

SUPPLEMENTARY & INITIAL COMMENTS ON P25/S1431/O

SUPPLEMENTARY COMMENTS - 5th September 2025

Caversham and District Residents' Association (CADRA) notes the new information provided by the applicant. However, it does not address any of the issues raised by CADRA in its objection dated 26th June 2025. Therefore, the objections that we have already submitted do not change.

We note the well-reasoned KEPC comments regarding the applicant's addendum and agree with them.

Trees

We note and welcome the small decrease to the number of trees felled, according to the Addendum, however it will have little impact on the total number of trees that lost.

The illustrative plans indicate further risks to trees and ecology, demonstrating the very real difficulties over leaving critical issues to Reserved Matters.

Illustrative plans appear to create increased risks for the important ancient woodland at Cucumber Wood. A buffer is essential to reduce the risk of vandalism and damage.

Traffic Volume Assessment

CADRA questions the methodology used in the Transport Assessment Addendum dated August 2025.

The date of the traffic survey was the 8th July 2025. However, by the 24th June both A-level and GCSE examinations had ended, and many other people would have been taking their summer holiday. As such, the survey underestimates the amount of traffic during normal term time.

As already stated, the traffic surveys does not reflect growth in traffic once the current Vistry development is fully occupied.

Furthermore, it would appear in section 3.2.2 of the Framework Travel Plan that there is an assumed 10% target reduction in car journeys which would appear to be highly speculative.

Road Junction Capacity

We note the RBC Transport report dated 25th June 2025 (application PL/25/0691), which clearly states that several junctions in Emmer Green currently operate at overcapacity. The very large number of comments on this from individual residents in their objections to both P25/S1431/O and PL/25/0691 would appear to support the RBC comments.

Pedestrian Safety

Crossing the junction at Peppard Rd / Prospect St / Henley Rd / Westfield Rd is of so much concern to residents that a petition has been launched to improve it, so pedestrians can cross safely. The application's proposed 70 houses would add to the junction's already overcapacity.

We agree that changes to this junction would be very beneficial for pedestrians (highlighted by an enquiry we had this month of a visually impaired resident who is unable to cross at this location).

Residents' Petition - <https://www.change.org/p/stop-a-fatality-install-pedestrian-crossing-on-westfield-rd-peppard-rd-junction>

Health Services

CADRA notes the large number of objections made to applications P25/S1431/O and PL/25/0691. As well as traffic and safety concerns, residents highlight the stretched health services in Emmer Green and Caversham. We note the comments from the NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Integrated Care Board, whose objection to application PL/25/0691 on 12/6/2025, confirms that there is a deficit of space at both Caversham Balmore Park Surgery and Emmer Green Surgery.

INITIAL COMMENTS - 26th June 2025 V5

CADRA Objection to South Oxfordshire District Council Planning Application No. P25/S1431/O

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

Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA), on behalf of its members across Caversham and Emmer Green, **objects** to the proposed development at land west of Kidmore End Road.

Introduction

The proposed development would be a further erosion of green space and a very significant negative environmental impact. The area is within a distinctive Chilterns dry valley with high landscape and diversity value.

It will also place an additional strain on local infrastructure and traffic in particular which is already a major problem in the area.

Whilst the land in question lies within South Oxfordshire, the only access for this development will be through constricted roads in Emmer Green within Reading Borough Council (RBC).

Potential new residents will also look to services, including health and education, in Reading.

Hence, all of the burden of this proposed development will fall on RBC and the residents of Emmer Green and Caversham.

Biodiversity, Ecology and Landscape

CADRA, its members and the local community view this area of land as a highly valued green space that is also an important habitat for a number of wildlife species. The ecology survey supporting the application recognises the area as being at “county level significance” with seven species of bats including the extremely rare Barbastelle.

The importance of this area has been considered in considerable detail as part of the examination of the Kidmore End Parish Neighbourhood Plan (KENDP). The 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.*”

CADRA strongly supports the Kidmore End Parish Council (KEPC) objection to the development. The proposed development is contrary to the KENDP objective to protect, maintain and where possible enhance existing open space between and around its villages and hamlets, with particular emphasis on retaining space between the parish and nearby larger urban / suburban developments. The proposed development would destroy part of the valued landscape to the south of the Parish.

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 require 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 the close proximity of the houses may still result in ecological damage.

The proposal includes the removal of 45 trees with 95 “small specimen” trees to be planted on site. This is a very low ratio given the c30% of saplings that die in the first year. The proposed landscaping plan does not successfully mitigate the negative impact arising from the development both from an aesthetic and climate perspective. It would take many years to off-set. CADRA notes the concern from the Forestry Officer on the risk to the trees due for retention. This raises serious questions as to whether 70 houses can be laid out with further tree removal.

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 RBC land, known as the Emmer Green Drive.

The SDP Transport Assessment submitted with the application indicates that the proposed development can be accommodated without a detrimental impact on the local transport network. However, the full extent of traffic arising from the Emmer Green Drive is yet to materialise as construction is ongoing and therefore would not have been recognised in the SDP transport assessment.

CADRA and members strongly believe the proposed development will place a significant increased burden on the local roads that are already extremely busy and on which many South Oxfordshire residents depend.

Previous transport surveys carried out prior to the planning application for current development at Emmer Green Drive, demonstrated that some of the junctions around it were already operating above capacity then. The 223 homes at Emmer Green Drive and the proposed 70 homes from this application will add around 500 more cars to the roads in Emmer Green and Caversham and will significantly worsen the situation.

To date, there have not been any improvement works in the local road network that were recognised as being required at the time of the Emmer Green Drive development application. As a result, the junctions referred to in the previous transport survey remain operating at over capacity even without the extra 500 cars.

The nearest bus stop is 700m away and would not encourage use of public transport.

KEPC has rightly also raised concern that there would also be a likely increase in traffic through the Parish. Kidmore End Road is a single-track lane leading up from Emmer Green through the south of the parish,

joining Chalkhouse Green Lane which is also narrow and primarily a single lane, through Chalkhouse Green and into Kidmore End. The increase in traffic would reduce safety for all users on the country roads and lanes in this area.

Furthermore, RBC, in its Transport Strategy 2040, recognises that the transport and other infrastructure constraints in the northern part of the Borough have long been seen as a significant constraint to large scale 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. This has had a cumulative impact on the area, with no solution likely in the medium term.

Health and Education

Local provision of sufficient doctors' surgeries remains a concern. This was raised at the time of the application for the current Emmer Green Drive development on the RBC land but, to date, no additional provision has been planned for, and the Emmer Green Surgery has not been able to expand.

The sufficiency of educational places, particularly for secondary education, is also a concern. The impact will fall on RBC where its local secondary school is regularly oversubscribed.

Utilities

CADRA are aware that the utility infrastructure providers were initially unable to service the Emmer Green Drive development without upgrade works.

There is a concern that this proposed development will place a further strain on the local utility networks and negatively impact service levels for the local community.

For example, the additional development is likely to impede the introduction of further heat pumps in the existing Emmer Green Drive development which have to date been prevented by lack of electrical capacity. It seems probable that the limited capacity will also prevent or severely limit the use of heat pumps in the proposed 70 homes.

Thames Water state that there is not sufficient capacity in its networks to accommodate this development and raises concern over the proximity of a sewage pumping station.

Further upgrading is required for the wastewater network, the sewage treatment facilities and the water supply network. These will create further disruption for residents and the community as the upgrades will entail off-site works in the local area.

Conclusion

CADRA strongly objects to the proposed development on the basis it would result in demonstrable harm to the local character, visual amenity, and landscape setting of the area. It would be detrimental to the area being prescribed as a Local Valued Landscape. The area around the town boundary is strongly defined by the distinctive dry valley and is well contained.

The proposed development would place considerable additional pressures on Reading Borough Council services, the local infrastructure, traffic in particular, and impact negatively on the local communities in both South Oxfordshire and north Reading.

It would provide a gateway to development threatening the very area which RBC, SODC and KEPC are all committed to protecting.

We urge South Oxfordshire District Council to oppose this proposed development in the strongest terms.