

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2020 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.59 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Simon Weeks (Chairman), Chris Bowring (Vice-Chairman), Stephen Conway, Gary Cowan, Pauline Jorgensen, Abdul Loyes, Andrew Mickleburgh, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

Councillors Present and Speaking

Councillors: John Kaiser and Stuart Munro

Officers Present

Catherine Brimble, Landscape Architect
Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery
Lyndsay Jennings, Legal Specialist
Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager
Clare Lawrence, Assistant Director – Place Services
Chris Traill, Director - Place & Growth
Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

Case Officers Present

Nick Chancellor
Mark Croucher
Andrew Fletcher
Senjuti Manna
Sophie Morris

33. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Carl Doran.

34. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

35. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Pauline Jorgensen declared an interest in item number 38, on the grounds that she had previously been the Executive Member for Housing. Pauline added that she had not formed a view regarding this item, and would keep an open mind during discussions. Pauline stated that she would take part in the vote.

Angus Ross declared an interest in item number 37, on the grounds that he was involved in the concept during his time as an Executive Member. In addition, Angus stated that he was a member of the Ramblers association. Angus added that he had not made any determination regarding this item, and would go into discussions with an open mind. Angus stated that he would take part in the vote.

Angus Ross declared an interest in item number 39, on the grounds that he had originally had some involvement with this site. Angus stated that he would go into discussions with

an open mind, and had taken no involvement in this planning application. Angus stated that he would take part in the vote.

Gary Cowan declared a prejudicial interest in item number 39, on the grounds that he had made comments in the past relating to this application. Gary added that he would take no part in this item.

Simon Weeks declared a prejudicial interest in item number 39, on the grounds that he had made comments in the past relating to this application. Simon added that he would take no part in this item, and the Vice Chairman would Chair this particular item.

Simon Weeks declared an interest in item number 38, on the grounds that he was the Ward Member for the area and had been involved with the residents on the estate. Simon added that he had not formed a view on this application, and he would go into discussions with an open mind. Simon added that he would take part in the vote.

Stephen Conway and Pauline Jorgensen stated that they had not taken part in some or all of the previously conducted site visits. Both Members added that they would listen to all discussions relating to these items, and would take part in the votes.

36. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

37. DIVERSION OF SHINFIELD FOOTPATH 12

Proposal: Application for the diversion of part of Shinfield Footpath 12 under Section 257 Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Applicant: Shinfield West Housebuilder Consortium

The Committee received and reviewed a report, set out in agenda pages 13 to 20.

The Committee were advised that there were no Members' Updates.

RESOLVED That the order be made.

38. APPLICATION NO.202133 - LAND EAST OF GORSE RIDE SOUTH, SOUTH OF WHITTLE CLOSE AND TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF BILLING AVENUE, FINCHAMPSTEAD, RG40 9JF

Proposal: Full planning application for the proposed redevelopment of the existing Gorse Ride South Estate, comprising demolition of existing buildings and replacement with 249 no. dwellings (mixed-tenure flats and houses) together with associated access, parking, landscaping, public open space and drainage

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council c/o Agent: Pegasus Planning Group

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 21 to 76.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included:

- Attached printed leaflet with summary information pertaining to the application;

- Clarification that the age of the existing development and its intended functional lifespan were not relevant planning considerations for the purpose of the current application;
- Clarification that the Local Planning Authority would also require a planning obligation in the form of a financial contribution towards local bus service contributions;
- Revision to Condition 16;
- Clarification regarding the affordable housing requirements;
- Substitute wording of Informative 6;
- Additional Informative 17;
- Correction to paragraph 21, to now refer to 88 households.

John Kaiser, Executive Member for Finance and Housing, spoke in favour of the application. John stated that this project would consist of 74 percent affordable housing, with 185 new homes for the community. John added that although Council budgets were under pressure, it was crucially important for this project to move forward. John stated that the current properties were in poor condition, and Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) were committed to supporting the local community via provision of high quality homes. John added that this project had been adapted to meet the local need of the area, and the houses would be climate friendly and carbon friendly. John urged the Committee to support the proposals.

Steve Bowers, Chair of the Gorse Ride Residents Steering Group, spoke in support of the application. Steve stated that he had lived on the estate for 36 years, and had raised 5 children, all of whom now owned their own houses. Steve added that he wanted this for future generations, and he wanted people to be proud to live on the estate. Steve stated that the next step for the estate now needed to be taken, and the residents steering group in conjunction with the Parish and Borough Councils, amongst other key parties, were committed to enabling the delivery of this project. Steve added that people needed to be given other opportunities for good quality affordable housing, and he could not emphasise enough just how important this project was for the local area.

Gary Cowan stated that he was supportive of the proposals, and felt that the properties would be delivered in the right area. Gary queried whether affordable housing schemes could apply to former and current military personnel. Simon Weeks stated that key worker lists could be updated to include a variety of groups.

Stephen Conway stated that he was supportive of the proposals. Stephen queried why more apartment blocks were now included within the proposals. Nick Chancellor, case officer, stated that the proposals would be of a higher density when compared to the existing dwellings. Nick added that 4 stories were deemed acceptable, as they were mitigated by public open space, and the sense of openness of the overall site. Nick added that the proposals were acceptable in appearance.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried whether there was bicycle storage in the blocks of flats, whether the properties would be Council owned or managed via a housing association, and why the current properties were not built to last. Nick Chancellor stated that cycle storage would be located within each apartment block. The site would be conveyed to Loddon Homes, which was wholly owned by WBC. Nick added that the site would offer a suitable mix of different types of housing including social rent, discounted rent and shared ownership. Simon Weeks clarified that the current properties were of a Swedish fabricated design, which had a shorter lifespan than more expensive designs.

Simon added that the proposals would be of significantly better quality, and therefore a significantly better lifespan.

Angus Ross queried why condition 24 only stated provision of 40 percent affordable housing, and how contributions towards SANG provision would be devised. Nick Chancellor stated that the 40 percent provision of affordable housing was just the policy requirement, however the proposals would far exceed this amount. Nick stated that the contributions towards SANG provision would only be sought from the uplift in dwellings compared to the current site.

Abdul Loyes stated that he was delighted to see the proposals progressing, and queried whether the roads would be adopted. Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager, confirmed that the roads would be adopted.

Malcolm Richards queried whether lifts would be present in the apartment blocks, queried whether some parking would be provided in clusters, queried whether there would be separate designated areas for electric charging, queried whether cladding would be present on the apartment blocks, and queried whether lighting would be present on all pathways across the site. Nick Chancellor stated that he thought lifts were not proposed within the apartment blocks. Nick stated that car parking would be well distributed across the site, and the site was designed so that allocated parking was close by to dwellings. Some electric charging points would be located on driveway plots, and some within unallocated spaces. The detail of placement of electric vehicle charging point was secured by condition and would come later. The exact materials to be used on the apartment blocks was secured by condition, and would be provided later, however the materials were likely to be a mix of brick, tile brick, and metal balconies. Nick stated that the intention was to illuminate all pathways, and this would form part of landscaping conditions.

Andrew Mickleburgh sought assurance that the garages were suitable for a modern vehicle, and the ban on business and residential usage of the garages would remain permanently. Andrew queried how the energy SAP rating compared to the Gold Standard. Nick Chancellor stated that the garages would be suitable for a modern size car, and the condition regarding acceptable use of the garages would remain in perpetuity unless appealed. Nick added that he could not compare the proposals to the gold Standard rating at this stage, however the properties would be very energy efficient, including features such as district heating of apartment blocks, and home air source heat pumps.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried whether permitted development would be allowed on the proposed dwellings, and queried whether photovoltaic panels would be present on the proposed dwellings. Nick Chancellor confirmed that permitted development would be removed by way of condition. Nick added that he could not confirm whether photovoltaic panels would be included, however it was possible that some would be included.

Committee Members were unanimous in their support for high quality affordable housing projects, such as this application.

RESOLVED That application number 202133 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 22 to 36, revision to condition 16, rewording of informative 6, and addition of informative 17 as set out in the Members' Update.

39. APPLICATION NO.163547 - HOGWOOD PARK, PARK LANE, BARKHAM, WOKINGHAM RG404PT

Simon Weeks and Gary Cowan withdrew from this item and took no part in discussions nor the vote.

Simon Weeks withdrew from the Chair, and Chris Bowring assumed the Chair.

Proposal: HYBRID APPLICATION: Outline application (all matters reserved except access to the site) for up to 140 residential units (Use Class C3) and all associated parking, soft and hard landscaping within the site and ancillary works. (Means of access into the Site off Park Lane, demolition of existing buildings and 2.83ha of SANG to be determined in full detail)

Applicant: Reading Football Club

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 77 to 142.

The Committee were advised that the Members' update included:

- Replacement wording of Condition 26 ;
- Additional Condition 42.

Graeme Dexter, Barkham Parish Council, spoke in objection to the application. Graeme stated that the proposals did not fit well with the Arborfield and Barkham neighbourhood plan, nor did it fit with the nearby Hogwood industrial estate. Graeme stated that the extraction fans on the industrial estate were not suitable to be located in close proximity to a residential estate. Graeme added that the site was not located within the existing SDL, and was not in close proximity to local shops. Graeme stated that there would be no direct road access to the district centre, which would force more traffic onto Park Lane, as there was no link to the Nine Mile Ride road extension. Graeme added that it was not possible to safely walk to California Country Park, which would force yet more traffic onto Park Lane. Graeme felt that green areas and landscaping should be used as a buffer between the proposed homes and the industrial estate. Graeme stated that the site required a dedicated link to the nearby SDL, and more SDL infrastructure was required prior to development.

Nina Sharp, agent, spoke in support of the application. Nina stated that this application was in hybrid form, and included up to 140 dwellings and a SANG. Nina added that the site would be vacant from December 2020, and the proposals would provide a safe cycle route to Bohunt School, shops, and community facilities. Nina stated that 5 hectares of public open space would be provided, including a SANG extension. Surface upgrades to the SANG would be secured by a S106 legal agreement, and the site would provide 40 affordable homes. Nina stated that all properties would be of two storey design, with an average density of 27 properties per hectare. Nina concluded by saying that the site was included within the emerging draft local plan, and there had been no objections from statutory consultees regarding this application.

John Kaiser, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. John stated that this was not a sustainable development, and by allowing this development it would allow developments to be built anywhere via precedent. John was of the opinion that there was no highways justification for this application, and this application would set a very dangerous precedent. John stated that this was a case of SDL creep, as the site was 'tacked' on to the edge of an SDL, which was not sustainable. John stated that the

proposals were not in line with the overarching SDL vision, and the access to the site would be via a dangerous and overstretched country road, with no safe crossing point. John was of the opinion that over 1000 jobs and livelihoods could be lost at the Hogwood industrial estate should they be forced to close due to environmental concerns from the proposed residential development. John stated that the site would force residents to drive to shops and amenities, which did not promote the Council's green agenda. John urged the Committee to refuse this application until concerns had been adequately addressed.

Chris Bowring queried the relationship in planning terms between the proposed dwellings and the industrial estate. Sophie Morris, case officer, stated that the nearest property to the industrial estate was located 30m from the industrial estate, and no environmental concerns had been raised during the application stage. Sophie added that the houses in the southern portion of the SDL were located adjacent to the industrial estate. Sophie stated that there would be levels of background noise, however there were no objections based on these grounds.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried what measures would be taken to meet climate emergency objectives, queried whether the roads would be adopted, queried whether the SUDs would be adopted, and queried why only one main entrance and exit was proposed. Sophie Morris stated that a sustainability report would be submitted, with a number of measures intended to be taken forward, at the reserved matters stage. Some features of the development would include photovoltaic panels and solar water heat pumps. Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager, stated that at the outline stage it was too premature to know if the applicant intended to offer the roads or SUDs for adoption, however the S106 agreement would either require adoption or for the roads and SUDs to remain private via a maintenance company with conditions attached. Judy stated that there would be two points of access, one main and one secondary, and the peak projected vehicle movements from the development would equate to 74 vehicle movements per hour on to Park Lane.

Abdul Loyes queried whether the SANG was inside or outside of the red line boundary, queried whether Natural England had objected to an access point from Park Lane, and whether the Education service had commented regarding the impact of the development on school places. Sophie Morris confirmed that the SANG on the application site was located within the red line boundary, with linkages to the existing northern SANG. Detailed discussions had not taken place with Natural England, however a pedestrian / cycle path along Park Lane would result in the loss of some SANG, and it would be very likely that Natural England would not support such a proposal. Sophie added that Bohunt School had not responded to the proposals to date however Education have not raised any issues with the impact on schools.

Angus Ross queried the purpose of the alternate recommendation C, queried if the application was premature based on Wokingham's land supply, and stated that noises and odours were present during the Members site visit. Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery, stated that the Committee were being asked to approve all recommendations in from them, with recommendation C allowing delegated refusal in the absence of the agreed S106 contributions. Connor stated that the NPPF was clear that an application could not be refused if it was deemed sustainable, and the assessment considered that the development would be sustainable given its location next to the SDL District Centre. He confirmed it would have been preferable if the site was originally planned and included as part of the wider SDL, however the planned infrastructure to be delivered as part of the wider SDL would make this site sustainable. Sophie Morris stated

that an odour assessment had not been submitted, as this was usually submitted for applications nearby facilities such as a sewage treatment plants. Sophie stated that a condition could be added requiring completion of a satisfactory odour assessment.

Angus Ross suggested that a condition requiring a noise and odour assessment should be added if Members were minded to approve the application.

Malcolm Richards queried whether a smaller width pavement than standard could be installed, as without the option of walking to local shops and amenities, residents would be forced to drive. Judy Kelly stated that although some sections of Park Lane could fit a standard sized pavement, other sections would force the pavement to encroach on green space, and it was therefore not possible to provide a pavement. Sophie Morris added that internal footways within the site would provide a safe and attractive link to Bohunt School.

Pauline Jorgensen queried the density of dwellings per hectare, queried whether green space could potentially be reduced by the applicant should parking not meet standards, sought more details regarding the informal school from off point, and queried what would happen to the bus service provision once the S106 money ran out. Sophie Morris confirmed that the density on site would equate to 27 units per hectare, inclusive of the SANG area. Connor Corrigan confirmed that the SANG could not be reduced in order provide additional car parking. In addition, other green space would be sought to be maintained in order to meet WBC guidelines. Regarding the school drop off point, Connor stated that this would be an informal drop off point, and would allow students to be dropped off safely as currently this occurred within the industrial park, which was not ideal. Judy Kelly stated that S106 monies would be added to top up the Arborfield SDL bus strategy. More money was needed at the beginning of new and improved bus routes whilst passenger numbers were comparatively low due to full SDL housing numbers being in the delivery stage. As additional dwellings were constructed and occupied, bus services would become more profitable and self-sufficient.

Andrew Mickleburgh sought confirmation that it was not a planning consideration to consider what would happen to this site should it not be developed, and queried whether point 12 within the agenda report was contradictory as it stated the proposals were not considered as "so substantial" when they would contribute to a 9.3% increase to the southern SDL area. Connor Corrigan stated that WBC had looked at proposals to take on the site in its current form, however it was not a planning consideration to consider what the site would be should development not occur, and the Committee had to consider the application in front of them. Connor stated that officers had considered the proposals, including capacity of the existing and proposed local amenities, and had deemed the proposals to be sustainable and met the planning tests.

Chris Bowring sought clarification that if the proposals did not cause harm, then their position outside of the SDL was not a planning issue. Connor Corrigan stated that the NPPF was very clear that if a development was sustainable and caused no adverse harm, then they should be approved. Connor added that the planning tests had been looked at, and officers considered them to have passed, with the proposals not causing significant adverse harm.

Stephen Conway was concerned that this application could be considered as premature, and queried whether the development would be sustainable without the infrastructure being present. Connor Corrigan stated that prematurity could not be used as an agreement on sustainable sites and that the same argument could apply to the rest of the

development in the SDL. However the approach is that supporting facilities and services generally come later on which also helps ensure their viability. Sophie Morris stated that reserved matters were yet to come, and they would provide a lot of detail. Sophie added that should this application be approved, reserved matters would be unlikely to return for at least six to twelve months. As such, units may not be developed until 2023, by which time facilities in the wider SDL should be developed.

Angus Ross proposed that standard conditions relating to noise and smell be added, and the results thereof be agreed in conjunction between the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the proposer. This was seconded by Chris Bowring, carried, and subsequently added to the list of conditions.

RESOLVED That application number 163547 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 79 to 96, replacement wording of condition 26 and additional condition 42 as set out in the Members' Update, and additional standard conditions related to noise and smell as resolved by the Committee.

40. APPLICATION NO.200711 - BARTLETTS FARM, SWALLOWFIELD ROAD, ARBORFIELD

Simon Weeks resumed the Chair.

Proposal: Full planning application for Installation of a Solar park to include 40000 solar photovoltaic panels, 11 inverter/transformer cabins, a single control building and associated works to include vehicle access and fencing with Environmental Statement.

Applicant: Wessex Solar Energy

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

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included a typographical correction to paragraph 24.

Jonathan Wheelwright, Swallowfield Parish Council, spoke in objection to the application. Jonathan stated that Swallowfield Parish Council were in support of climate emergency objectives, however this was the wrong location for a solar farm. Jonathan was of the opinion that this would be more likened to a solar industrial site, built on top of good quality 3A graded agricultural land which was not low quality land. Jonathan stated that it would be hard to find a more visible or intrusive location. Jonathan added that this application had received 89 resident objections, all of who supported the green energy initiative, however not in such an unsuitable location. The site would cover around 46 acres of Greenfield, including installation of approximately 40,000 panels each 8 feet in height. Additional security fencing and outbuildings would also be developed on the Greenfield. Jonathan stated that the fields would be lost to foraging animals, and the alternative site assessment had shown other more suitable sites. Jonathan concluded by stating that sustainable energy was important, however sites should not be placed on good quality farmland, situated in highly visible locations.

Harry Cannon, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Harry stated that he was speaking on behalf of a number of residents, and their view was that this was a good idea, but it was situated in the wrong place. Harry added that this would be a large industrial development located within local countryside on rising ground. As such, the proposals

would be visible for miles around, including from farmland and paths which were used enormously by locals. Harry stated that the proposed development would be located next to listed buildings, and would breach a variety of planning policies and guidelines. Harry stated that one report categorised the views from paths as negligible or minor, which was not the case at all. Harry added that the development would be seen from as far away from Earley, Arborfield and Eversley. Harry concluded by stating that the assessment for alternative sites was incredibly weak, and these proposals would in fact damage the environment by placing an industrial site within the countryside which was valued by residents.

Richard Wearmouth, applicant, spoke in support of the application. Richard stated that this application was for the development of a solar park, and the proposed park was entirely suitable for a site of this scale, in part due to the 33kv powerline running underneath the site. Richard added that the WBC landscape officer had deemed the screening proposals to be appropriate, and the site would see a net ecological gain in the form of hedgerows, trees, and wildflowers. Richard stated that gates would be present to allow for animals such as hedgehogs and badgers to pass through the site safely. Richard added that the proposals would improve drainage in the area, and the flood risk assessment had shown that the proposals would not pose any additional risk when it came to flooding. Natural England had concluded that there was only a limited use for the land, Richard added. Richard stated that the power lines would be located underneath the site, which was desirable for a site of this nature. Richard concluded by stating that this site would not be used indefinitely in the proposed way, and the applicant was not placing an application for an indefinite designation, and the site would be safely decommissioned at the end of the site's lifespan.

Stuart Munro, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Stuart stated that this was a rare occasion whereby he had received quite so many comments in opposition to an application. Stuart added that there was clear support for solar panels and solar farms within the Borough, however the question needed to be answered, could a site be positioned in a more suitable location. Stuart urged the Committee to consider residents' concerns and submissions prior to making a decision.

Simon Weeks sought clarification regarding a number of points raised by speakers, namely whether the existing hedgerow was planned to be reinforced, whether the proposals could be viewed from miles around, and what animals would be present on the site. Mark Croucher, case officer, stated that there were plans to reinforce the existing hedgerows, and this would follow in detail should the application be approved. Mark stated that the western parcel of the site was flat and would be very well screened, and where the ground did rise to the east more distant views would be present, however the visual envelope would still be fairly well contained. Catherine Brimble, Landscape Architect, stated that most views would be contained very locally, with gaps mainly present, through vegetation, footpaths, and gates. Longer distance views could possibly be seen from the north, and middle distance views would be really restricted to existing vegetation. Regarding the animals present on the site, Mark Croucher stated that this would be primarily deer and sheep.

Gary Cowan was of the opinion that there was next to nothing presented which gave support to this application. Gary stated that it was very hard to make a judgement regarding the stated low grade land until a high resolution map from Natural England was provided. Gary added that there were no pictures showing the dimensions of the site as it stood. Gary stated that the site elevated considerably, which could lead to views from a

long distance. The highest point of the site was approximately 65m to 70m, with the lowest point being 55m, which showed a considerable 10m to 15m rise across the site. Gary added that the vast majority of the land was good quality 3A as stated by Natural England, which should not be used for proposals such as this. In addition to the plethora of solar panels on site, Gary added that the proposals included hundreds of feet of buildings, some being up to 10 feet in height. Gary stated that planning policies stated that developments in the countryside should seek to protect and enhance the natural landscape, and significant development should only be delivered in areas of poor quality land. Gary was of the opinion that 3A land should be protected, and the proposed 8 foot fence would urbanise a rural location.

It was at this point of the meeting that Simon Weeks proposed the meeting be extended by a maximum of 30 minutes to 11pm. This was seconded by Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey and carried.

Stephen Conway recognised that this was a difficult recommendation to make for the case officer, as there were a variety of policies going in different directions. Stephen stated that there were a variety of national and local planning policies which suggested that there were problems with this site, including landscape harm and the quality of the agricultural land that would be used. Stephen stated that there appeared to be a lack of information regarding potential alternative sites, and why they were deemed to not be suitable. Stephen suggested that a deferral may be appropriate, in order to receive information regarding alternative sites and how they had been considered. Mark Croucher stated that one of the key benefits of this particular site was the 33kv power line running underneath the ground. Mark added that the climate emergency action plan would require seven solar farm sites of this site in order to achieve its objectives. With that in mind, Mark stated that some impacts were inevitable and other sites had other problems, and therefore there would always be an impact regardless of the location. Mark stated that the Natural England map was broad, and the soil tests were accurate at showing 58 percent of the land was of 3A grade, and 42 percent being 3B or 4 grade, being moderate or poor quality land. Mark added that there were two grades of land which were classified as better land for agricultural purpose than 3A grade.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey was of the opinion that the proposals were a good idea in a reasonable location, and would help Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) to achieve its climate emergency agenda.

Abdul Loyes queried how visible the site would be from the highway, and queried whether flooding was a major concern. Mark Croucher stated that cars may see a small view from the bypass. Mark Croucher stated that that the only change to the site's surface would be the stands for the panels to be mounted on. In addition, extra SUDs would be provided.

Malcolm Richards stated that views would not be present from most nearby roads, and the Borough needed a variety of facilities of this scale. Malcolm was of the opinion that stating that the site should be placed somewhere else was not a valid reason for refusal.

Angus Ross was of the opinion that the proposed location was a totally inappropriate site, and grade 3A land should not be used for a solar farm, and therefore the application should be refused.

Chris Bowring stated that he would support a deferral of this application, as the Committee needed to know what the criteria were for site selection, such as profitability, proximity to

the electrical grid, the sightlines, and the weighting applied to all of these considerations. Chris queried whether the Executive's climate emergency declaration had any change on current planning policies. Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, stated that the climate emergency declaration did not change planning policy. Justin commented that this site could potentially generate enough energy to accommodate for 5 percent of the Borough's energy needs.

Pauline Jorgensen stated that she was not convinced that the site could potentially be viewed from miles around based on her experience at the site visit. Pauline queried whether the site would be protected in future from a developer stating that the site had been used in an industrial nature, and therefore wanting to place either an industrial site or housing on the land. Mark Croucher confirmed that the change of use would only be granted for 40 years, after which the use would revert to its current form.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether the site had no formal designation, and queried what criteria was used to select sites for renewable energy generation, as these were not allocated within the Local Plan. Mark Croucher stated that the site was deemed as essentially countryside land, rather than a formal designation. Mark stated that Local Plan policy CCO5 set out what would be required in terms of renewable energy. Any of the normal material considerations would be taken into account when looking at an application of this type.

Angus Ross proposed that the application be reduced, on the grounds that the land being used was of high quality agricultural land. This proposal was not seconded, and therefore fell.

Stephen Conway suggested that the application be deferred, to allow for further information to be gathered regarding the assessment and consideration of alternative sites, and why those sites were rejected in favour of the proposed site. Gary Cowan added that the returning information should include better maps and plans that included the profile of the site, rather than just the planned view.

The above suggestion was proposed by Angus Ross, and seconded by Chris Bowring.

RESOLVED That application number 200711 be deferred, to allow for further information to be gathered regarding the assessment and consideration of alternative sites, and why those sites were rejected in favour of the proposed site, and in addition include better maps and plans that included the profile of the site, rather than just the planned view.

41. APPLICATION NO.202103 - LAND AT MAIDENHEAD ROAD, WOKINGHAM, RG40 5RN

Proposal: Full planning application for the change of use of land from agriculture to the keeping of horses, plus erection of a hay barn and stable building.

Applicant: Mr L Proctor

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 175 to 194.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Update included a slight variation of wording to Condition 5.

Simon Weeks commented that the application had received no objection, and had received the support of the case officer.

RESOLVED That application number 202103 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 176 to 178, and variation to condition 5 as set out in the Members' Update.