable, you will never capture the noise with an acoustic wall as it is in the open and can 'bounce' off all the adjacent walls and buildings (and trucks, trailers and containers) at any height. There is no comparison to the 2 sets of noise whatsoever.

I trust this gives you a clearer indication of the consequences we will suffer, if the Council and the Traffic Commissioner can give an undertaking that no objection can be received from any new resident ever then, in principal, we would have no objection but the reality is that the Council definitely can't and the Traffic Commissioner probably can't on the grounds that future complaints could revolve around health and mental health issues that would immediately override any truck operators normal course of business, please emphasise this at the meeting on Wednesday.

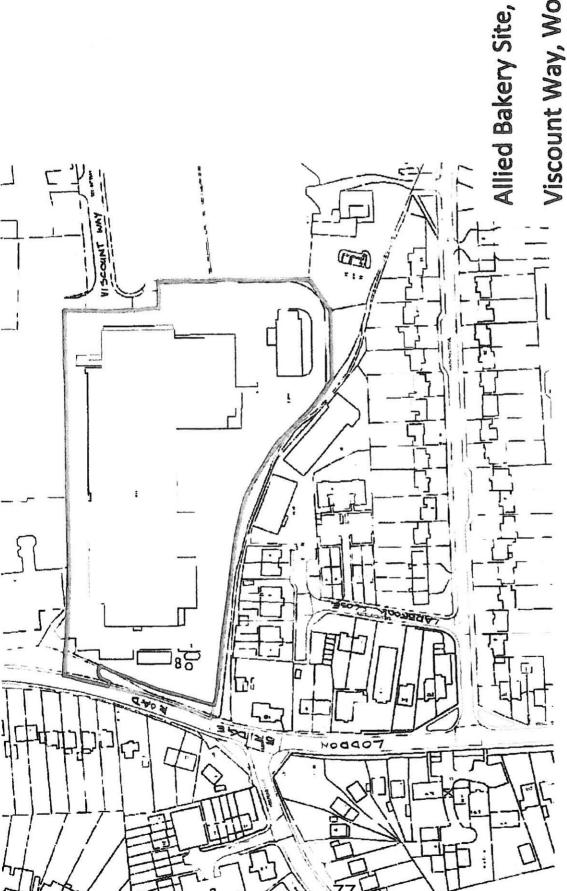
Thank you.

Regards

Jeff Cahill BDT Transport Ltd Unit 5, 6 & 7 Headley Park 8 Headley Road East Woodley RG5 4SA

Office:0118 9692888 Mobile: 07785 575825

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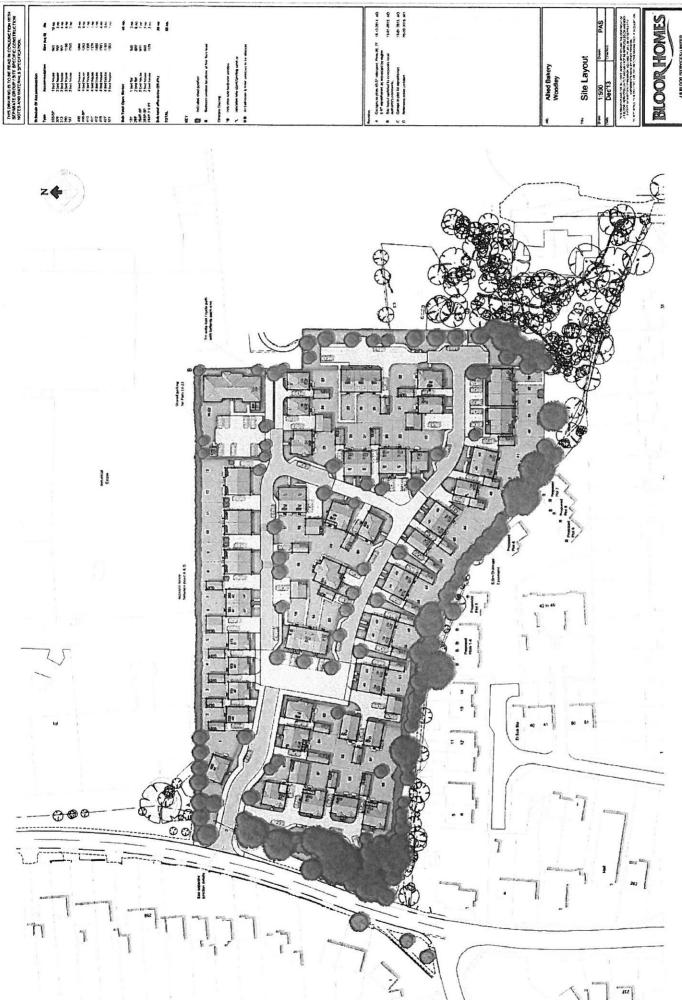


Viscount Way, Woodley.

SITE LOCATION PLAN.

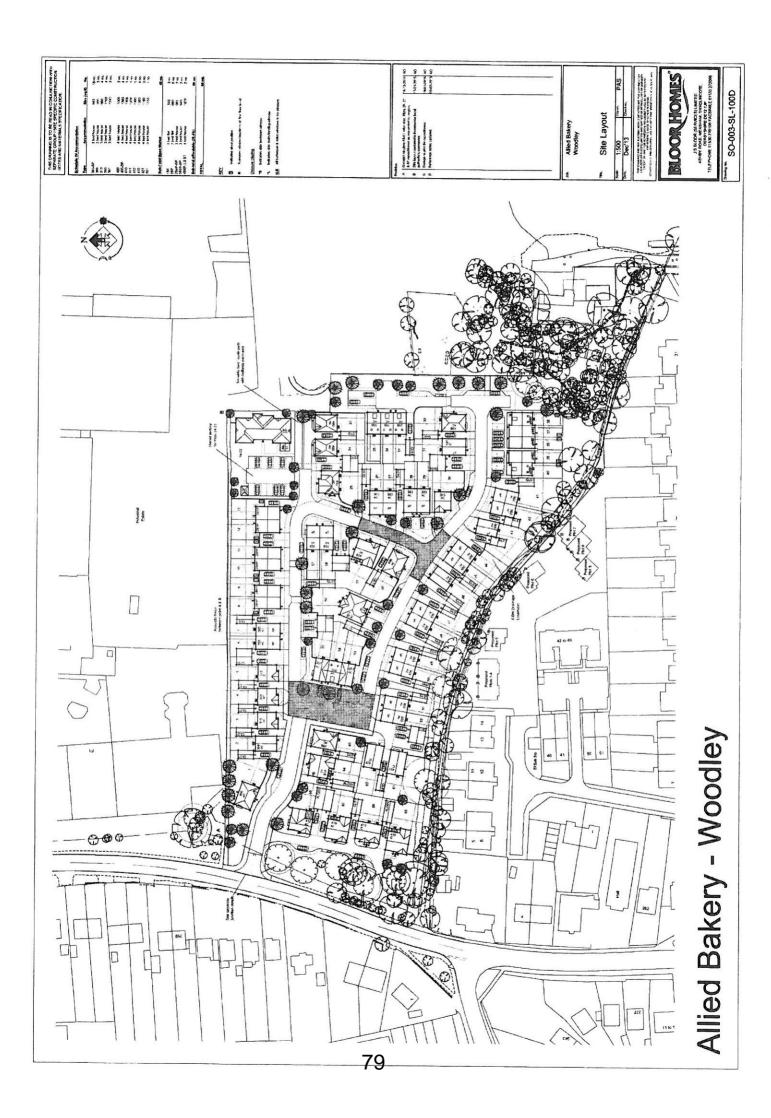
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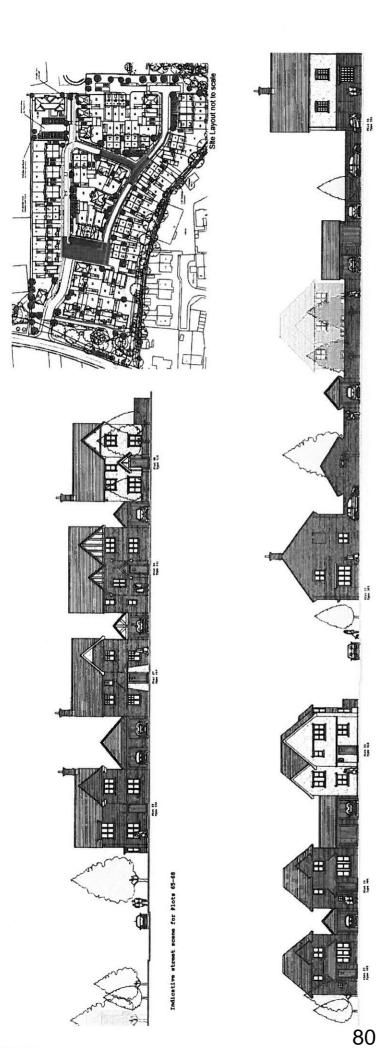


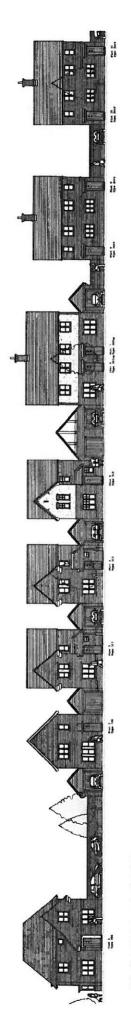
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Allied Bakery - Woodley



THIS DRAWING IS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH SEPARATE GROUP / SITE SPECIFIC CONSTRUCTION NOTES AND MATERIALS SPECIFICATION TOGETHER WITH THE GENERIC HOUSE TYPE DESIGN RISK ASSESSMENT.





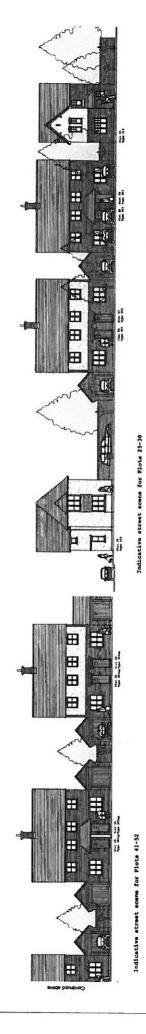
scene for Plots 23-25, 55, 57

Allied Bakery, Woodley



Type. Name. THIS DRAWING IS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH SEPARATE GROUP / SITE SPECIFIC CONSTRUCTION NOTES AND MATERIALS SPECIFICATION TOGETHER WITH THE GENERIC HOUSE TYPE DESIGN RISK ASSESSMENT. Indicative street scene for Plots 30-32, 53, 56, 60





Allied Bakery, Woodley

PROOF HOMES

The carrow a carrow.

Type.

Type.

Drawing Title:

STREETSCENES

Drawn / AD

Scale. 1/10096AD Checked:

Dwg No. 50-003-13-5C-131 Rev.

Woodley Town Council

Clare Lawrence - Team Leader Development Management

Wokingham Borough Council

Shute End Wokingham Berkshire

Deborah Mander - Town Clerk

The Oakwood Centre

Headley Road

Woodley Berkshire

RG5 4JZ

Telephone 0118 9690356

Fax

Case Officer: David Wetherill

Date 24/10/2014

Status: 0 New Application

Application No F /2014/2105

Date Received: 10/10/2014

Applicant: Bloor Homes Ltd & ABF Grain Pd

River View House First Avenue

Newbury Business Park Newbury, Berkshire

RG14 2PS

Location: Former Allied Bakeries Site

Viscount Way Woodley RG5 4BJ

Parish:

N.G.R :

Road Class:

Agent/Architect:

Proposal: Proposed erection of 70 dwellings with associated roads, parking, amenity space, landscaping and creation

of new access onto Loddon Bridge Road.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - LOCAL COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

Woodley Town Council have considered the Application No F /2014/2105 and observations thereon are as follows:

The Committee considered the proposals and recommended the application be refused on the following grounds:

Type: Full

- There are safety concerns regarding the siting of the access on Loddon Bridge Road. Residents of Loddon Bridge Road in the vicinity of the proposed entrance to the site already find it very difficult and dangerous to exit their driveways due to the amount of traffic and poor visibility caused by a bend in the road. This will also apply to people exiting the proposed development. The Committee did not think it appropriate for there to be any access onto Loddon Bridge Road and felt strongly that the access to the development should be from Viscount Way.
- Many school children use this area of Loddon Bridge Road, on bicycles and on foot, and their safety will be put at risk by traffic using the proposed site entrance.
- As the proposed entrance is next to a blind bend in Loddon Bridge Road, traffic exiting the site will find it difficult to turn right, particularly during rush hours and most will therefore turn left. Much of this traffic will then turn into Vauxhall Drive to avoid the bottleneck at the southern end of Loddon Bridge Road, thereby exacerbating the traffic problems in Vauxhall Drive.
- The Wokingham Borough Managing Development delivery Document (Local Plan), adopted 21 February 2014, identified this site as appropriate for the delivery of around 57 dwellings. This proposal is for 70 dwellings.
- There is insufficient parking provided on the site.
- There appears to be footpath access to the rear of some properties, which does not appear to be in compliance with Safer Homes Initiatives.
- The acoustic fence to the north of the site does not appear to be appropriate for the nature of the business carried out in the industrial estate. The proposed acoustic fence is 2m high, whereas the HGV vehicles using the industrial estate are 4m high.
- The proposed 2m fence to the north of the site will not provide sufficient protection to the industrial units, where high value goods are sometimes stored.
- The noise impact assessment gives the measured noise levels from the 24 hours a day truck movements on the industrial estate, and general traffic noise, and states that in order for acceptable internal levels of noise to be achieved the windows of the dwellings adjacent to the industrial estate must remain closed day and night. This is not acceptable.

If permission is granted for this development the Committee request that the following concerns be addressed:

Woodley Town Council

Clare Lawrence - Team Leader Development Management

Wokingham Borough Council Shute End Wokingham Berkshire Deborah Mander - Town Clerk

The Oakwood Centre Headley Road Woodley Berkshire RG5 4JZ

Telephone 0118 9690356

Fax

Case Officer: David Wetherill

Date 24/10/2014

- High level windows in the industrial units to the north of the site will overlook the adjacent houses and gardens.
- Cctv cameras covering the industrial estate will overlook the adjacent houses and gardens.
- The HGV vehicles using the industrial estate have cabs at a height of 3m, which will overlook the adjacent houses and gardens.
- The existing business operating to the north of the site has to renew its 24 hour HGV operator?s licence every 5 years and should be protected against objections by the new residents in order to comply with the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (Local Plan), which for this site specifically states that "the proposals must deliver appropriate measures to safeguard the amenities of the occupants of the dwellings whilst ensuring continued B class activities can continue within adjoining Headley Road Core Employment Area.?"
- The boundary treatment to the south of the site must provide protection to the historic bridle way in this area.

