

## **Planning Appeal by Gladman, Land off Peppard Road, Emmer Green**

1. I am speaking on behalf of Helen Lambert, Chair of the Caversham and District Residents' Association (CADRA) since 2005. My name is Kim Pearce. I have been a member of the CADRA committee since 2014. I am a Chartered Architect and Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects
2. The association was founded over 50 years ago. It draws members from in and around Caversham. With an active Facebook page and well used website, its reach is far wider than the active membership of around 500 households. CADRA has always played an important role in maintaining a strong informal network with other local organisations.
3. The association has followed these proposals from the first public pre-application exhibitions. We were struck at that early stage by the explanation from several of the Gladman team that the development would be a 'natural extension' to Caversham and Emmer Green.
4. January 2017, CADRA submitted an objection to South Oxfordshire District Council to this speculative unplanned development.
5. November 2017, CADRA wrote formally to the Planning Inspectorate. This follow on statement today aims to summarise the main issues and we hope will be a helpful overview. It also refers to paragraphs in the Reading Borough Council Appeal Statement December 2017
6. Concerns expressed include:
  - Planning Policy
  - Traffic and Transport (2.14 and 6.1)
  - School places (2.12 and 4.21)
  - Primary Health services (2.13)
  - And in particular the impact on Caversham and Reading since development cannot be "properly served by infrastructure" (Para 2.1)
7. The pressure of traffic moving south through Caversham Centre is a major issue for residents of Caversham and indeed Reading as a whole. The capacity of the roads towards the Thames crossings, and the bridges themselves, is limited, so not capable of mitigation without major new infrastructure. Long traffic queues and the consequent pollution are a constant concern. This is a major factor in both South Oxfordshire and Reading deciding against planning for new housing development in this area. Recent air quality readings show the two major Caversham junctions where traffic arrives from South Oxfordshire as 55 and 57 micrograms per cubic metre, well above the European Union legal mean annual limit for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) of 40µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

With poor pedestrian and cycle routes, anticipation of school places at a distance within South Oxfordshire and most employment in the opposite Reading direction, it seems clear that the new residents will be obliged to rely heavily on private cars.

8. The landscape of the area in question is highly valued by local people. While not part of the AONB, it forms an important setting for the AONB and has many important qualities which other have explained in more detail. As already demonstrated, the development would completely change the “gateway” into Emmer Green which is presently a soft edge with a rural feel.
9. The SODC Committee report, the Reasons for Refusal, and the submissions of the Principal Parties, all focus heavily on the policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan(s) and the adequacy or otherwise of the housing land supply within it.

Important as that may be, we suggest that at least as pressing a strategic planning issue is the relationship of the appeal site to Reading and its impact on Reading’s Local Plan policies.

The site physically abuts the Reading boundary, and Reading’s housing areas extend right up to it. This proximity, the structure of local transport, health and schools, the retail offer and Reading’s huge pull as an employment centre all mean that, if developed, this site would in all practical respects function as an extension of Reading. The administrative boundary of SODC would have no real impact on that.

Reading’s Local Plan meets its housing land need (para 2.2). Not only is there no need in planning terms for such an extension, but ad hoc greenfield land releases would in our view undermine its NPG-compliant focus on brownfield sites. Neither does Reading have the infrastructure or services to support such development. it. Even if such releases were to be contemplated, the least suitable area for them would be north of the Thames, for the reasons we have indicated. We set this out in more detail in our letter of 20 November 2017 para 2.1
10. We are in no doubt that development in this area would have a very serious impact on Caversham and Emmer Green. We urge the Inspector to look beyond the administrative boundaries of South Oxfordshire and examine the real and practical issues arising from an effective extension of the Reading border.
11. It is clear from their strategic plans that neither South Oxfordshire nor Reading support or have planned for new housing in this area. Development without adequate infrastructure and services cannot be considered ‘sustainable.’
12. While recognizing that each case is decided on its own merits, there is substantial evidence of the desire to develop the areas around this site. Reading Borough Council confirms that any appeal decision on the current proposals could set a precedent with detrimental impacts Para 1.1, 2.9 – 2.11

At present the boundary of housing follows the administrative boundary in a relatively smooth line. If this site were to be developed, the housing line would have a sudden jagged edge and inevitably open the way for further development without adequate infrastructure and not capable of mitigation.
13. We urge the Inspector to refuse this appeal.