

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 9 MARCH 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.43 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Chris Bowring (Chairman), Angus Ross (Vice-Chairman), Sam Akhtar, Stephen Conway, Gary Cowan, Pauline Jorgensen, Rebecca Margetts, Andrew Mickleburgh, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey and Bill Soane

Officers Present

Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery
Chris Easton, Head of Transport, Drainage, and Compliance
Marcia Head, Head of Development Management
Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

Case Officers Present

Joanna Carter
Andrew Chugg
Emy Circuit
Simon Taylor

79. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

Stephen Conway shared his thanks to former Councillor Carl Doran, for his hard work on the Committee and his very useful contributions to discussions, including pushing for good quality affordable housing to be delivered across the Borough. These thoughts were echoed by the Committee, and would be circulated to Carl.

80. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 February 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following minor amendment.

Minute Item 73: "Rebecca added that she had not been involved with the applications or the committee set up for these applications at the parish Council and she did not sit on the Planning Committee for the Parish Council."

81. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Andrew Mickleburgh made comments with regards to application number 214016. Andrew stated that he was a Member of Earley Town Council which had made a recommendation on this application, however he had not taken part in those deliberations. Andrew added that he came into this meeting with an open mind, would listen to all representations and take part in the discussions and vote.

Stephen Conway declared a personal interest with regards to application number 214108. Stephen stated that his son had worked at the site 15 years ago, and he himself had also been a customer. Stephen added that he came into this meeting with an open mind, would listen to all representations and take part in the discussions and vote.

Bill Soane declared a personal interest with regards to application number 214108. Bill stated that he had done some work for the site, though not for 5 years. Bill added that he

came into this meeting with an open mind, would listen to all representations and take part in the discussions and vote.

82. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

83. APPLICATION NO.192325 - LAND SOUTH EAST OF FINCHAMPSTEAD ROAD, SOUTH WOKINGHAM SDL

Proposal: Hybrid Planning application (part outline/part full) comprising outline application with all matters reserved for up to 171 no. dwellings, public open space and associated infrastructure and full application for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

Applicant: Charles Church Development Ltd.

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 13 to 142 and within pages 3 to 110 of the supplementary agenda.

The Committee were advised that updates included within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Comment that an additional representation had been received from a correspondent who had also commented on the original and first re-consultation, and the issues raised had been covered within the officer report;
- Correction to paragraph 9;
- Additional cross reference to condition 3;
- Explanation with regards to condition 20;
- Additional condition 60 and additional associated informative 35.

Fitzroy Morrissey, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Fitzroy stated that the area immediately to the south of the development including his own property in Chapel Green was subject to regular flooding, with the driveway and garage being continually flooded between January and March of last year resulting in the fire brigade being called, whilst the tributary of the Emm Brook regularly flooded and the ditch to the side of Luckley Road was constantly waterlogged. Fitzroy added that the road and underneath the railway bridge regularly flooded during the winter months as did a number of properties on Luckley Road and Luckley Wood, which had become significantly worse in recent years as a result of rising water tables and climate change. Fitzroy was particularly concerned that the plans for the development did not take the risk of increased flooding to this area into account, with the latest version of the flood risk assessment showing that there would be no increased flood risk to neighbouring properties as a result of this development, however this conclusion was based on an assessment of the likely flooding of the Emm Brook itself and did not take into account the risks associated with the flooding of the tributary. Fitzroy commented that according to the flood risk assessment, no flood risk measurement nodes had been allocated to this stream. Fitzroy stated that the current situation was already dangerous and unsustainable and would be made worse as a result of climate change, and there was concern that the area will be constantly under the threat of inundation if subject to further development unless much more severe flood mitigation measures were put in place. Fitzroy added that there were concerns that users of the SANG and the allotments may try to gain access via the emergency access route via Luckley Road, which was not suitable for vehicular parking. Fitzroy stated that there was already considerable damage to the road and verge of Luckley Road as a result of parking, which would only get worse should the application be approved. Fitzroy asked that additional

measures be put in place to prevent users of the SANG and allotments from using Luckley Road to park. Fitzroy commented that the owner of 1 Chapel Green Cottage wished it to be noted that the proposed SANG area at the bottom of his garden continuously flooded, turning the area into a lake and making it unusable for parts of the year, which would make it obsolete as a SANG.

Laura Jackson, applicant, spoke in support of the application. Laura stated that the applicant had worked closely with officers to make the proposal acceptable in planning and design terms. Laura added that the site was located within the SDL and was required to deliver much needed housing within the Borough, whilst importantly ensuring that all of the land required to deliver the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR) would come forward, whilst providing funding through S106 and CIL for the SWDR and wider highway improvements. Laura stated that the proposal would facilitate the delivery of a much needed sustainable travel corridor, and noted that the proposal was a hybrid application which would provide residential units and a SANG, with a detailed layout to be provided at the detail stage, should this application be approved. Laura added that the proposal included a compliant housing mix, thirty-five percent affordable housing, adequate car parking, compliant garden sizes, pedestrian cycle movement corridors and open space. Laura stated that the important existing landscape features were retained, including distinctive hedgerows and trees in addition to the Emm Brook. Laura added that important habitats would be retained as part of the open space elements, whilst mitigation measures for protected species would be provided for. Laura commented that a ten percent biodiversity net gain would be achieved as part of this application, and added that it had been demonstrated that the site could be appropriately developed without increasing flood risk on the site or elsewhere, whilst suitable on-site surface water and foul drainage solutions can and would be provided within future reserved matters applications. Laura stated that the application overall would not have an adverse impact which would demonstrably outweigh the positives of the proposal. Laura was of the opinion that all three of the main objectives listed within the NPPF had been demonstrated within the officers report, and urged the Committee to approve the application.

Peter Dennis, Wokingham Town Council, commented on the application. Peter stated that Wokingham Town Council had a number of objections to the application, firstly being that the greenway proposed through the development would not separate cyclists from pedestrians which would therefore discourage one or both forms of sustainable transport. Peter stated that there was a lack of kickabout space for older children in addition to a lack of outdoor exercise equipment which residents had asked for at other sites. Peter felt that it would be more beneficial to retain the group of trees at the centre of the development, thereby protecting the view of the site from the outside. Peter stated that the existing public right of way situated within countryside would now be a walk through a residential estate which would be a loss of public amenity. Peter suggested that wooden posts be placed at regular intervals at the access point near the railway bridge to protect it from cars choosing to park there. Peter added that the proposed SANG would be situated within a flood plain which could not be built upon, but would now instead be designated for dog walking rather than designating an area which would not flood as a SANG. Peter noted that the suggested bicycle storage was located with the bin store and not next to the flats which would discourage cycle use. Peter queried why the allotments were proposed to be located so far away from the flats that might wish to use them. Peter stated that the application site flooded regularly, and commented that the Environment Agency had requested additional documentation to ensure that development would not make this worse, and Peter added that climate change would make flooding in the area worse and this consideration fell under CP1, CP4, and CP9. Peter stated that this site would lead to

additional traffic which would not all use the new SWDR but instead the already overused Finchampstead Road. Peter noted that concerns raised by the Environment Agency in relation to ecological enhancements had seemingly not been addressed. Should the Committee be minded to approve the application, Peter asked that consideration be given to the retention of the trees in the middle of the site, protection of the roadside verges on Luckley Road, ecological protection enhancements to the Emm Brook, and consideration of the impact of flooding downstream outside of this site.

Chris Bowring raised a number of points mentioned by public speakers. Chris sought additional details regarding flooding, sought additional details regarding potential parking on Luckley Road, sought additional details regarding removal and replacement of trees, sought details regarding siting of the bin and cycle store, queried the siting of the allotments, sought details regarding the multi-use game site, sought clarity regarding the Environment Agency asking for additional details, and sought clarity regarding the greenway provision. Emy Circuit, case officer, stated that it was difficult to comment on flooding at Chapel Green specifically, however the wider site and SDL had been assessed as one drainage system. The application required extensive flood modelling which had been carried out via the application for the SWDR. The flood risk assessment had been based on the modelling work, and the downstream flooding instances were likely to be better as a result of the wider SDL development. In relation to SuDs, the Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Drainage officer had raised no objections. Emy stated that parking was an existing issue on Luckley Road, and as part of the detailed design the emergency access could be looked at. In relation to trees, Emy stated that the tree officer had assessed the application and had raised no objections, relatively few trees would be removed and those were of low quality which would be replaced throughout the SANG and elsewhere throughout the site which was more than compliant with policy. Emy commented that the cycle and bin storage would be dealt with via reserved matters and needed to be appropriately sited. Emy stated that the allotments were 400m or less from all properties within the proposed development. Emy added that a multi-use games area was proposed within phase two of the development, and had a slightly larger catchment area as it was aimed at a slightly older age group. With regards to the comments by the Environment Agency, Emy stated that they had asked for more detail regarding the flood risk assessment and biodiversity net gain which had now been provided. Council officers were now content and comments from the Environment Agency were awaited. The proposed specification of the greenway strategy through the site was consistent with the Council's greenway strategy.

Angus Ross stated that the principle of development had been established and had to be accepted, and commented that it was regrettable that this application could not have come with the other SDL applications. Angus added that he was pleased to see the application was for up to rather than around 171 dwellings. Angus commented that the SANG would be linked with the phase two SANG, which was very desirable. Angus stated that it now had to be accepted that cyclists and pedestrians would have to share space, and this was working at the first greenway in Finchampstead. Angus stated that the east side of the road heading towards Ludgrove School was a private road, and there were therefore limits as to what could be done there. Angus raised some concern that the Environment Agency had still not withdrawn their holding objection, and sought officer reassurances. Angus asked whether it could be appropriate to have an informative stating that at the reserved matters stage access would be achieved from parcel C2 which would allow the Knoll Farm railway crossing to be closed. Emy Circuit stated that the Environment Agency currently had resourcing issues which was the reason why the holding objection remained, and officers were content that issues had been addressed. If the objection stood, officers could

ask the applicant to amend the scheme further or refer the matter back to the Planning Committee in the case of a fundamental change. With regards to the railway crossing, Emy stated that the applicant was aware, and the most that could be expected was for the applicant to facilitate a future access point at Knoll Farm which would allow the crossing to be closed, which would be secured via the S106 legal agreement.

Angus Ross queried whether the development was dependent on the SWDR reaching that point prior to occupation, sought clarity regarding the public art condition, and suggested that footpaths through the SANG be designated and signposted. Emy Circuit stated that condition 3 required the sequence of development to be set out, whilst there was also a condition which required modelling to be carried out to demonstrate the number of occupations prior to completion of the SWDR that could be accommodated without an unacceptable impact on the highway network. In relation to public art, Emy commented that there was a requirement within the policy and guidance for provision of public art, which would be secured through condition and subsequent liaison with the appropriate arts bodies could then be carried out. Emy stated that the landscaping condition required details of signage of footways and paths.

Stephen Conway commented that his initial concern was in relation to the setting of the listed building, however this was mostly to be surrounded by green space. Stephen was concerned that the methodology for flood risk mitigation was based on historic data with only some allowance for the effects of climate change. Emy Circuit stated that the modelling work to support the SWDR application had included the expected future position and included an appropriate allowance for the effects of climate change. Emy added that a number of drainage basins would be located across the site which would form part of an integrated drainage system throughout the SDL, and officers were content with the proposals.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried whether all of the affordable housing would be located on site, queried whether the SuDs would be wet all of the time, queried whether the equivalent tree cover would be provided via replacement trees, queried how street trees would be maintained, queried what would happen should flooding get worse in the wider area as a result of the development, and commented her hope that residents would be told that the roads were not adopted roads. Emy Circuit stated all thirty-five percent affordable housing would be located on site. Whether SuDs features are permanently or occasionally wet would be dependent on their design and a mixture were proposed, which the ecology officer had indicated was beneficial for the ecology of the area. Emy stated that the number of trees to be replanted would significantly out-number the number of trees scheduled to be removed. Street trees would be cared for by the developers until the land was transferred to WBC alongside a commuted sum, and the landscaping condition had been reinforced to require ongoing monitoring of plants and trees. Chris Easton, Head of Transport, Drainage and Compliance, stated that a climate change allowance had been applied to the site, and added that this portion off the site would not make the flooding situation in the wider area any worse than was currently experienced.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether a large part of the SANG could be subject to flooding, sought details regarding journey times on Finchampstead Road as a result of the development and any associated mitigation measures to approve safety for cyclists prior to occupation, sought assurances regarding the road bridge widening, sought details in relation to facilities present within Montague Park, queried whether the intention was for surfaces and access to the bridge over the Emm Brook to be fully accessible, and queried whether the tallest building should instead be located towards the centre of the

development. Emy Circuit stated that the SANG would follow the route of the Emm Brook which would flood on occasion however a waterside environment was very attractive for residents, and the areas most liable to flooding had alternative routes that could be used in the event of flooding. Montague Park included a small public square associated with the neighbourhood centre, and a similar space was proposed within phase 2A, whilst the application site was also located close to the town centre. The footbridge had been designed to be accessible, and the conditions and S106 for the application required upgrading of those paths within the greenway network. Emy added that the SWDR would redistribute traffic whilst providing a new route, and in some areas there would be a reduction of traffic, and a number of mitigation measures were also proposed. Chris Easton added that the transport assessment and the modelling had been consistent across all of the SDL applications, secured via an IDP and linked to a S106 agreement. Emy stated that the maximum height of the largest properties had been reduced to 12.5m, which was consistent with building heights within other phases of the development and these were proposed to be located along the SWDR, in line with the guidance in the South Wokingham SDP.

Pauline Jorgensen commented that the Luckley Road was being damaged via vehicles parking there as the route was heavily used by walkers. Pauline queried whether anything could be done to stop people parking on the road, and queried whether the allotments would be shielded to protect the setting of the listed building. Emy Circuit stated that the emergency access situated on Chapel Green could be looked at as this was at an early stage. With regards to the allotments, Emy stated that there was quite a substantial hedge between the listed building and the allotments in addition to a landscaping condition. Emy added that the allotments were due to be transferred to the Council, and discussion could be had as to where the sheds were situated. Emy commented that an additional informative could be added which suggested what could be built on the site and outlined a suggested use of the site. This proposal was agreed by Members, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

Rebecca Margetts commented that parts of the proposed SANG flooded every year, leaving footpaths unusable. Emy Circuit stated that the proposal should improve parts of the SANG in relation to flooding.

Gary Cowan commented that in 2017 a public petition was submitted to the Council in relation to traffic levels on Finchampstead Road, which was subsequently debated at a full Council meeting. Gary added that this showed that a large number of residents were concerned about this issue a number of years ago. Gary commented that there were very few affordable one and two bedroom units proposed, and there was little detail as to what trees were scheduled to be cut down and where replacements would be planted. Gary stated that he would like to see an area TPO placed on the application site, and added that there was one tree on site which had not been referenced within the report. Gary noted that details relating to electric vehicle charging points was being left to officers, and felt that the detail was generally lacking within the applicant's tree report. Gary commented that lack of new school infrastructure was disappointing. Gary felt that the application should be deferred to allow outstanding points to be addressed. Emy Circuit stated that an area TPO was usually applied to sites under direct threat and where a tree survey had not been carried out, whereas this site had been surveyed. Emy added that the existing paddocks were not a particularly ecologically rich environment, and additional landscaping across the SANG would enhance the site overall. Biodiversity net gain was conditioned and would be assessed in line with the Natural England assessment for measuring net gain. Emy stated that education was a planning issue, and within the SDL as a whole there

would be two new primary schools being delivered whilst CIL payments would contribute to secondary education.

Stephen Conway stated that he would be minded to wait to read the Environment Agency's updated comments.

Connor Corrigan, Service Manager – Planning and Delivery, stated that there was a plethora of documentation online and officers had provided the most pertinent and relevant information within the lengthy Committee report. Connor added that there was scope to reduce the housing numbers down from 171 should flooding issues arise, and noted that extensive flood modelling had been carried out to support the SWDR application. Connor stated that should a substantial amendment to the scheme be required, this would be taken back to the Planning Committee.

Pauline Jorgensen commented that threat to trees was usually only presented once they were in the process of being cut down. Emy Circuit noted that paragraph 65 of the report stated the numbers of trees scheduled to be removed.

Gary Cowan proposed that this item be deferred, to await updated comments from the Environment Agency and to explore the option of applying an area TPO. This was seconded by Stephen Conway, and upon being put to the vote the motion was lost.

Pauline Jorgensen proposed an informative, asking that the applicant have regard to the need to manage informal parking on the lane between Luckley Road and Chapel Green including consideration of timber bollards or other means of preventing parking on verges. This proposal was seconded, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

Members raised a number of points with regards to placing TPOs on trees on the site. Connor Corrigan stated that there were conditions in place to protect the trees which would give time for tree officers to assess which trees required a TPO. Stephen Conway proposed an additional informative, asking the Council's landscape team to consider placing Tree Preservation Orders on trees that have been identified as high quality and worthy of retention within the development. This proposal was seconded by Angus Ross, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

RESOLVED That application number 192325 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 15 to 47, with condition 3 updated and an additional condition 60 and additional associated informative 35 as set out within the Supplementary Planning Agenda, additional three informatives relating to allotment use, parking on Luckley Road, and TPOs as resolved by the Committee, and subject to legal agreement.

84. APPLICATION NO.214183 - LAND AT 1040 AND 1100 SERIES ESKDALE ROAD, WINNERSH TRIANGLE BUSINESS PARK, RG41 5TS

Proposal: Full application for the proposed temporary erection of 2no. sound stage buildings for commercial filming and 8no. workshops, with associated access, parking, landscaping and infrastructure for a period of five years (retrospective).

Applicant: Stage Fifty

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 143 to 174.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Additional representation from Winnersh Parish Council, which should be read in conjunction with comments previously submitted;
- Insertion of plans related to condition 1;
- Update to the detailed floor space figures;
- Updated paragraph 16;
- Additional condition 17.

Oliver Bell, agent, spoke in support of the application. Oliver stated that the applicant specialised in the design, build and operation of professional design stages and boutique film and television studios across the UK and Europe, with clients including Netflix and Sony. Oliver added that the film sector was one of the fastest growing sectors in the UK, however a shortage of purpose built studios and production support space was a major issue in the UK, and this temporary application was seeking to accommodate the needs of a major international production company. Oliver commented that this application formed part of the first stage of the applicant's investment plans, with a permanent application for a set of wider proposals due to be lodged later this year. Oliver stated that the intention was to deliver a creative quarter via the delivery of Winnersh film studios, and the applicant had committed to delivery of 25,000 square feet of office space with a final studio plan comprising of six sound stages and 50,000 square feet of work shop across the business park. The application before the Committee would create 250 direct and 250 indirect jobs, whilst the overall plans had the potential to create further 250 direct jobs, whilst also contributing to 250 indirect jobs relating to areas such as food provision and make-up. Oliver noted that the retrospective application was regrettable, however due to the slow nature of the English planning system the economic opportunity associated with the development would have been lost to Wokingham and likely the UK as a whole should works not have taken place. Oliver stated that Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) officers had worked positively on the application, and positive engagement had taken place with the parish Council, whilst no resident objections had been received.

Chris Bowring noted that Ward Members Prue Bray and Paul Fishwick had submitted comments in support of the application.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey commented that Wokingham was quickly becoming the Hollywood of the United Kingdom, and added her desire to see youth apprenticeships offered at the site.

Pauline Jorgensen queried where vehicles which used the previous overspill car park were parking now. Joanna Carter, case officer, stated that the applicant had advised that car park use was now lower as a result of hybrid working. Joanna added that should the application for permanent permission come forward, the applicant will be required to show that the application will not have a detrimental impact on local car parking or the highway network.

Stephen Conway concurred with the desire to see local apprenticeships offered, and stated his regret to see a retrospective application. Despite this, Stephen felt that this was an application that the Committee could safely support.

Andrew Mickleburgh stated that the application had considerable merits, and stated his regret to see it come forward as a retrospective application. Andrew queried whether some biodiversity net gain could be sought off-site. Joanna Carter stated that there would be a small loss of biodiversity on site, however an off-site biodiversity net gain to reflect this would be secured via S106 agreement.

Bill Soane queried whether there was any proposal for live audiences on site. Joanna Carter confirmed that the site would not be available for public use.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey stated that this was previously an unused site and it was great to see it get used, though it was regrettable that the application was retrospective.

Sam Akhtar commented that he was pleased to see the film industry becoming increasingly interested in the Borough, and queried whether any considerations had been given to fire safety and noise pollution. Joanna Carter stated that the building would be sound proofed, and the design of the stage was such that noise would not permeate the building. Joanna added that fire resistance of construction materials was a matter dealt with under Building Regulations, and there was liaison between the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and applicant in relation to the roof design, and a change to the roof material could be submitted during the condition discharge application if required.

RESOLVED That application number 214183 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 144 to 152, additional condition 17 as set out within the Supplementary Planning Agenda, and subject to legal agreement, noting that the resolution included delegation of the authority to refuse in the event of S106 agreement not being completed within 3 months unless longer period agreed in writing.

85. APPLICATION NO.214108 - HARE HATCH SHEEPLANDS, LONDON ROAD, TWYFORD, RG10 9HW

Proposal: Full application for the proposed redevelopment of existing mixed-use site to a new garden centre with associated play area, allotments, reconfigured parking and servicing, landscaping and other associated infrastructure, replacement cafe, demolition of existing glasshouses, and retention of existing farm shop, site office/toilet block

Applicant: Hare Hatch Sheeplands

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 175 to 240.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Inclusion of the 2019 appeal decision for information;
- An additional 33 submissions in support of the proposal, and an additional 6 submissions in support from those who had previously commented on the application, and associated officer responses;
- Inclusion of a rebuttal to the recommendation from the agent, and associated officer responses.

Alyson Jones, agent, spoke in support of the application. Alyson stated that in addition to being the agent for the application, she was a local resident and had been a customer at Hare Hatch for many years. Alyson stated that the applicant fundamentally disagreed with

the approach taken within the report in relation to the green belt, as the site was in a mixed use its redevelopment was appropriate in accordance with the green belt tests. In addition, Alyson felt that the officer assessment of very special circumstances was flawed, as an Inspector had given weight to considerations such as customer expectation, popularity and value to the community, rural job creation and training. Alyson felt that no weight had been given to the huge community benefits which would be delivered as part of the proposals including a new children's play area, community allotments and recreational facilities, nor significant levels of biodiversity net gain and electric vehicle charging points, or the fifty-eight percent reduction in floor space due to the removal of the existing greenhouse structures. Alyson felt that the previous abuse of process should also be taken into account as very special circumstances. Alyson added that the local community had clearly demonstrated that they wanted these proposals, which would provide a clear basis for the applicant, community and Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) to move forwards in a positive way. Alyson made it clear that should the application not be approved then an appeal would be lodged, and it was likely that further applications would have to be made to the Planning Committee with ad-hoc applications to keep the business operational. Alyson reminded the Committee that should these applications fail, the banks would sell the land to a property developer, and Hare Hatch would lose its community heart.

Mark A'Bear, resident, spoke in support of the application. Mark was representing a large number of residents who were strongly in support of the proposals. Mark added that this application represented opportunities in three respects. Firstly, the application stood on its own merits as a unique proposition that did not exist anywhere else within the Borough, promoting environmental credentials, carbon capture, renewable energy use and sustainability. Secondly, this was an opportunity to extend and retain the benefits of Sheeplands for the local community, including local employment, work experience for young people, community organisations, local suppliers, local charities, education establishments, and over 9000 customers that are in weekly contact with Sheeplands. Finally, Mark felt that this was an opportunity to look forwards and draw a line under the past, and work collaboratively to create something that the community and WBC could be proud of.

Stephen Conway thanked the case officer for his presentation and report. Stephen noted the long and complex planning history relating to the site, and commented that the officer assessment and recommendation was an on-balance conclusion to refuse the application. Stephen stated that his own on-balance view was that the application should be approved for a number of reasons. Stephen stated that there was a dispute as to whether this was previously developed land, however there was recognition that part of the site was previously developed land whilst almost seventy percent of the site under this application would be for horticultural use, which was entirely compatible with its green belt status. Stephen added that the proposed woodland area was also completely compatible with green belt use. Stephen stated that in his view very special circumstances did apply, those being the local community benefit - especially in terms of employment and local community support in excess of 400 submissions, which was considered as a material consideration by a previous appeal Inspector. Stephen stated that the second reason for refusal, harm to the character of the area, was partly offset via the new woodland planting which would partially screen the new build from the A4. In addition, there would be a very clear reduction in the total footprint and volume of the built form on the site. Stephen felt that the lack of employment skills plan could be resolved via legal agreement should the application be approved. Stephen proposed that planning permission be granted.

Angus Ross felt that this was an on-balance decision, and in the view of the very detailed and complex rebuttal of the reasons for refusal as set out by Boyer Planning, Angus proposed that the application be deferred to give adequate consideration to the letter from Boyer Planning and to allow a site visit to be undertaken. Chris Bowring noted that he would be open to seconding this proposal.

Chris Bowring sought clarity as to what would happen to the enforcement notice should planning permission be granted. Simon Taylor, case officer, confirmed that should the application be approved then WBC could withdraw the enforcement notice.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried whether, if approved, the retail space on site could be converted to another form of retail space via permitted development. Simon Taylor stated that agreement could be reached with the applicant to restrict the ongoing use to that of a garden centre.

Sam Akhtar felt that on balance the application should be approved, as there would be an overall reduction in floor space, the new development would be partially screened by the proposed woodland, and there was huge community support for the proposals.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried which special circumstances did not apply from the officer perspective, queried why the presence of other garden centres on the A4 was not a material planning consideration, and queried which viewpoints were used in the landscape and visual impact assessment when referencing the impact of the built form view at the site. Simon Taylor stated that paragraphs 48 to 50 outlined the very special circumstances that were felt not to apply, such as biodiversity net gain which was an expected outcome of any development, whilst the abuse of process was not felt to be a material planning consideration as it went back several years. Simon added that other less desirable uses would still be required to be assessed under the green belt policy and the NPPF. In relation to the neighbouring garden centres, Simon stated that these garden centres were lawful developments whereas this application sought change of use from a nursery to a garden centre. Simon noted that a range of viewpoints were used when assessing the view of the site.

Pauline Jorgensen queried whether the retail use would be subsidiary of the nursery, and queried whether the agreement of planning permission would designate the rest of the site as previously developed land which could lend to future applications. Simon Taylor stated that this application was effectively removing the existing development on site and starting again, which was a provision within the NPPF. Simon stated that there would not be an automatic entitlement to develop across the whole site should planning permission be granted, and the openness of the green belt would be protected via the proposal not having a greater impact than that of the existing development.

Gary Cowan noted that there was an enormous amount of support for this application, and added that the site had been developed and must be looked at within this context. Gary stated that the garden centre across the road had also started as a smaller nursery and had been expanded, and commented that there were no statutory objections to the application.

Bill Soane noted the overwhelming community support for this application, and commented that the tractor dealership across the road had once been a nursery. Bill added that the application site was a community asset that residents had long asked for, and noted the various charity and community work carried out at the site.

At this stage of the meeting, Simon Taylor shared a document of suggested draft conditions should the Committee approve the application. Angus Ross suggested that the final conditions be agreed in consultation with the Chairman and neighbouring Ward member Stephen Conway. This suggestion was agreed by the Committee.

Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor, sought that Angus Ross' proposal to defer be withdrawn prior to Members voting to go against the officer recommendation of refusal. Angus Ross confirmed that he was happy to withdraw his proposal.

Mary Severin sought clarity for the reasons why Members were proposing to go against the officer recommendation, for example that there were very special circumstances to approve, that subject to conditions there would be very little harm to the character of the area, and that an employment skills plan could be achieved via legal agreement. Stephen Conway confirmed that he was happy with the wording suggested by Mary Severin.

Stephen Conway proposed that the application be approved, subject to conditions and informatives being agreed in consultation with the Chairman and himself as the neighbouring Ward Member, and subject to legal agreement to secure an Employment Skills Plan. This proposal was seconded by Gary Cowan, and upon being put to the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED: That application number 214108 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives to be agreed in consultation with the Chairman and neighbouring Ward Member Stephen Conway, and subject to legal agreement to secure an Employment Skills Plan.

86. APPLICATION NO.214046 - AUTO TRADER HOUSE AND HARTMAN HOUSE, DANEHILL, LOWER EARLEY, RG6 4UT

Proposal: Full application for the proposed demolition of the existing office buildings (Class E(g)(i)) and the erection of 1 no. building to form a single employment unit (Flexible Class E(g)(iii), B2 and B8 use(s)) with ancillary offices, including vehicular and pedestrian access, parking, landscaping, infrastructure and associated works

Applicant: The Owner and/or Occupier

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 241 to 278.

The Committee were advised that there were no updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda.

Angus Ross proposed that the meeting be extended by thirty minutes to a maximum end time of 11pm. This was seconded by Stephen Conway and upon being put to the vote the motion was carried.

Mark Thomson, agent, spoke in support of the application. Mark stated that the applicant had worked closely with officers, and thanked them for their professional report. Mark added that the site was in a very poor state and the application would transform the site to deliver a high quality industrial logistics development, which would respond positively to the Cutbush Industrial Estate. Mark stated that the site had extant residential permission, however this was not viable and it was considered the site's location was more appropriate

and logical for continued employment use. Mark added that the development sought to meet an unmet need for industrial and logistics within the Borough and would contribute approximately £4-5 million per annum to the economy whilst also generating a number of on and off-site construction and operational jobs. Mark stated that the design delivered a net gain in biodiversity, new native tree and hedge planting across the site, a mix of car, cycle and motorcycle parking including electric vehicle charging points, and sustainable drainage measures. Mark added that the building design incorporated high quality materials and has been designed to achieve BREEAM Excellent. Mark highlighted that the parking and infrastructure requirements had been carefully developed in close collaboration with the Council, including the Highways officer. Mark noted that no objections had been received, and one comment of support had been received from an adjacent business. Mark stated that the proposals were in accordance with local and national planning policy and guidance, and urged the Committee to approve the application.

Andrew Mickleburgh felt that the proposals had many merits including the BREEAM Excellent rating. Andrew sought details regarding the numbers and timing of HGV movements, and queried whether any parking restrictions along Cutbush Lane towards Danehill could be included and operational prior to occupation. Chris Easton, Head of Transport, Drainage and Compliance, stated that condition 22 had been set to limit the land use to comply with Wokingham Borough Council's parking standards. In addition, there were proposals for funding to enable a traffic regulation order, however that would be determined via a separate process. Chris stated if there was an existing speeding issue, this should be reported. Andrew Mickleburgh asked officers to investigate the need for double yellow lines close to the junction of Danehill and Cutbush Lane.

Pauline Jorgensen stated that she would be very keen for double yellow lines to be installed. Pauline raised concerns that HGV vehicles would be going past residential houses. Simon Taylor stated that there were five loading bays to the rear of the building, and the number of trip movements used within the acoustic assessment was for 7 to 8 vehicle movements over a nine-hour overnight period, which was not deemed to be harmful compared to the background noise of the motorway. Pauline Jorgensen noted that the noise assessment had only been carried out on the building, and not the residential houses. Simon Taylor stated that a condition could be incorporated within the delivery logistic plan, giving an undertaking to reach an appropriate outcome via the Chairman and Andrew Mickleburgh. This condition was agreed by the Committee and added to the list of conditions.

RESOLVED That application number 214046 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 242 to 252, additional incorporation within the delivery logistic plan condition to give an undertaking to reach an appropriate outcome via the Chairman and Andrew Mickleburgh, and subject to legal agreement.

87. APPLICATION NO.213975 - INDIGO HOUSE, MULBERRY BUSINESS PARK, WOKINGHAM, RG41 2GY

Proposal: Full application for the proposed removal of the existing roof structure and the erection of a new second floor providing 11 No. 1 & 2 bedroom apartments, together with a cycle & refuse store.

Applicant: Mr D Bolt

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 279 to 304.

The Committee were advised that there were no updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda.

Sam Akhtar queried whether there was potential for inclusion of flora to attract a variety of wildlife to the roof gardens. Andrew Chugg, case officer, stated that this could be incorporated into the landscaping condition.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey proposed an informative exploring whether a gate could be installed through to Leslie Seers park to allow access for residents. This proposal was seconded, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

Angus Ross queried whether there was adequate bin storage on site. Andrew Chugg confirmed that adequate bin storage would be secured.

Bill Soane proposed an additional informative, encouraging the installation of electric vehicle charging points. This proposal was seconded by Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

It was confirmed that the building did not have access to a lift.

RESOLVED That application number 213975 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 280 to 283, incorporation into landscaping conditions to include provision of flora to attract a variety of wildlife to the roof gardens, additional informatives exploring whether a gate could be installed through to Leslie Seers park to allow access for residents and encouraging the installation of electric vehicle charging points as resolved by the Committee, and subject to legal agreement.