

Development Management Ref No	No weeks on day of committee	Parish	Ward	WBC application
160523	4	Wokingham	Emmbrook	

Applicant Wokingham Borough Council C/O WSP

Location Land at Elms Road, Wokingham **Postcode** n/a

Proposal Application for change of use from outdoor sports area to a temporary car park with 96 parking spaces plus temporary lighting. Formation of a vehicular access linking to the Paddocks car park.

Type Full

PS Category

Officer Nick Chancellor

FOR CONSIDERATION BY Planning Committee on 30/03/2016

REPORT PREPARED BY Head of Development Management and Regulatory Services

SUMMARY

The site corresponds to four outdoor tennis courts (Use Class D2 Assembly and Leisure) on land west of Elms Road, Wokingham. The application seeks temporary change of use to a car park for up to 96 vehicles and for the construction of a 7x15m access linking to the Paddocks car park. The proposal is before planning committee as the application has been made by Wokingham Borough Council.

The site is subject to a separate, unrelated planning application which proposes to redevelop land between Wellington Road and Shute End (Elms Field and Paddocks Car Park) for a mixed use development, as part of the regeneration of Wokingham Town Centre (application reference 153125).

A facility is temporarily required to alleviate anticipated pressures on parking capacity resulting from the short term closure of a car park at Wokingham train station. The proposal will help to mitigate some of the 200 spaces that will be made temporarily unavailable whilst South West Trains undertake works to upgrade capacity.

Aside from the formation of a 7x15m vehicular access to the Paddocks, the development involves minimal physical change. Heras fencing would be erected around the southern and eastern boundaries and two 6m lighting columns are proposed along the northern boundary. No significant harmful impacts would occur to the neighbouring residential occupiers and, as the tennis courts are not currently in active use, short term use of the site for car parking would not materially affect the provision of sports facilities within the town centre. In any case, it is intended that the courts will be replaced at Cantley sports hub. The development is consistent with the development plan and is therefore recommended for conditional approval.

PLANNING STATUS

- Major Development Location
- Wokingham Town Centre
- Elms Field and the Paddocks Car park are allocated for Mixed Use (SAL08) and Housing

- Public Open Space
- Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area 7km linear mitigation zone

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun (and the change of use commenced) before the expiration of six months from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered PADDOCK/PLAN/001 rev A (Site Boundary Plan), PADDOCK/PLAN/001 rev B (General Arrangement), PADDOCK/100/002 rev A, PADDOCK/200/001 rev B, PADDOCK/700/001 rev B, PADDOCK/1200/001 rev B.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. The car park use hereby permitted shall be discontinued and the land reinstated to its former use, on or before 12 months from the date of this permission, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: Because the use hereby permitted is required to mitigate the impact of the temporary closure of Wokingham Station car park and longer term use of the land as a car park would not necessarily be appropriate. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3; MDD Policy CC03, TB08, TB21; and National Planning Policy Framework para 74.

4. Prior to the use of the site as a car park, works to improve denotation of the one-way system within the Paddocks car park shall be completed in accordance with details to be first agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To provide for a safe and functional access to the site. Relevant policy: Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP3; MDD policy CC07

PLANNING HISTORY

SO/2012/1043	12 June 2012: screening opinion for development at "Peach Place" and Elms Field concluded the proposals constituted EIA development.
SO/2012/1044	19 July 2012: Scoping Opinion for an EIA for development at "Peach Place" and Elms Field
F/2013/2283	20 December 2013: parallel applications for (re)development of Peach Place and Elms Field withdrawn prior to determination.
F/2013/2284	

153125

Full application for the erection of mixed use development for Town Centre uses comprising A1 shops including a food store, A2 Financial and Professional Services, A3 Cafes and Restaurants, A4 Drinking Establishments, A5 Hot Food Takeaways; Cinema (D2); 95-bed hotel (C1); 126 C3 residential units; re-configured town park; new and re- configured public car parking and partial closure of Elms Road (south) and provision of a new road to link Wellington Road and Shute End, as part of the regeneration of Wokingham Town Centre. Decision pending / due to be considered by planning committee on 30/03/2016.

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Existing land use(s): Public Open Space / Use Class D2 Assembly and Leisure
Proposed temporary use: Car park
Existing parking spaces: 0
Proposed temporary parking spaces: 96

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

This report has been prepared prior to the expiration of the 28 day statutory consultation period for the application (ending 25/03/2016). Any subsequent consultation responses and representations will be reported through the members update.

Highways	No objection
Biodiversity	No comments received
Tree and Landscape	No objection
Flooding and Drainage	No objection
Environmental Health	No objection
Sport England	No objection
Wokingham Town Council	No objection to the proposed change of use but request that consideration is given to relocating the well-used basketball posts.
Local members	No comments received

APPLICANTS POINTS

The works will alleviate temporary pressure on parking at Wokingham Station and is an appropriate solution within the timescale of the works.

REPRESENTATIONS

2 letter of objection received. One objection cites the proximity of the site to Albert Road properties and highlights the potential for noise, disturbance and light pollution and loss of public sports amenity.

Another letter objects to there being no provision for reinstatement of the sports area or replacement of the four trees. Also asserts that there is sufficient car parking capacity in other town centre car parks to accommodate displaced station parking. Suggests

creating additional capacity by demolishing Wellington House and that the tennis court conversion does not represent value for money.

[OFFICER NOTE: Recommended condition 3 requires reinstatement of the land to its former use after a period of 12 months and hence safeguards the site for sports use; therefore the acceptability of the proposal is not tied to the outcome of application 153125. WBC Highways have advised that additional capacity is temporarily required to accommodate displaced train station parking. Evaluation of potential alternative sites such as Wellington House and Elms Multi Storey is not required to assess the current application in planning terms. Value for money is not a planning issue. Other issues including impact on trees and neighbour amenity are evaluated in the main body of the report, please see below. Note above comment under 'consultation responses' – any further representations that are received will be reported through the members update]

PLANNING POLICY

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies

- CP1 Sustainable development
- CP3 General Principles for development
- CP4 Infrastructure requirements
- CP6 Managing travel demand
- CP7 Biodiversity
- CP8 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- CP9 Scale and location of development proposals
- CP10 Improvements in the Strategic Transport Network
- CP13 Town centres and shopping
- CP14 Growth and renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policies

- CC01 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC02 Development Limits
- CC03 Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
- CC06 Noise
- CC07 Parking
- CC08 Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure
- CC09 Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
- CC10 Sustainable Drainage
- TB08 Open Space, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development
- TB15 Major Town and Small Town/District Centre development
- TB21 Landscape Character
- TB23 Biodiversity and Development
- SAL02 Allocated housing development sites
- SAL05 Delivery of avoidance measures for Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- SAL08 Allocated Mixed Use Sites

South East Plan Policy

- NRM6 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

Supplementary Planning Documents and other guidance

Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (June 2012)

Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (April 2010)

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

PLANNING ISSUES

Principle of Development

1. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
2. The site is located within a major development location and within a settlement boundary and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers and this is discussed below.

Description of Development

3. The proposal is for temporary change of use of four outdoor tennis courts (Use Class D2 Assembly and Leisure) to use as a car park for 96 vehicles, together with the formation of a 7x15m access linking the site to the existing Paddocks car park.
4. A car park is temporarily required to alleviate anticipated pressures on parking capacity resulting from the short term closure of a car park at Wokingham train station, operated by South West Trains. The proposal will help to mitigate some of the 200 spaces that will be made temporarily unavailable whilst South West Trains undertake works to upgrade parking capacity. Heras fencing would be erected around the southern and eastern boundaries and two 6m lighting columns are proposed along the northern boundary.

Access and Movement

5. Plan PADDOCK/700/001 constitutes an appropriate layout for the 96 car parking spaces that are proposed. The access to the Paddocks is also considered to be appropriate, subject to there being improvements to signs and white line markings (denoting the one way system) within the Paddocks car park itself. The applicant has agreed to undertake such works. Therefore, there are no operational concerns and the proposal is acceptable in highways terms.

Character of the Area

6. The site is within an area of public open space known as Elms Field, an urban park to the west of Elms Road and north of Wellington Road. The tennis courts located at the northern end of the park, adjacent to a children's' play area and bordering the Paddocks car park off Ellison Way.
7. Elms Field has an open, green and semi-formal character and benefits from a number of mature trees, mainly sited around its perimeter. The southern half is a grassed, informal recreation area; whereas the northern half, including the tennis courts and a children's' play area, has a more formal character. A row of trees separate the tennis courts from the existing Paddocks car park to the north of the site. Following consultation with the Tree and Landscape officer, these were not considered to be high value and four of these trees have been removed.
8. The site is subject to a separate, unrelated planning application which proposes to redevelop the area between Wellington Road and Shute End (including Elms Field and Paddocks Car Park) for a mixed use development, as part of the regeneration of Wokingham Town Centre. Application 153125 is due to be considered by the planning committee on 30/03/2016. If approved, the tennis court land would be redeveloped for housing.
9. The site reads as part of Elms Field and the proposed car park development would intensify the use of the land, detracting from the character of the wider recreation area. However, the car park use would be temporary and there are other mitigating factors which are considered to outweigh the harm, as set out in later sections of this report.

Car Parking in Wokingham Town Centre

10. Core Strategy Policy CP14 seeks to ensure the growth and renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre, ensuring development provides and maintains appropriate car parking to facilitate a viable and sustainable town centre.
11. Additional car parking is required to alleviate the effects of the short term closure of the station car park during works to upgrade its capacity. The application proposal will help to mitigate some of the 200 spaces that will be rendered temporarily unavailable. This will reduce pressure that would otherwise be transferred to town centre car parks, thereby helping to safeguard existing retail and leisure amenities, in keeping with the aims of Core Strategy policy CP14.

Loss of Recreational Facility – tennis courts

12. Core Strategy Policy CP3, MDD Policy TB08 and NPPF para. 74 seek to prevent the loss of open space, sport and recreational facilities unless they can be demonstrated as surplus to requirements, would be replaced elsewhere, or provide for an alternative that clearly outweighs the loss.
13. The proposal would result in the temporary loss of a currently unused sports facility. Recommended condition 3 requires the car park use to cease and for the former use to be reinstated within 12 months. Therefore, the proposal is not considered to result in a permanent loss of a sports facility.

14. Permanent loss of the tennis courts is a matter for consideration under the Elms Field planning application (153125) and not the current application (160523). However, it should be noted that the wider Elms Field redevelopment proposes to replace the tennis courts on a different site and Wokingham Borough Council Executive Resolution dated 28/01/2016 secures the sum of £320,000 for the provision of replacement courts within the sports hub at Cantley Park. An application for these is expected to be submitted in the near future. This would mitigate the loss of the Elms Field tennis facilities should planning application 153125 be approved and implemented. Cantley Park is approximately 1km walk from the edge of the designated town centre and 1.5km from the existing tennis courts; Sport England have confirmed that this constitutes a suitable alternative provision.
15. In these circumstances, temporary loss of the tennis courts would not be contrary to development plan policies.

Loss of Recreational Facility – basketball hoops

16. Wokingham Town Council have commented that basketball hoops on the site are popular with teenagers and suggest relocating these.
17. The applicant has confirmed that the hoops are to be moved, but can be re-accommodated within the existing site. Bollards will be installed at the access to prevent use of the site for parking at the weekend. Therefore, basketball hoops will continue to be available for safe use at weekends.

Residential Amenities

18. A local resident has objected to the application on the basis that the temporary car park would be within close proximity of Albert Road properties and would lead to noise disturbance and light pollution.
19. The nearest property, 14 Albert Road, is located 15m from the westernmost extent of the car park and separated by mature foliage. Other Albert Road properties are considerably further away. Although some cars would park in the south western corner of the site, the majority will be located further to the east, away from Albert Road. Two 6m street lighting columns would be erected; however, both of these are set in from the western site boundary and would provide a low level of illumination and light spillage. The proximity of the proposed car park to a residential area is not uncommon for a town centre location.
20. Therefore, it is not considered that the development would result in a significant harmful impact in terms of noise or light pollution over this temporary period.

Trees and Landscape

21. The application indicates four trees to be removed in order to facilitate a proposed access link between the site and the Paddocks car park. None of these are considered to be high value and there is no requirement to replace them. Following dialogue between the applicant and the WBC Tree and Landscape officer, it was agreed that the trees could be felled in order to prevent disturbance to wildlife during the bird nesting season. It should be noted that the remaining row of trees (separating the site from the Paddocks car park) are proposed for removal as part of the Elms Field planning application.

22. The proposed access road and Heras fencing will not have any detrimental impact on trees that are shown as being retained within the Elms Field planning application (153125). Therefore, the proposal is acceptable in tree and landscape terms.

Ecology

23. The proposed access link will not cause harm to protected species and the application is otherwise considered to be acceptable in ecology terms.

CONCLUSION

The tennis courts are not currently in active use and so short term use of the site for car parking would not materially affect sports provision within the town centre. Basketball hoops would be relocated within the site and continue to be available for use at weekends when the car park is not in use. The proposal will impact visually on the character of the surrounding Elms Field recreation area. However, the land use would be temporary and is considered necessary to mitigate the short term loss of the station car park for the duration of works to upgrade its capacity. Only modest physical changes are proposed and the car park use would not result in significant harm to residential amenity. As such, the proposal accords with the development plan and is recommended for conditional approval.

CONTACT DETAILS

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