

CADRA Objection to Reading B.C. Planning Application No. PL/25/0691 and PL/25/0731

Proposed Development at Land West of Kidmore End Road, Oxfordshire, RG4 8SG

CADRA objects to the proposed development at land west of Kidmore End Road and will make an objection to the South Oxfordshire District Council planning application no. P25/S1431/O with additional information included.

Introduction

Although the land in question lies within South Oxfordshire, the only access is through constricted roads in Emmer Green. This means that residents will look to services including health and education in Reading and all of the burden will fall on Reading Borough Council and the residents of Emmer Green and Caversham.

Roads and traffic

A primary concern is the negative impact on local infrastructure, in particular the additional volume of traffic that will be generated. Due to the geographical position of the proposed development all traffic will have to use the single access and egress on Kidmore End Road through the newly constructed development on the Reading Borough Council land, known as the Emmer Green Drive.

This will place an increased burden on the local roads that are already extremely busy and, to date, have not benefited from any improvement works from the Emmer Green Drive development.

Reading Borough Council itself recognises that the transport and other infrastructure constraints in the northern part of the Borough have long been seen as a significant constraint to significant new development north of the River Thames. Reading is increasingly facing pressures as a result of new houses being built in the neighbouring villages, from which most traffic will regularly travel through North Reading. As the Council knows, this has had a cumulative impact on the area, with no solution likely in the medium term.

Health and Education

Additionally local provision of sufficient Doctors surgeries remains a concern. This was raised at the time of the application for the development on the RBC land area but to date no additional provision has been planned for and the Emmer Green Surgery has not been able to expand.

Utilities

CADRA were aware that the utility infrastructure providers were initially unable to service the Emmer Green Drive development without upgrade works. To what extent does this additional proposal place a further strain and impact service levels for the local community? Additional development is likely to impede the introduction of further heat pumps in the Reading development which have to date been prevented by lack of electrical capacity.

Construction

While recognising that a Construction Method Statement would be an issue for Reserved Matters, RBC Councillors and Officers will be aware of the many difficulties experienced in Emmer Green over construction traffic and connection of utilities. There are grave concerns that these would continue under the proposed development and be exacerbated by the complexities of coordination between different authorities.

Biodiversity, Ecology and Landscape

While recognising that this is formally a matter for SODC, this is an important area of green space which is highly valued by local residents.

These issues have been considered in considerable detail and are well documented as part of the examination of the Kidmore End Parish Neighbourhood Plan. Map 4 on page 56 of their plan shows the area from the AONB right to the Emmer Green boundary as Local Valued Landscape. The Examiners Report May 2022 in para 7.89 confirmed that the *"principle of identifying a Locally Valued Landscape is entirely appropriate."*

Reading's adopted Local Plan's policies for Caversham and Emmer Green (sections 8.1.6, 8.2.1(e), and 8.2.4) specifically requires preservation of "the edge of the Chilterns National Landscape" and "the relationship of the landscape with the Chiltern Hills," recognising the importance of "wooded and undeveloped areas that help to link the area into the wider Chilterns landscape."

Policy ENV13 of the Reading Plan, page 54, says *"Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of a Major Landscape Feature"* which includes *"The North Reading dry valleys and Chilterns Escarpment."* Then para 4.2.66 (same page) says *"The Chilterns AONB runs along part of the boundary between Reading and South Oxfordshire but does not cross it. It is vital that the rural-urban fringe at this point is managed to ensure that development does not jeopardise the characteristics of the AONB."*

This development would adversely impact the landscape character and Chilterns connections that the Reading Local Plan and the Kidmore End Parish Neighbourhood Plan are seeking to protect, undermining strategic landscape policies for this sensitive area.

CADRA acknowledges the proposal to protect Cucumber Wood and the "Dry Valley" to the northeast, though this remains unclear.

Conclusion

The proposed development would place considerable additional pressures on both Reading Borough Council and on local people. It would provide a gateway to development threatening the very area which RBC, SODC and KEPC are all committed to protecting. We urge Reading to oppose it in the strongest terms.