

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO. 9

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 2nd March 2022

App No.: 211843/OUT

Site Address: Reading Golf Club, Kidmore End Road, Emmer Green

Proposal: Outline planning application, with matters reserved in respect of Appearance, for demolition of the existing clubhouse and the erection of a new residential scheme (C3 use to include affordable housing) and public open space at the former Reading Golf Club

Applicant: Fairfax (Reading) Limited and Reading Golf Club Limited

16 Week Target Determination Date: 17th March 2022 Extended to 31st March 2022

RECOMMENDATION: Amended as follows (italics)

Subject to the Secretary of State confirming that they do wish to call in the application for their determination delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services to

- i) **GRANT** Outline Planning Permission, subject to conditions and satisfactory completion of a section 106 legal agreement or
- ii) Refuse Outline planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 31st March 2022 (unless officers on behalf of the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)

S106 Obligations - As per the main agenda report but with the following amendments proposed (italics):

Obligation 3 - amended to: *A contribution of £135,000 towards carbon off-setting or other contribution agreed with the LPA as part of the detailed SAP energy performance review of the development. Sustainability Statement and Energy Statement to be submitted to include projected SAP calculations and including confirmation of carbon off-setting approach that will be taken and, if necessary, a calculation of S106 payment amount required should the development fail to achieve 100% off-set on-site to be submitted*

Obligation 9 - amended to: A contribution of ~~£50,000~~ £100,000 towards facilitating efficiency and safety improvements at the junction of Peppard Road / Prospect Street / Henley Road / Westfield Road signalised control junction to increase capacity at the junction

Conditions - As per the main agenda report but with the following additional conditions proposed:

49. Thames Water - Groundwater Abstraction Source Protection Strategy - Prior to commencement of development details of a a Groundwater Abstraction Source Protection Strategy detailing how the water abstraction source would not be detrimentally affected by the proposed development both during and after its construction has been agreed with Thames Water to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

50. Phasing - Prior to commencement of development details, plans and written schedule showing any proposed phasing of the development to be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. No development shall commence on site until details or plans and a written schedule showing the phasing of the development hereby approved has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

All conditions and obligations requiring submission and approval of details would be aligned with any approved phasing plan to allow details to be submitted and approved in accordance with any approved development phasing.

1. Corrections

1.1 Paragraph 1.1 of the main agenda report incorrectly refers to the application site area as being 12.5ha when this should be 12.15ha. The site area is referred to correctly elsewhere within the report.

1.2 The table referred to within and under paragraph 2.4 of the main agenda report incorrectly references the unit mix for the 4-bedroom affordable housing units proposed. This incorrectly states that there are to be 5 x 4-bedroom houses to be provided at Reading Affordable Rent levels and 15 x 4-bedroom houses to be provided at Affordable Home Ownership (shared ownership) units. The proposed units mix for the 4-bedroom affordable housing units proposed is in fact 6 x 4-bedroom houses to be provided at Reading Affordable Rent levels and 14 x 4-bedroom houses to be provided as Affordable Home Ownership (shared ownership) units. This small change does not impact on any of the overall conclusions of the main agenda report. The total number of private dwellings proposed within the table under paragraph 2.4 should also read 156 and not 157 which is typographical error.

2. Thames Water

2.1 The following paragraph was omitted in error from Thames Water's Consultation comments on the application referenced under paragraph 4.9 of the main agenda report.

Following initial investigations Thames Water has identified that, the proposed development is located within Source Protection Zone of a groundwater abstraction source. These zones are used for potable water sources for public water supply for which Thames Water has a statutory duty to protect. Thames Water request that the following condition be added to any planning permission. "Development here by approved shall not commence until a Source Protection Strategy detailing, how the developer intends to ensure the water abstraction source is not detrimentally affected by the proposed development both during and after its construction has been submitted to and approved by, the local planning authority in consultation with the water undertaker. The development shall be constructed in line with the recommendations of the strategy.

Reason - To ensure that the water resource is not detrimentally affected by the development. More detailed information can be obtained from Thames Waters' Groundwater Resources Team email GroundwaterResources@Thameswater.co.uk Tel: 0203 577 3603. Should the Local Planning Authority consider the above recommendation inappropriate or are unable to include it in the decision notice, it is important that the Local Planning Authority liaises with Thames Water Development Planning Department (telephone 0203 577 9998) prior to the planning application approval.

- 2.2 Therefore a further condition is recommended in line with these comments as set out in the updated recommendation box at the beginning of this update report to secure submission and approval of a Source Protection Strategy.

3 Transport

- 3.1 Following publication of the main agenda report the RBC Transport Development Control Manager has reviewed the recommended contribution (£50,000) sought towards the MOVA (signal phases) and pedestrian /cycle improvements to the Peppard Road / Henley Road / Westfield Road junction as set out under section 106 obligation no. 9 within the recommendation box of the main agenda report. Having further reviewed the costs of carrying out these junction works with RBC Highways Officer it is now recommended that this contribution be increased to £100,000 which has been agreed by the applicant. An updated s106 obligation no. 9 to reflect this is set out with the recommendation box at the beginning of this update report.

- 3.2 The RBC Transport Development Control Manager has also provided the following additional comments on the transport mitigation measures proposed as part of the development:

Localised Pedestrian Improvements

To improve pedestrian facilities in the local area, a raised informal crossing, comprising a flat-top speed hump with a Duratherm herringbone imprint, is proposed on Kidmore End Road: at Lyefield Court at its junction with Kidmore End Road, and on Grove Road at its junction with Kidmore End Road.

Traffic calming measures such as these can improve traffic safety at the junction by slowing vehicles down when entering and exiting the junction and / or increase visibility of pedestrians to other road users. These informal crossings will be provided with tactile paving to facilitate the crossing of visually impaired pedestrians.

The crossing proposed on Kidmore End Road does aid pedestrians wishing to avoid the narrow footpath located to the south of the application site running alongside the White Horse Public House. This ensures that pedestrians have a choice of which route they would prefer to use.

To supplement the above an imprint crossing is also proposed at the Kidmore End Road / Peppard Road junction. This allows those pedestrians wishing to travel further south along Peppard Road / Buckingham Drive to do so.

These localised improvements ensure that the pedestrian facilities surrounding the site help to encourage residents of the development and the wider community to walk as a primary mode of travel, especially for those shorter destination trips. This also ensures that pedestrians are not dissuaded from walking essentially at the origin of their journey which would ultimately lead to them transferring to the private car.

Peppard Road / Henley Road / Prospect Street / Westfield Road junction

The assessment of the development has identified that the proposal will further exacerbate congestion at the Peppard Road / Henley Road / Prospect Street / Westfield Road junction. Given that physical improvements are not possible at the junction due to insufficient land being available the applicant has proposed the introduction of Microprocessor Optimised Vehicle Actuation (MOVA) to the junction. This is at a cost of £50,000.

MOVA is an intelligent traffic light system that detects what arm of the junction should be given priority and for how long so as to better manage the traffic. This would be instead of standard timings which would result in green times even if vehicles were not waiting / approaching the junction.

It should be stressed that the applicant is only required to mitigate the impact of the development and not any pre-existing issues. The introduction of MOVA will have a positive impact on the junction in managing the flows better and reducing congestion not just within the peak periods but throughout the course of the day.

It has also been agreed with the applicant that a further contribution of £50,000 will be provided towards improvements to pedestrian and cycle improvements at this junction. This has been requested following further discussions with the Network Management team that have identified that the introduction of MOVA and pedestrian / cycle improvements at the junction would equate to a total amount of £150,000.

The Highway Authority have not requested this full amount given that the pedestrian / cycle movements generated by the development would have 'diluted' by the time they had reached this junction and therefore although there will be new movements these would not be of such a significant figure through this junction that this would warrant the request of the developer to pay this full amount. As is stated above the applicant is only required to mitigate the impacts of the development and therefore the contribution requested is compliant with the National requirement for S106 contributions.

As such the contribution of £100,000 is sought to facilitate pedestrian / cycle improvements and / or the introduction of MOVA at the junction of Peppard Road / Prospect Street / Henley Road / Westfield Road signalised control junction.

Bus Contribution

The applicant has also agreed to provide a contribution of £50,000 a year (for a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 5 years) to support bus services serving the site within the Caversham area. This contribution will help to provide alternative modes of travel to the private car for both residents of the development and the wider community and therefore reduce the reliability on the private car in turn reducing congestion.

Peppard Road / Kiln Road / Caversham Park Road junction

The assessment of the development has identified that the proposal will further exacerbate congestion at the Peppard Road / Kiln Road / Caversham Park Road junction. The applicant has therefore provided a mitigation scheme illustrated on Drawing 45675/5511/005.

This mitigation scheme includes the realignment of kerb lines to creating two lanes at Caversham Park Road approach to Kiln Road and the Kiln Road approach to Peppard Road. This provides increased capacity at the junction and as such has been deemed acceptable to mitigate the impacts of the development.

Conclusion

The suite of measures being secured provide a varied array of options to mitigate the impacts of the development which is deemed acceptable to the Highway Authority.

4 Layout/Scale/Landscaping

4.1 Paragraphs 6.6.28 to 6.6.46 of the main agenda report consider the wider visual and landscape impacts of the proposed development. Further to this Officers consider it pertinent to draw Members attention to paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) which states the following:

Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

- 4.2 Whilst the above paragraph from the NPPF is not explicitly stated with the main agenda report Officers consider that this matter has been considered in the conclusions to this section of the report where the impact on the setting of the AONB is assessed.

5 Woodland Trust Comments

- 5.1 The Woodland Trust (who are not a statutory consultee) have provided the following consultation comments on the application:

The Trust previously provided comments on the withdrawn application 200713 located at this site. We have assessed the new application details and wish to maintain our position on this development.

We remain concerned about potential impact to T160a which is verified as a veteran oak tree on the Ancient Tree Inventory (ID no: 184641). Whilst we acknowledge that the applicants have provided an un-encroached root protection area (RPA) for the tree in line with BS:5837:2012, as a veteran specimen T160a should be afforded an RPA in line with Natural England's standing advice: "For ancient or veteran trees (including those on the woodland boundary), the buffer zone should be at least 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree. The buffer zone should be 5 metres from the edge of the tree's canopy if that area is larger than 15 times the tree's diameter. This will create a minimum root protection area. Where assessment shows other impacts are likely to extend beyond this distance, the proposal is likely to need a larger buffer zone."

When the increase in RPA is considered, it is likely that the proposed road will fall within the root protection area of T160a. As such, we recommend that the road layout is re-aligned to ensure the veteran tree is appropriately protected from the impacts of the development. Similarly, a footpath is proposed within the RPA of T150, a veteran crack willow also recorded on the Ancient Tree Inventory (ID no: 201817).

Furthermore, the Trust requests confirmation from the applicant that no trees provided to the site via our MOREwoods scheme are to be felled or damaged to facilitate the proposed development, as it is not clear from the maps provided if this is the case. The aforementioned trees should be appropriately protected from the impacts of the scheme.

- 5.2 The RBC Natural Environment Officer has commented as follows:

T160a Oak - I note the lack of information on the Woodland Trust (WT) inventory about this tree other than it's a 'veteran Oak'. The tree survey submitted with the application refers to this tree as a mature Oak (not veteran) with a stem diameter of 1224mm (which would give a circumference/girth of 3845 mm - 3.8m).

WT guidance in terms of what Oak trees to record states the following:

Girth size

- Up to 10m plus in girth. Record all oak more than 4.5m.
- Consider recording oak with any ancient characteristics and a girth more than 3m.
- It's important to rely on characteristics rather than size, which is an unreliable indication of age. Most ancient oak are greater than 6m in girth if they grow in oak woodland, but oak that have been previously managed as a pollard may be no more than 3.5m in girth.

Based on the above and given the submitted tree survey with the application has been carried out to an appropriate standard it is considered that the classification of this tree is not clear. However, in terms of the impact on the RPA of this Oak, based on BS5837 calculations, this is 14.7m, so more or less the 15m it's capped at by this BS (this is the radius of a circle from the trunk). It is reasonable to argue a greater RPA for veteran trees. For arguments sake, the RPA of this tree, based on the WT 15 x diameter recommendation would be 18.4m and would then mean the road to the north would overlap it by around 3m or so. As the RPA (18.4m) will be unaffected in all other directions, I would say that 'on balance' the impingement to the north for the road is acceptable. It should be acknowledged that developments such as this never achieve a perfect situation. It should be noted that a huge offset for the confirmed veteran Oak T53 (WT's 184642) is provided well in excess of WT recommendations.

In relation to T150 Crack Willow, it is acknowledged that a footpath is proposed in its RPA (15+m) but this, in line with normal requirements for any retained tree's RPA, will be a 'no-dig' footpath to prevent root damage. This only affects a very small portion of the overall RPA which is otherwise unimpacted.

- 5.3 Officers are satisfied that the impact of the development on retained trees have been fully assessed and that the comments from the WT do not change the recommendations set out within the main agenda report.

6 Policy CA1b

- 6.1 Officers note that a significant number of the representations received are concerned that the proposals do not comply with the requirements of the Local Plan allocation, Policy CA1b. Therefore, it is considered pertinent to further reiterate those points made in paragraphs 6.1.4 to 6.1.6 of the main agenda report with regard to this Policy.

- 6.2 Only part of the site falls within the area allocated in the Local Plan as CA1b. This is allocated for development for residential (90-130 dwellings) and replacement clubhouse, supported by on-site community infrastructure including healthcare, subject to the future provision of golf on the remainder of the Golf Club site. However, the current application covers an area significantly wider than the allocated land and would have the effect of

removing any potential for 18-hole golf on the remainder of the course. As such, it represents a very different form of development to that envisaged under the policy, and the development should not therefore be treated as having specific policy support in respect of CA1b.

- 6.3 In consideration of the current application it is important to consider whether it has been demonstrated that the development envisaged under Policy CA1b cannot be delivered. This is a matter which has been subject to considerable discussion through the Local Plan adoption process, and at the time of the Local Plan Examination, there was considered to still be sufficient potential for its delivery to justify its inclusion. However, at the time of the Examination of the Plan, the Council was concerned that the Golf Club had not shown that sufficient efforts had been made to find adjacent land within South Oxfordshire for the additional holes required.
- 6.4 This situation has now progressed further and the Golf Club have relocated to The Caversham Golf Club and whilst a reduced family orientated short form golf offer continues on remaining land to the north of the application site in South Oxfordshire (not part of the current application proposals), there appears to be little realistic prospect of the development envisaged by the Local Plan, with a limited residential development to secure the golf use of the remainder of the site, being delivered.
- 6.5 It is therefore considered that it is clear that the development envisaged by allocation CA1b has no realistic prospect of delivery, and that the application should therefore be determined on its own merits based on other policies in the Local Plan and other material considerations.

7 Drainage SuDS Basins

- 7.1 Paragraphs 4.3 and 6.9.7 of the main agenda report sets out that the RBC Lead Local Flood Authority raises no objection to the proposed development based upon the SuDS Strategy submitted with the application. Officers consider it pertinent to provide further clarification on the proposed drainage arrangements for the site.
- 7.2 The Site is located in Flood Zone 1 and therefore has a Low Probability of flooding from rivers and the sea. The Environment Agency flood maps for surface water flows indicate that a surface water flow pathway runs along the northern part of the Site and appears to flow south west to north east, although this is only present under the extreme, 1 in 1000-year storm scenario. The Site is currently 'greenfield' and as such the surface water runoff generated as a result of the proposed development is required to be managed.
- 7.3 The drainage proposals for the development are based around three attenuation basins and a single infiltration basin, that are proposed to be located in the lowest parts of the site, in combination with swales (drainage channels) and use of permeable paving. The drainage strategy submitted sets

out that ground surveys and permeability testing of the site shows that the Seaford Chalk underlays the northern part of the site which is an appropriate medium to receive stormwater and hence the proposed basins are also located to this part of the site. As confirmed by the RBC Lead Local Flood Authority the proposed drainage basins and other mitigation measures proposed are considered capable of accommodating the required stormwater runoff volumes for the site and conditions are recommended to secure submission and approval by the LPA of full SuDS scheme, management and maintenance strategy.



Location of Proposed Attenuation Basins (1 to 3) and Infiltration Basin (4)

7.4 In terms of the physical form of the attenuation basins they would be between 1.3m and 3m in depth and between 1775m² and 705m² in area. Pipework and swales would connect the proposed basins with the final destination for all stormwater to be the infiltration basin (which is the largest of the four proposed basins). In short, the attenuation basins would be lined and would collect and store stormwater before transferring this to the infiltration basin in a controlled matter where the water would infiltrate to the ground. For the significant majority of the time, the basins would be empty and would only fill with water during storm events.

8 Potential Phasing of Development

8.1 An additional condition is set out with the recommendation box at the beginning of this update report to secure submission and approval of a phasing plan to facilitate that the development could proceed in an orderly and well-planned manner. All conditions requiring submission and approval of details would be aligned with any approved phasing plan to allow details to be submitted and approved in accordance with any approved development phasing.

9 Sustainability

- 9.1 Section 6.10 of the main agenda report relates to the sustainability aspects of the development. Paragraph 6.10.5 of the main agenda report incorrectly refers to proposed energy efficiency and decentralised energy measures proposed as demonstrating compliance with Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change). This should in-fact refer to compliance with Policies CC4 (Decentralised Energy) and H5 (Standards for New Housing) which seeks to ensure developments provide decentralised energy sources and energy efficiency measures to contribute towards achieving Reading Borough Council's zero carbon homes standard.
- 9.2 Officers consider it pertinent to provide further clarification as to the developments compliance with Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change) which require that all developments are designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate changes. These measures should include, orientating building to maximise opportunities for natural heating and ventilation, use of trees and other planting as part of landscaping scheme to provide shading of amenity areas, building and streets to help connect habitats areas and use of native planting and that all development should minimise the impact of surface water run off via drainage system design.
- 9.3 The Energy and Sustainability Report sets out how the development has been designed to take into account climate change including the majority of homes being orientated with south/south west/south east facing facades to facilitate solar gain, with primarily occupied rooms located to the perimeter of buildings. Infrequently occupied spaces such as bathrooms sited to north elevations where feasible. Building fabrics will be designed to reduce winter heat losses and solar control glazing would mitigate excessive solar gains and overheating in summer months. Mechanical Ventilation Systems with heat recovery (MVHR) is also proposed the new dwellings to mitigate winter heat losses but with openable windows to also facilitate natural ventilation. The landscaping, biodiversity measures proposed as part of the development are also summarised within the main agenda report whilst the drainage measures are further outlined within section 7 of this update report.
- 9.4 Officers are satisfied that the proposals have demonstrated compliance with Policy CC3.
- 9.5 Officers are aware that a note has been circulated to Councillors from a member of the public with regard to the compliance of the proposals with Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) in terms of justification as to why an on-site Combined Heat and Power Plant (CHP) or use of ground source heat pumps are not proposed as part of the development. As set out in paragraph 6.10.4 of the main agenda report Officers are satisfied that the application has suitably investigated the provision of on-site CHP and demonstrated why this has not been incorporated. Paragraph 4.1.15 of the supporting text to Policy CC4 goes on to state that both air source heat pumps (ASHPs) or ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) should also be considered as alternatives to CHP given these

are less carbon incentive. As also set out in section 6.10 of the main agenda report the application proposes the use of AHSP's. However, paragraph 8.5 of the Council's adopted Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019 goes on to state that GHSPs should be investigated as a priority over ASHPs given they have greater seasonal efficiency and that evidence should be provided at planning application stage where GSHP systems are discounted, and ASHP systems selected.

- 9.6 The Energy and Sustainability Report submitted as part of the application includes investigation of the provision of GSHP's, whilst an addendum note has also been submitted by the Applicant to further explain why this option has not been incorporated, which has also been circulated to Councillors. In summary this sets out that GSHP's extract heat from the ground and upgrade it to a more useful temperature. The heat pump consists of a closed loop ground heat exchanger, a heat pump and a distribution system. The ground heat exchanger is a sealed loop of pipe buried either vertically or horizontally in the ground. The report identifies that there are risks associated with this option due to the site's location above a groundwater Source Protection Zone (as referred to under Thames Water Comments in section 2 of this update report) which would result in pollution concerns from leaks.
- 9.7 The report also notes that in terms of GSHP's from a heat exchange perspective the boreholes/ loops required to provide GSHP's would likely be too close together on this site and you would see thermal breakthrough (e.g. in the summer the heated injection borehole would heat a radius around it which would likely impact the nearby cooling abstraction borehole) which would largely reduce the effectiveness of the system.
- 9.8 In terms of efficiency of GSHP's the report notes that these are theoretically marginally higher for GSHPs than ASHP's but that these levels are often not achieved in practice due to design and operational issues. Notably, adopting GSHP at scale works best if the source can be 'recharged' - i.e. where fully air-conditioned buildings are proposed (more akin to commercial developments), in summer heat can be rejected back into the ground. This is not the case on this development, and extensive arrays to serve the homes could result in degrading the source, affecting performance.
- 9.9 Officers opinion is that the application has satisfactorily investigated the provision of GHSP's and explained why these have not been incorporated within the development as per the requirements of the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. The proposed used of ASHP's is also recommended under Policy CC4 and within the SPD and therefore the proposals are considered compliant in this respect.
- 9.10 Paragraph 6.10.7 of the main agenda report refers to the projected carbon performance of the development in achieving zero carbon homes standards required under Policy H5. However, noting the application is outline with detailed matters of Appearance reserved for later consideration it makes it difficult to accurately predict the energy performance of the development at

this stage. The proposed wording of obligation no. 3 (carbon off-setting) of the main agenda report is recommended to be adjusted to allow for this to be fully assessed at detailed stage and ultimately determined most accurately once the dwellings have been built and a SAP assessment of the finished dwellings carried out. Proposed conditions 7 and 8 of the main agenda report would ensure that the development remains policy and achieves a minimum 35% improvement above building regulations as require by Policy H5. The amended obligation is set out in the recommendation box of this update report.

10 Conclusions

- 10.1 Officers consider it pertinent to add that the conclusions reached with section 7 of the main agenda report have been reached in full assessment of the proposals against the relevant policies of the Development Plan and in the context of other relevant national and local planning policies and other material considerations as set out within the main agenda report.

11 Secretary of State - Request to Intervene

- 11.1 The LPA received notification from the Secretary of State (SoS) on 1st March 2022 that they had received a Third-Party request to call in this planning application for their determination. The SoS advises they do not act on third party requests to call in planning applications until the relevant planning committee has resolved to approve the application. Therefore, the SoS have requested that if planning permission were to be granted for the proposed development that a decision notice is not issued until the SoS has had time to consider whether or not to call in the application.

12. Other

- 12.1 The Applicant has confirmed agreement to the proposed pre-commencement conditions.

Case Officer: Matt Burns