

## Supplementary Planning Agenda Planning Committee – 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022

### Planning Applications

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#### Agenda Item 24

**Hogwood Farm, Sheerlands Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham RG40 4QY**

**Application No: 220175**

**Pages 33-59**

Pp 34-35 Update to condition 1 – Approved Plans. Insert updated plan ref number for Garages, Stores and Sub Station Plans and Elevations – Ref. 3062 A 3300 PL Rev A – this should be superseded to plan ref:

Garages, Stores and Sub Station Plans and Elevations - Ref. 3062 A 3300 PL Rev B

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#### Agenda Item 25

**Toutley East, Land Adjacent to Toutley Depot, West of Twyford Road, Wokingham RG41 1XA**

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**Application no: 211777**

**Pages 73-123**

- One additional neighbour comment has been received which states that the site visit should be carried out at the busiest time of the day (peak times morning and evening) when Twyford Road is busiest. If done mid-morning this time would have been missed.
- Minutes from meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022 should have been appended to the officer report. These are below:

#### Extract from the Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 11 May 2022

**Proposal:** Outline application for up to 130 residential units and a 70 bed care home (all matters reserved except access to the site).

**Applicant:** Wokingham Borough Council

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 67 to 126.

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

- Amended condition 45;
- Correction to the approved plan referenced within condition 47;
- Plan provided by the applicant showing projected flood levels, which had been accepted by the Environment Agency;

- Correction that the scheme would be for up to 130 residential units rather than 120 as stated within the report.

The Committee were advised that additional condition 48 was also proposed, in relation to speed limits and speed reduction.

Imogen Shepherd-Dubey, Wokingham Town Council, spoke in objection to the proposal. Imogen stated that this application had caused significant concern, with a large number of objections received from residents. Imogen added that road safety was a major concern, with vehicles on the bridge travelling along the road at 60MPH not seeing the single exit from the site until they were close by, whilst the road was one step below the desired visibility standard for a 50MPH road. Imogen stated that the pavement was only located on one side of the road, and felt that the proposed emergency exit needed to be available at all times or be made into a proper exit. Imogen stated that part of the site was located in a flood zone, and noted that the Environment Agency report had stated that the site was not suitable for such a development. Imogen added that there was no nearby public transport available, whilst the noise assessment had been carried out in August which was when noise levels were typically at their lowest and were not a fair representation. Imogen concluded by stating that a variety of Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC's) core policies had not been met including CP1, CP2, CP3, CP4 and CP6, and urged the Committee to refuse the application.

Phil Cunnington, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in support of the application. Phil stated that the site had been earmarked for development for quite some time, and had been included within the North Wokingham SDL when the core strategy was adopted back in 2010, and had been expressly promoted for housing under the recent Local Plan Update (LPU). Phil thanked planning officers for working proactively to get the proposals to a level whereby they could be recommended for approval. The proposals included residential units which would accommodate affordable housing to help meet the projected housing demand for the Borough within a sustainable location with good access to facilities and the Wokingham town centre. Phil stated that opportunities would be explored to reduce the development's carbon footprint in accordance with WBC's climate emergency declaration in addition to improving biodiversity, providing high quality open spaces and promoting job opportunities for local people within the construction phases. Phil added that the site would also deliver a new dementia care home, which was a key priority for the Council given the key long-term trend for the area indicated that more older people would require dementia and residential care going forwards. Phil added that care costs were predicted to rise by up to twenty percent over the next few years, whilst social care reforms would leave WBC with increased costs as yet to be specified. Phil stated that purpose-built facilities would enable some of the costs of high quality dementia care to be mitigated, and to ensure capacity for future occupants. Phil added that the existing Suffolk Lodge facility struggled to meet the needs of all potential residents, and could not meet nursing care needs. The new larger facility would be a more flexible and purpose designed 68-bedroom facility which would be designed to support personalised care, enable residents to live healthy lives, provide better value than current care arrangements, and provide an enhanced in-Borough service provision for residents. Phil stated that he was confident that the outline proposals provided the framework for the delivery of high-quality design which would be considered in detail at the future reserved matters stage, should the proposal before the Committee be approved. Phil urged the Committee to approve the application.

Morag Malvern, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Morag stated that a number of local residents were concerned that any access to this site from the A321 would be extremely dangerous, and queried whether any independent safety assessment had been undertaken.

Rachel Bishop-Firth, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Rachel stated that more social and affordable homes were required within the Borough in addition to care home beds to meet the needs of the aging population, however these homes and care homes must be situated within suitable locations, and Rachel felt that the proposed site was not a suitable location. Rachel felt the proposal was to use a noisy piece of land which was very close to the motorway and an industrial depot to house those who had the least choice over where they lived, those on lower incomes, and those requiring old age care. Rachel stated that for some of the proposed homes, noise could only be kept at acceptable levels if residents had triple glazed windows and kept them shut, whilst the report acknowledged that acceptable noise levels would be breached within some of the gardens. Rachel raised concerns regarding flooding, stating that the Environment Agency were of the opinion that a portion of the site was liable to flooding, but that the applicant had produced an alternative report which showed a reduced risk. Rachel was concerned that information was being relied upon which conflicted with the Environment Agency's advice, and queried whether either assessment had taken into account the possible effects of global warming. Rachel stated that travel into the town centre would take approximately 30 minutes whether travelling on foot or by bus, which would be a significant barrier to many of the care home residents and staff, and those individuals on low incomes. Rachel added that she was concerned with the proposed emergency exit, and queried how it would be opened in an emergency. Rachel voiced concerns that lower income residents and those requiring dementia care were being pushed into an unsuitable site when other uses such as a solar farm should be explored. Rachel urged the Committee to refuse application and for the applicant to explore other possible uses for the site.

Chris Bowring queried a number of points raised by public speakers. Chris sought additional details relating to the proposed emergency access, queried whether the housing would be located within flood zone two or three, sought clarity with regards to the Environment Agency's comments, and queried where the nearest bus stop was in relation to the application site. Chris Easton, Head of Transport, Drainage, and Compliance, stated that new condition 48 in addition to the speed survey carried out by the applicant and a first stage road safety audit broadly met the visual splay requirements. The speed survey was carried out during lockdown, however there was a general trend of higher speeds during this period. The survey identified an average speed limit of approximately 40MPH, with an 85<sup>th</sup> percentile at 51MPH, and assessments were requested to be considered to move the 40MPH sign closer to the bridge. Chris stated that the emergency access would be via the depot land with a dropped bollard which could be accessed by a coded lock for use by emergency services. A pedestrian walking and cycle route would be secured via S106 prior to the development being occupied, which would lead to the south through the Matthewsgreen and on to Queen's Road. Chris noted that the nearest bus stop was located on Queen's Road, approximately 200m from the application site. Stefan Fludger, case officer, stated that officers had negotiated with the Environment Agency regarding the additional information submitted by the applicant, and the applicant had demonstrated that the water would remain within the existing watercourses during times of flood, and the Environment Agency had accepted the submission subject to additional investigation of the existing culvert at the access point and further additional detail at the reserved matters

stage. In relation to noise, Stefan stated that the environmental health officer had raised this as a point, however this had to be considered in the context that the proposal was only an indicative scheme. Some areas on the indicative scheme would exceed recommended guidelines, for example the upper floors of some dwellings and a number of other properties. Officers had assessed the outline scheme in detail, and it was considered by the environmental health officer that these issues could be dealt with at the reserved matters stage, and the application was for up to 130 dwellings and a 70-bed care home and could be amended as appropriate, for example adjusting the noise bund or re-assessing the layout of the site. Community facilities were located approximately 150m away over the new pedestrian bridge in the form of the new community centre and a local school. Stefan confirmed that affordable housing was in accordance with policy.

Pauline Jorgensen felt that the site appeared to be isolated, and queried how the access to the left worked. In addition, Pauline felt that a site visit might be useful to assess surroundings of the site and to understand how the access would work. Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery, stated that a pedestrian and cycle link would be installed into the neighbouring development once the site was built out. Connor added that the site was closer to a lot of amenities and facilities than many other sites, whilst access would be available off of the Twyford Road. Condition 40 was secured to ensure management of the access via the depot if it was ever required.

Gary Cowan was of the opinion that the site was not a suitable location for residential development or a care home, and should continue to be allocated for employment use. Gary commented that the Green Park employment site was located within similar surroundings, and was a fine example of a modern and thriving employment site. Gary stated that this application would lead to 130 dwellings and a 70-bed care home being located in a noisy area where residents could not open their windows else noise levels would become even worse. Gary noted that many consultation responses were missing from the report, and reiterated his view that the site was inappropriate for residential development and was instead a perfect employment site. Connor Corrigan stated that the application was for outline planning permission which would agree the principle of development. Noise bunds and fencing could be installed and repositioned in order to make noise levels acceptable, whilst alterations could be made to the layout of the site. Connor added that the employment needs of the Borough had changed markedly since the site allocation in 2010 for employment use, and the site could potentially become a 'bad neighbour' positioned next to a school and residential properties to the south. Connor stated that there had been no interest from retailers, though this was not a planning consideration. Connor noted that the Environment Agency were now satisfied that the scheme could now go ahead subject to further detail, and it was very regular for consultees such as South East Water to wait for outline planning permission prior to making comment. Gary Cowan stated that Green Park was an excellent example of an employment site being a good neighbour, with a fantastic residential development in the middle of the site. Gary was of the opinion that houses next to the Toutley Depot would be a far worse scenario, and residents would not be able to open their windows and would have to live with a 1.8m high noise bund. Gary commented that once the principle of development was established via outline planning permission, residential dwellings and a care home would be developed on what Gary felt was a wholly inappropriate site for such a development.

Sam Akhtar was of the opinion that a site visit would be useful for the Committee to better understand the context of the site. Sam stated that he appreciated the idea of more one-bedroom housing and studio flats to help first time buyers.

Stephen Conway stated that approval of the outline application would approve the principle of development for a 70-bed care home and up to 130 dwellings, which the access would have to account for. Stephen noted that more social housing and residential care would be provided, but queried whether this would be the correct location. Stephen added that this site sat on the edge of a development location, and the Committee would be required to take on faith that a reduction in houses would occur to accommodate noise reduction measures. Stephen added that the Environment Agency would require further details regarding flooding, and the Environment Agency had also raised concerns regarding a number of sites suggested within the Local Plan Update. Stephen sought clarity regarding the speed limit on the stretch of the Twyford Road. Chris Easton stated that just south of the proposed access to the site the speed limit changed from 40MPH to the national speed limit. A condition had been added which required additional information, whilst speed surveys had been carried out for that section of the road and visual splays could be provided at a later stage. Stephen commented that he was very against any development going ahead prior to the entire section of the road being limited to 40MPH.

Stephen Conway stated that it may be very tempting for residents to turn left onto the Twyford Road in order to catch the train services from Twyford station, which would cause considerable congestion. Stephen queried whether a regular bus could be provided from the proposed site to Twyford station. Chris Easton stated that the trip distribution from this site travelling northbound in the AM peak would be approximately 23 vehicles. The North Wokingham bus strategy was being worked up and funded by all major developments in the area, including this one, whilst the Coppid Beech park and ride may be attractive to residents who wished to commute into London.

Stefan Fludger clarified that the response from the Environment Agency should read no objection, as they had withdrawn their original objection to the scheme.

Andrew Mickleburgh was of the opinion that if outline planning permission was granted then a development of this nature would almost certainly come forwards. Andrew queried whether there was any statutory guidance for care homes located near motorways, queried whether there any specific standards for care homes in terms of amenity space or air quality, queried whether the three-storey height of the care home could possibly exacerbate any problems given its close proximity to the motorway, and queried whether Adult's Services could be one of the consultees. Stefan Fludger confirmed that officers were not aware of any statutory guidance in relation to care homes and their proximity to motorways, and officers were reliant on the guidance of the environmental health officer who had not raised any objection. Connor Corrigan stated that there was no statutory obligation to consult Adult's Services, however as the outline plans included a care home this was indicative of the numerous conversations that would have taken place internally with Adult's Services. Connor stated that the higher a property was the more noise that it could experience as noise would deflect upwards from any noise bund. Should the development progress to the reserved matters stage, the height of the care home could be reduced, and the footprint increased or the height of the noise bund could be increased to mitigate the impact of noise.

Andrew Mickleburgh commented that he wished for Adult's Services to be more formally included and recognised within the consultation process. Andrew queried what might be some of the potential adverse consequences of phasing the development, sought clarity with regards to the definition of built form, and queried whether any mitigating measures could be implemented with regards to overshadowing and overlooking concerns. Connor Corrigan stated that the applicant needed to consider how the site was going to be phased, and this would be considered at any future reserved matters stage. Stefan Fludger confirmed that built form of the site included the green spaces and drainage basin. Connor Corrigan confirmed that officers had noted the issue of overlooking within the report as it was clear from looking at the indicative layout that issues would occur. Layout and design would be considered in detail should this development progress to the reserved matters stage.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey was of the opinion that it was wrong to place affordable housing and a care home in a location that was unwanted for employment use, and was an inappropriate location for residential development. Rachelle stated that drivers often drove over and above the speed limits on this particular stretch of road. Rachelle queried whether residents of the care home would be expected to cycle to the town centre, queried where the funding would come from to fund a bus service to Twyford, raised concerns in relation to adequate provision of public transport services for care home staff, commented that the Coppid Beech Park and Ride was not a well-used service, and felt that a site visit was necessary to better understand the context of the site. Connor Corrigan stated that this development would be closer to facilities than the development at Keephatch which also included affordable housing provision. Connor added that a bus route was planned for the area however it was not yet implemented. Connor commented that the Environment Agency had assessed the site and in essence felt that the site could accommodate such a development however additional details with regards to engineering were required. Chris Easton stated that the Coppid Beech park and ride had only opened in the past few weeks, and needed time to bed in and settle down. With regards to bus route funding, a combination of developer contributions, partnership working and S106 contributions would be explored to look at delivery of routes.

Rebecca Margetts stated that she had a background in nursing, and voiced concerns with regards to how a large number of care home staff would be able to access the site, especially as many of the staff may not have access to a private vehicle. Rebecca commented that the scale of the care home and its proposed location was a major concern. Connor Corrigan stated that how staff would get to and from the site would be a decision for the operator, and in planning terms officers felt that the site could accommodate such a development. A bus service was planned for the future, and officers deemed the site as acceptable and close by to facilities.

Gary Cowan commented that as the lead local flood authority Wokingham Borough Council should have flood maps and should be able to assess the application based on these detailed plans. Gary added that Members of the Committee had raised serious reservations with regards to this application, and felt that the application should be refused.

Pauline Jorgensen proposed to defer the application to enable a site visit to be undertaken to allow the Committee to assess the positioning of the motorway in relation to the site, the access to the site and the perceived isolation of the site, and to assess the impact of

noise. This proposal was seconded by Stephen Conway and upon being put to the vote the motion was carried.

**RESOLVED** That application number 211777 be deferred to enable a site visit to be undertaken to allow the Committee to assess the positioning of the motorway in relation to the site, the access to the site and the perceived isolation of the site, and to assess the impact of noise.

## **Pre-emptive site visits**

None.

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## Non-Householder Appeal Decisions

Following 13 April 2022 Planning Committee, the Non-Householder Appeal Decisions will be reported quarterly prior to the following meetings as part of the Supplementary Planning Agenda:

- July 2022
- October 2022
- January 2023

App No.	Address and Description	Committee (Y/N)	Decision	Main planning issues identified/addressed
202926	<b>Loddon Court, Lambs Lane, Swallowfield, Wokingham, RG7 1JE</b>  Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for use of existing caravan ancillary to host dwelling. (Lead Appeal 3271861/211057)	N	Allowed	- The Inspector concluded that when the totality of the evidence now before them is assessed, on the balance of probabilities, it was sufficient to justify the grant of a LDC. On the LDC application date the caravan was used for purposes ancillary to the residential use of the main dwelling, rather than as a separate dwelling in its own right.
210668	<b>Land to the North East of Vauxhall Drive, Woodley, Wokingham RG5 4EJ</b>  Prior approval submission for the installation of a 20m high monopole supporting 6 no. antenna apertures and 4 no. 600mm transmission dishes, plus the installation of 8 no. ground-based equipment cabinets within a secured, fenced compound, and ancillary development thereto.	N	Dismissed	- The development would appear alien and oppressive within the surrounding landscape, significantly undermining the sense of verdancy and seclusion which characterise the park. The siting and appearance of the development would harm the character and appearance of the area, and the need to site the proposal in the location proposed would not outweigh this harm.
212685	<b>Land at The Garden Cottage, The Ridges/Wellingtonia Avenue, Finchampstead, Berkshire RG45 6AF</b>  Outline application with all matters reserved for the proposed erection of 1no. dwelling.	N	Dismissed	- The appeal proposal would conflict with the locational requirements of CS Policy CP11. As a result, it would cause harm to the development plan's housing strategy for the area.  - The proposed development would urbanise the appeal site, and would represent a further consolidation of the existing built development in the area. As such, the development would

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- harm the area's character and appearance.</li> <li>- The proposed scheme would be likely to have an adverse effect on wildlife habitats and biodiversity.</li> </ul>
211804	<p><b>41 London Road, London Road, Wokingham RG40 1YA</b></p> <p>Outline application for with some matters reserved for the proposed 1no. four bedroom dwelling. (Access to be considered)</p>	N	Dismissed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The development has the potential to compromise highway safety, and would therefore conflict with NPPF and CS Policy CP6.</li> <li>- No S106 provided. Without appropriate mitigation, proposal would have a negative effect on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.</li> </ul>
212317	<p><b>Long Meadow Farm, Edneys Hill, Wokingham RG41 4DS</b></p> <p>Full application for the proposed change of use of land from agricultural to residential garden. (Retrospective).</p>	N	Allowed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inspector found the development represents a suitable use within the countryside, without causing undue harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape.</li> </ul>
213194	<p><b>Land at Bathurst Road, Winnersh, Wokingham RG41 5JA</b></p> <p>Prior approval submission for the proposed installation of a 15.0m Phase 8 Monopole C/W wrapround Cabinet at base and associated ancillary works.</p>	N	Dismissed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The proposal would appear significantly more prominent than the surrounding street furniture. Development would undermine the prevailing sense of openness that surrounds the site, which would harm the character and appearance of the area.</li> </ul>

## **Reserved Matters applications**

An application for reserved matters is the next stage after an outline planning permission has been granted. Reserved matters applications are not actual planning permissions, they are merely details reserved following approval of the outline planning consent (normally design, layout and landscaping). In many cases an outline planning permission will be followed by multiple reserved matters applications.

Currently a large number of reserved matters applications are brought to planning committee which are policy compliant, and to date, all reserved matters applications have been approved as per officer recommendation.

There is currently no requirement under the Council's scheme of delegation for these types of applications to be brought to committee (CHAPTER 8.1 - PLANNING COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE – 8.1.1). Understandably, at the time when the Council's SDL sites were starting to be built out, Members wanted to see the type of development that was being brought forward. However, now the majority of the SDL sites are well underway and the approach to development within Wokingham has been well established, there is now the opportunity to review this approach.

Like all other applications, members continue to retain the right to call-in reserved matters applications should they have material planning grounds to do so. The committee also has a power to approve any matter which it resolves it wishes to consider, usually at the time it considers the outline application. Furthermore, all new major applications (outline and full) recommended for approval would need to go before planning committee in any event in accordance with the scheme of delegation.

In summary, modifying the blanket approach that reserved matters applications are heard by planning committee would allow members to concentrate on those applications that have the biggest impact upon the Borough or are of relevant interest for public decision making and therefore ought to be scrutinised democratically at a Committee Meeting. This revised approach would conform to the current scheme of delegation, thereby saving member/officer time and Council resources.