

Agenda Item 8.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
213106	10 June 2022	Woodley	Bulmershe and Whitegates;

Applicant	HE2 Reading 1 GP Limited
Site Address	Land at Headley Road East, Woodley, RG5 4SN
Proposal	Full planning application for the proposed erection of 5 no. buildings for commercial development to provide flexible light industrial, general industrial, and storage and distribution uses, with ancillary offices, associated car parking, formation of new accesses, and landscape planting, following demolition of existing buildings
Type	Full
Officer	Graham Vaughan
Reason for determination by committee	Major application

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 8 June 2022
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place

SUMMARY
<p>This application was considered by the Planning Committee on Wednesday 11 May 2022, and it was resolved to defer the determination of the application. This was to allow the committee to understand the context of the site and undertake a site visit to consider the heritage aspects of the site and environmental health issues raised more fully. The original report to members is attached at Appendix 1 and should be read in conjunction with this report. The applicant has provided further clarification on the matters set out below. For confirmation, this does not change the recommendation that the application be approved subject to the signing of a legal agreement and conditions.</p>

RECOMMENDATION
<p>That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:</p> <p>A. Completion of a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution towards the Council’s employment skills plan and a monitoring fee for a travel plan associated with the development.</p> <p>B. Conditions and informatives:</p> <p>List of conditions stated in the report to committee on Wednesday 11th May 2022 and attached at appendix 1 to this report. One additional condition (to be inserted as number 28 and report number updated if necessary) is recommended:</p> <p>28. Delivery and services plan - The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the details as agreed in ‘Delivery and Servicing Plan, Stunt Consulting B2106/DSP01, 16 June 2021’ received by the Local Planning Authority on 15 September 2021. The measures contained within the report shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plans unless otherwise approved in writing by the local planning authority.</p>

Reason: To protect residential amenity and promote safe highway practices. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP1, CP3 and CP6.

PLANNING ISSUES

Access and Movement:

1. The applicant has proposed that Headley Road East access would be used for all in/out movements and therefore HGVs from the site would only use Viscount Way when accessing units 9 and 10. This would remove the identified 20 HGV movements per day from Viscount Way and is considered a benefit of the scheme particularly in the context that the current occupier requires all HGVs to exit via Viscount Way. As a result of this change, a new condition as identified above is set out which would secure this improvement. Overall, the application has demonstrated that no harmful highway impacts would occur and is therefore acceptable.

Environmental Health:

2. Air quality – It should be noted that the current use of the site has no controls in planning terms and therefore intensification of the use could occur without any intervention possible from the local planning authority. Against this context, the submitted report regarding air quality presumed a ‘worst-case’ scenario using traffic movement data supplied by the Council’s Highways department. That assessment concluded that negligible impacts would occur, and they would be significantly below the health-related Air Quality Objective Levels (AQOLs) set by Government in its Air Quality Strategy (AQS). The Council’s Environmental Health Officer agrees with the methodology and conclusion of this assessment. It should be noted that the movement of HGVs can occur within approximately 4 metres of residential properties on Millers Grove because of the site occupied by ‘Delivered’. The proposal scheme would result in HGV movements approximately 55 metres away from these properties. Overall, the application is considered to demonstrate that air quality would not be decreased and is therefore acceptable.
3. Noise – The context of the site is again important in considering this aspect. There are no controls in planning terms currently present and the site is used for industrial processes with deliveries. Currently there are no restrictions on working hours on the site and this would remain the case with the proposed scheme. The submitted report regarding noise impacts sets out that in terms of plant and breakout noise, the impact would be negligible. In terms of noise from service yards and in particular from deliveries, the report recognises an adverse impact during the day and a significant adverse impact at night.
4. However, in considering the scheme, it has been agreed with the Council’s Environmental Health Officer that this arises due to units 9 and 10. The orientation of units 1 – 8, the ‘very good’ BREEAM level the buildings would be constructed to and the provision of internal loading bays mean that units 1 – 8 would only result in a negligible impact in terms of noise. As such, units 9 and 10 have a specific condition to restrict delivery times during the night which would mitigate the identified harm. In addition to this, all units would be required to submit a noise management plan, currently not a requirement for the existing units, which would help monitor any impacts and ensure best practice. This condition is set as a ‘pre-

occupation' condition because currently the occupants are not known. Requiring this as a 'pre-commencement' condition would not meet the test of 'reasonableness' as set out in the NPPF. Overall, the application is considered to demonstrate that harmful noise impacts would be mitigated and is therefore acceptable.

5. Cumulative impact – At the previous committee meeting, the concept of cumulative impacts was raised. It is worth clarifying that the cumulative impact of a proposal would only be material if the scheme was for new employment development, rather than the redevelopment of an existing employment site as proposed. Furthermore, this is not a scheme requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment and the determination of any application must be based on the development within the 'red line' application boundary. Finally, an application cannot be used to fix existing problems which exists outside of the 'red line' boundary on land which is not within the applicant's control.

Non-designated Heritage Asset:

6. The office building and wider site have been assessed by Historic England which included a site visit and historical research. Historic England concluded that there was not sufficient architectural or historic interest to warrant the building, or the site being listed. For clarity, this recommendation is presented to the Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport who make the final determination on the listing process.
7. The site is not subject to any heritage designations be that a national listing or inclusion on a local list. It is not within a Conservation Area or Area of Special Character and there are no local plan policies or supplementary planning documents which outline any heritage reasons for conserving the site. It is noted however that there is a local heritage aspect in relation to the former use of the site regarding Woodley Airfield. As a result of this, the buildings and site are considered to be non-designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF. The NPPF requires local planning authorities to make a balanced judgement between the significance of such assets and the benefits of the proposed scheme, which has been outlined in Appendix 1.
8. At the previous committee meeting it was highlighted that Facebook group polls and an online petition indicated the desire for the building to be retained. Indeed, it is acknowledged that Woodley Airfield is a significant part in the history of Woodley and shaped how the town has developed. Clearly the site is of local interest and there is a link to aviation history given the people that were involved and the remaining structure on the site.
9. In undertaking the balanced judgement as required by the NPPF, several material benefits were set out in the previous report, but have been summarised here for completeness:
 - a. Between 222-433 new jobs, both skilled and unskilled
 - b. Circa 2,700sqm of additional commercial floorspace in modern, energy-efficient buildings
 - c. Significantly increased separation distances from homes on the eastern side of the site to at least 7.5m, enhancing the amenity of our neighbours

- d. Reduced noise from the current use, through improved design and orientation of buildings
 - e. Improved access onto Headley Road East and dedicated on-site parking
 - f. No HGVs arriving or departing along Viscount Way (officer note: this is a new benefit secured via condition and agreed by the applicant)
 - g. Significantly enhanced soft landscaping across the site, particularly along the eastern boundary
 - h. New wildlife habitats including native planting and nesting boxes, and
 - i. A financial contribution to the Council's Employment Skills Program
10. It is recognised that the scheme results in the total loss of the non-designated heritage asset and it cannot be replaced. However, whilst noting that the site is of local interest, the site context is important. Specifically, little historic fabric remains, and it is not possible to understand or experience the fact that aircraft manufacturing/repair occurred at the site. This is compounded by the fact that Woodley Airfield has long been removed and the buildings have spent a considerable proportion of their lives in a wider commercial use rather than for their original aviation purpose. This serves to diminish the significance and, when weighed against the identified benefits, identifies that the scheme is acceptable in regard to the balanced judgement required by the NPPF.

Employment Opportunity:

11. The scheme would provide between 222 to 243 jobs. The variation is due to the different uses proposed and is based on the Homes and Communities Agency employment densities data. This would create an uplift of between 70 to 281 jobs at the site, compared to the existing provision, and includes both high and low skilled opportunities. In this respect, the scheme clearly provides economic benefits.

Ecology:

12. The site currently has limited ecological value because it is primarily hardstanding or built form however there are some trees/grassed areas. The scheme would result in the removal of 25 trees and eight tree groups however, this would be replaced by over 100 trees across the site. The NPPF requires specific biodiversity enhancements to be provided as part of a scheme and it is proposed a minimum of 12 bird or bat boxes are provided. As outlined in the previous report, this is considered to improve the ecological value of the site and the provision of a condition requiring the boxes secures this improvement. The removal of trees is also restricted to outside nesting season via condition, which is standard practice. Furthermore, the Ecology Officer does not raise an objection to the scheme. As such, the ecological benefits of the scheme are material and weigh in favour of the proposals.

Other:

13. In the previous report it was stated that Councillor Shepherd-DuBey had commented on the application. For clarification, this reference was to Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey and not Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey. As such, no conflict of interest with Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey's position on the Planning Committee is considered to arise.

Planning Balance:

14. As described above, the previous report undertook a detailed balance exercise in line with national policy. Whilst no new material planning considerations have arisen, the above matters clarified are intended to assist in the consideration of this proposal following deferral and a site visit. One additional condition preventing HGVs from accessing units 1-8 (80% of all proposed commercial units) from Viscount Way, is considered further material benefit in allowing the responsible operation of the site. Overall, the development is still considered to contribute to sustainable development and be in accordance with the development plan. As such, it is recommended for conditional approval.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts upon protected groups as a result of the development.

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