

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 12th August 2020

ITEM NO. 8
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Ward: Minster

App No.: 200122

Address: Wensley Road, Reading

Proposal: Demolition of 29 garages and development of 46 new dwelling units, including the provision of affordable homes, provided in a mixture of houses and apartments (1 bed / 2 bed / 3 bed / 4 bed) in blocks of between 2.5 to 4 storeys, and the provision of bicycle parking spaces, car parking spaces and public realm works.

Applicant: Reading Borough Council

Deadline: Originally 29/04/2020, but an extension of time has been agreed until 25/09/2020

Recommendation:

As in main report, barring the following changes (omissions denoted by ~~strikethroughs~~ and additions in **bold and underlined**):

Altered unilateral undertaking legal agreement head of term:

The applicant will ~~look to~~ offer each household affected by the loss of a garage within the red line boundary of the site an alternative 1 garage/storage per household within the Coley area.

Additional unilateral undertaking legal agreement head of term:

A tree planting scheme will be submitted and agreed for planting off-site (but within Minster ward) if a net gain is not achieved through the landscaping secured by condition 23 (cascade mechanism to achieve a net gain in trees - in the context of the 275 trees proposed to be felled)

Altered condition 5

Pre-commencement (including demolition) demolition and construction method statement, including transport (**standard elements and the following bespoke element: Full details of any temporary bus stop locations and confirmation that Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders will be secured where necessary**), environmental protection (dust, dirt and other airborne pollutants; noise; pest control) and ecology based matters

Amended informative 2

Clarification that should condition 23 not achieve the planting of 275 replacement trees on site, then the shortfall (to offset the felling of 275 existing trees, and therefore achieving a net gain in trees as a result of the proposal) would be secured off-site within the Minster ward.

1. Additional public consultation responses

1.1 Further to paragraphs 4.103 - 4.146 of the main report, 6 additional public consultation responses have been received. These have been received from occupiers of addresses at Wensley Road (x3), Carslade Close, North Lodge Mews and Trelleck Road. All respondents objected to the application at the time of the original consultation process, so these are considered to be follow-up objections. A summary of the issues raised in these further responses are:

- The need for social housing is understood, but this is not the place.
- Existing 'never ending' parking issues will only worsen.
- Speeding issues - speed humps do not slow people down.
- Traffic and buses are already causing houses to crack and shake.
- This development will ruin the community network, increase mental health issues due to overcrowding and with Covid 19 the highest in Coley the removal of little green space will only exacerbate the situation.
- Covid-19 has added an additional reason for why this development should not be agreed. The high number of deaths in Coley Park in relation to other areas in Reading needs to be looked into and understood before adding more people to the area. The number of cases could be linked to the high population density and close living conditions. More housing with only exacerbate this. I would urge that until we know about the pandemic that agreement on this development be put on hold.
- Loss of amenity and job opportunities for residents through the removal of storage and parking issues with the removal of car parks and garages.
- Open space where children play will be reduced and the families living in the flats need an area large enough for their children to be able to take part in outdoor activities. The reduction in green space is also totally against RBC claims in the Local Plan to be introducing measures to tackle climate change. The suggested improvements at Courage Park will not suffice for the loss of the exercise areas within this open space.
- New homes will not be in keeping with the character of the area.
- Unclear from the report whether all residents that will lose garages will be offered alternative provision. Ambiguity. No commitment to specify the distance of the 'new' garages from existing residents and whether the alternative locations are appropriate.
- Loss of outlook - In some cases, this has to be seen to be believed, with these roads being close to and directly outside people's windows. How can this possibly be acceptable?
- Loss of trees - add to the concrete jungle appearance of Wensley Road. Another states that the loss of trees is completely at odds with the development being touted as being zero-carbon and meeting sustainability criteria.
- More rats.
- More litter/flytipping.
- Loss of bats.
- More drugs, alcohol and anti-social behaviour.
- More damage to cars due to loss of garages.
- Less school places.
- Overcrowded doctors.
- More pollution.
- Less places to walk dogs.
- Disruption during construction (e.g. construction vehicles passing the community centre and primary school).
- Lower house prices.
- Loss of grass areas.

- Site chosen to avoid upsetting private areas by planning to keep social housing in a predominantly social housing estate, with no regard for the well-being of its existing residents and the issues it will cause them.
- Suggestion to build on alternative site instead - Courage Park, 2 storey flats on Wensley Road, Southcote Library and land between flats and Prospect Park off Bath Road all suggested.
- Insufficient time to review the report and additional plans submitted - item should be deferred to allow more time for responses. Speaking allowance at committee should be 10 minutes.
- One response concludes: The justification given for recommending approval of these proposals knowing the harm the development would cause and the many policies that would be contravened is that more social housing is needed and the development would meet sustainability criteria. This cannot be allowed to justify the devastation of a community, and the proposals surely must be rejected.

1.2 One of the responses posed a series of specific transport-based questions, which are summarised and specifically responded to (by the Transport Development Control Manager) below:

1.3 Question: Can the 32 proposed electric charging spaces be used for general parking by people with non-electric vehicles?

Officer response: At the present time, there would be no restriction on the use of these spaces. Put another way, there would not be any restriction on their use by solely electric vehicles, as this could reduce provision in overall terms. In the future, if there is an increased proportion of EV and/or EV are having trouble using the spaces, management of the spaces could be introduced.

1.4 Question: Existing houses on the west of the inner loop will have access to the proposed parking spaces, but they have not been included when calculating the required parking provision/ratio. Therefore, the true ratio for the site will be even lower than the already inadequate 0.73 quoted.

Officer response: The application site would currently provide a proportion of parking for the existing houses located to the west of the inner loop and therefore this parking would fall within the retained on site provision of 192 spaces. Given that this would be an existing situation and has been included within the retained parking provision the Highway Authority have no objection to this. The parking provision of 0.83 solely facilitates the new development.

1.5 Question: Will people from the wider Coley Park area who own electric vehicles be able to use these spaces to charge their cars? Will there be any restrictions whatsoever on any of the 230 proposed spaces, including the charging point spaces? The proposed parking ratio of 0.73 is already unjustifiably below car ownership levels for this area.

Officer response: It has been stated that the parking ratio of 0.73 or 192 spaces for the existing residential units has not been justified; however, this has been established through an on-site survey undertaken by the applicant. The Highway Authority have reviewed the survey undertaken and can confirm that the survey complies with the required methodology. In relation to the existing dwellings

the applicant would only be required to ensure that the existing level of car parking is retained and not increase existing parking levels should they not meet current standards. The Highway Authority are therefore satisfied that the retained parking provision of 192 spaces complies with Policy. It should be noted that the proposed residential units would be provided with a parking ratio in line with the car ownership data for the wider area and equates to 0.83 spaces per dwelling and is also compliant with Policy.

It is the applicant's intention at present that the internal parking courts would remain private, albeit within Reading Borough Council Control, but all other roadside parking would be offered for Public Highway adoption. As a result, any electric charging bay located within the adoptable area would be able to be used by the wider public if they wish. However, the use by non-residents would result in a displacement of parking from elsewhere; this is likely to be close by rather than further afield, therefore the status quo for parking would be retained.

- 1.6 Question/comment: Existing houses on the west of the inner loop will have access to the proposed parking spaces (page 56, 4.2 of the Design & Access Statement) but they have not been included when calculating the required parking provision/ratio. Therefore, the true ratio for the site will be even lower than the already inadequate 0.73 quoted in the plans and the report. This issue has been raised in many objection letters, but has still not been addressed by the applicant.

Officer response: The application site would currently provide a proportion of parking for the existing houses located to the west of the inner loop and therefore this parking would fall within the retained on site provision of 192 spaces. Given that this would be an existing situation and has been included within the retained parking provision the Highway Authority have no objection to this. The parking provision of 0.83 solely facilitates the new development.

- 1.7 Question/comment: Shared surfaces / highway safety matters - claims at paragraph 4.24 of the report are vehemently disputed. Proposals do not give priority to cyclists and pedestrians, and will cause serious issues for blind and partially sighted people.

Officer response: The development has been altered through the course of the application assessment to remove the shared surface design to include dedicated footway facilities on the desire lines across the site. Pedestrian crossing facilities are also provided throughout the site and on the boundaries of the site including a link to the Public Right of Way located in the south east corner of the application site. The application therefore complies with the NPPF.

- 1.8 Question/comment: Referencing section 6.6 of the main report (Reconfiguration of the road network / parking spaces), nothing has been done that mitigates the risks and dangers of building two through roads lined both sides with parking spaces through this pedestrian site; the change from raised to non-raised crossing points for Reading Buses is a negative change to the original proposals as far as pedestrians are

concerned, as raised surfaces at least serve towards speed calming measures when approaching 'crossing points'.

Officer response: The application site currently includes the provision of 3 dedicated parking areas that accommodate significant levels of car parking and it is noted that double parking currently occurs as is identified by the parking survey undertaken by the applicant. These parking courts are all located directly adjacent to the main entrance to the buildings and result in pedestrians walking through the parking courts on established desire lines through the application site. The application seeks to spread the parking spaces throughout the development and create clear pedestrian routes using the desire lines with dedicated crossing facilities therefore seeking to provide a balance between the two whilst also incorporating a larger consolidated amenity area to the centre of the application site. The proposed layout would not be detrimental to Highway safety and therefore complies with the NPPF.

It is acknowledged that some of the raised tables have been removed but many remain, the scheme has also resulted in the replacement of the initially proposed rumble strips with raised tables and therefore the Highway Authority is happy that sufficient at grade crossing points have been provided. This will not only aid pedestrian movement but provide suitable traffic calming through the site.

- 1.9 Question / comment: Referencing the section of the officer report (paragraph 4.13) where a car would not be able to pass a bus, would this not interfere with the free-flow of traffic and have a potential impact on highway safety?

Officer response: The NPPF states that an application can only be refused on Highway grounds should the impact be severe or on Highway safety matters. The Highway Authority are satisfied that sufficient visibility is provided at the junction for vehicles to assess whether they would be able to pass one another in the same way as any other junction involving a larger vehicle, which would require a larger proportion of the carriageway to turn. This is also weighed against the limited number of vehicle movements that would be travelling south in this location and the frequency of the bus route in particular. The Highway Authority are therefore satisfied that there would not be any detriment to the free flow of traffic or Highway safety.

2. Additional responses from a local group

- 2.1 Since the completion of the main report Coley Park Residents' Group have made four separate further submissions objecting to the proposals. These are in addition to those detailed at paragraphs 4.147 - 4.164 of the main report, and are summarised below.
- 2.2 Coley Park Residents' Group object to the Reading Buses consultation response suggestions:
- further reduction of parking spaces and introduction of yellow lines will realistically have a knock on effect with vehicles having to park further

- along the bi directional part of Wensley Road. This in turn will cause more of an inconvenience to the bus journey.
- A One Way system around Coley Loop was refused at the Traffic Committee on 13th September 2017 where there were resident objections.
 - An anticlockwise system will lengthen all journeys (from 60 metres to 600 metres), increase exhaust fumes and decrease in air quality in the area.
 - Attempts to force residents to dispose of their vehicles would contravene human rights
 - Traffic will be forced around the loop, causing congestion when following a bus. Increase in traffic crossing the shared spaces, located near the new play areas (increased risk of accidents).
- 2.3 Officer response: As per section 3 below, Reading Buses has now confirmed in correspondence with the transport consultant for the applicant that they are content with the now proposed layout. RBC Transport Planning are also satisfied, as per the main report and this update report.
- 2.4 Coley Park Residents' Group object partly on the basis of parallels with other planning applications:
- The reasons cited for refusal of the Tilehurst development (171219 and 182114 6 no. 3-bedroom dwelling houses at Thorpe House Colliers Way Reading RG30 2QS, as refused at planning applications committee on 4th March 2020) are very similar to the objections the group has raised in objection to this application.
 - 50 local residents had objected to the Tilehurst plan and these were taken into account and appear to have influenced the decision (circa 350 objections for Coley Rise).
 - The area in application 182114 does not suffer from any of the Coley Rise issues such as rats, wildlife conservation, flood issues for the adjoining areas, loss of amenities etc
 - Therefore ask that the rejection of application 182114 and 171219 be considered as setting a precedent for the rejection of application 200122
- 2.5 Officer response: Each application is required to be considered on its own merits and this approach has been followed in the assessment of the current application.
- 2.6 Coley Park Residents' Group object to the proposals on the basis of the contaminated land report submitted during the course of the application. For example, a number of inaccuracies with the report are identified. Furthermore, the report is considered to be incomplete as it states that several other studies are needed over several months, but have been unable to complete due to covid. Further concerns are raised about the lack of 12 month long gas and groundwater monitoring, the need for further testing and that RBC should be prioritising the removal of asbestos to make existing homes safe before even considering any new development.
- 2.7 The group therefore states "Given the seriousness of these unresolved issues it is entirely inappropriate that the proposed plan be put forward for approval until there is certainty about the fundamental safety of the site". The group concludes that "In view that the report is clearly incomplete and repeated references to more rounds of testing needed, it would be a serious breach of Health and Safety to consider this planning application, and could

lead to other developers submitting incomplete reports for their applications as this would set a precedent”.

- 2.8 Officer response: As per paragraph 4.61 of the main report, specialised Environmental Protection officers have assessed the report submitted and have recommended the standard four-stage conditions (see conditions 16-19 within the officer recommendation), with the first two elements being pre-commencement.
- 2.9 Coley Park Residents’ Group made a further submission regarding two Freedom of Information / Environmental Information requests. Furthermore, the group states that “A third complaint is currently being dealt with by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the way the Council has been communicating information to the residents. We wish all three complaints to be considered against this planning proposal”. The group also comments that there is confusion over the local lettings policy if the development goes ahead.
- 2.10 Officer response: The Council’s Planning Solicitor has confirmed that these are separate matters and not material considerations in respect of planning matters.

3. Further response from Reading Buses (received via the Transport Consultant for the applicant)

- 3.1 Officers have been forwarded correspondence between the Support Services Manager at Reading Buses and the Transport consultant for the applicant (dated 10th August 2020), indicating that Reading Buses are now content with the proposed road layout.
- 3.2 It is noted that Reading Buses state that is subject to the parties agreeing a location for the terminal bus stop during construction, which would need to be protected with a separate 24 hour bus stop clearway order.
- 3.3 The Transport Development Control Manager welcomes the further comments from Reading Buses. With regard to the caveat Reading Buses noted, it is suggested that recommended condition 5 (Demolition and Construction Method Statement - as per the main report) should specifically include an additional point, as follows:

Full details of any temporary bus stop locations and confirmation that Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders will be secured where necessary.

- 3.4 This is duly reflected in the updated recommendation above, and with this secured the caveat referenced by Reading Buses is satisfied.

4. Clarification regarding garage arrangements

- 4.1 Recognising the potential ambiguity in the main report (paragraphs 6.2 & 6.3) regarding the precision and enforceability of the applicant only ‘looking to’ offer each household affected by the loss of a garage an alternative (rather than categorically offering a replacement garage), the applicant was sought to provide clarification. The applicant has responded as follows:

Every household that currently holds the tenancy of a garage within the red lined area will be offered an alternative garage within the Coley area. This offer may be a void garage in one of the existing blocks in the area, or within newly built garages at a nearby site that is suitable for this purpose. Contacting those in order of who have been a tenant the longest provides the reallocation process with some structure, but there will be enough garages for each relevant household to have a replacement.

- 4.2 This provides a greater level of certainty, with 'look to offer' now specified as 'will be offered' in the statement above. This is welcomed and the head of term in the recommendation above has been revised accordingly to omit 'look to', so that it reads that:

The applicant will offer each household affected by the loss of a garage within the red line boundary of the site an alternative 1 garage/storage per household within the Coley area.

5. Tree matters

- 5.1 Upon further discussions with the applicant, the applicant is now committed to achieving an overall net gain in tree numbers as part of the all works/phases at the site. The applicant has indicated that there will now be scope to plant 279 trees to replace the 275 proposed to be felled, which goes beyond those referenced at paragraph 6.25 of the main report (where 50 additional trees were mentioned, in addition to the 184 already shown to be proposed - therefore the applicant now anticipates to providing 95 additional trees to the 184 currently proposed on the plans).
- 5.2 In general terms this step is welcomed by officers, both in itself and in comparison with the net loss concerns detailed in the main report (paragraphs 2.9, 4.47 - 4.49, 6.21-6.29 and 7.1 of the main report). It therefore reduces one of the harmful impacts of the development previously identified in the main report.
- 5.3 The exact details to demonstrate a net gain in tree numbers has not been able to be provided by the applicant prior to the committee meeting. Officers have some concerns about the feasibility of achieving a net gain in tree numbers at the site, given the current number shown is 184 (a shortfall of 91 compared with the 275 to be felled), the fairly limited space available and the desire by officers for a substantial size at planting (i.e. not whips), and with the space to grow into good individual specimens. Whilst the applicant considers that a net gain on site is achievable (and this is the preference of officers), it is considered reasonable and necessary to include a cascade approach to ensure that a net gain is subsequently achieved.
- 5.4 This will involve the already recommended condition 23 securing and agreeing details of the future planting plan (this will detail the schedule of plants noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers and an implementation timetable - no changes to the already recommended condition are required). At this point it will be ascertained whether the site can accommodate more than the 275 trees proposed to be felled. If this subsequently proves not to be possible/feasible/reasonable, then the shortfall in numbers will be made up through planting off-site within the

Minster ward. This is the second stage of the cascade, and will only be applicable if a net gain is not achieved in the details as part of condition 23.

- 5.5 The Parks officer has confirmed that there are a number of nearby areas within the ward which would benefit from additional tree planting, although the exact locations would need to be agreed at a future time, taking into account potential underground (e.g. services) and overground (e.g. highways safety) constraints for example. This cascade approach will therefore ensure that a desired net gain is achieved in the ward, whilst providing a degree of flexibility over whether this is wholly on-site, or predominantly on-site, partly off-site. This change to the proposal is considered to be a positive step and assists in mitigating one of the shortcomings identified in the main report.
- 5.6 Given the second part of cascade would involve works outside the red line boundary of the site they would need to be secured via the unilateral undertaking legal agreement. It is considered that the possible future obligation would comply with both Policy CC9 and the National Planning Policy Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in that it would be: i) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, ii) directly related to the development and iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. Informative 2 (Legal Agreement) is also recommended to be altered to clarify the form of the cascade approach and interaction between the condition and obligation.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The conclusion specified within the main report remains unaltered in overall terms, although the comments from Reading Buses, the additional clarity in terms of replacement garages and the commitment from the applicant to secure a net gain in trees are all considered positive steps. Accordingly, in the final planning balance, the benefits of the proposals continue to be considered to outweigh the acknowledged shortcomings.

Case Officer: Jonathan Markwell

WRITTEN STATEMENTS SUBMITTED

From Karen Makepeace:

Application 200122, to which there is overwhelming opposition, contravenes an astonishing number of Local Plan/NPPF policies. The Officer's report acknowledges throughout that harm would be caused to residents' existing environment should the plans go ahead, that there are many shortcomings within the proposals and that the proposals often do not accord with policy. The justification given for recommending approval knowing the harm the development would cause is that more social housing is needed and the development would meet sustainability criteria. This cannot be allowed to justify the devastation of a community.

There are many grounds for objection, but as this document must be limited to 500 words, I will highlight 5 issues:

The Local Plan requirement for new developments is 1 to 2 **PARKING** spaces per home. These requirements have been ignored. The 2011 Census car ownership figure for O13B is 0.83 per home. Proposals will mean a parking ratio for the site of 0.73 per home, below LP requirements AND ownership levels (no visitor parking!). Unjustified and inadequate provision will cause serious pressure on surrounding roads, and contravene LP/NPPF policies.

Two **NEW THROUGH ROADS** are proposed on this currently safe, pedestrian site, which will be lined both sides with parking spaces, meaning much traffic movement and manoeuvring. They will also be highly dangerous shared space areas where vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians have equal right of way.

The area has a high density of homes with many children living on site who are used to roaming around freely and safely without the worry of roads and vehicles. The proposals mean the new roads will often have to be crossed to access play areas.

Shared spaces also pose particular risk to blind and partially-sighted people, and those that are mentally impaired to the extent they find it difficult to navigate or understand shared space areas.

6.13 acknowledges that the site will become 'more car-dominant'

The NPPF states that priority must be given to cyclists and pedestrians. This will not be the case. The proposals are in contravention of policy, including Policy TR3.

Reduction of 61% of **OPEN SPACE** acknowledged in report as a 'significant' reduction and a shortcoming 'despite various mitigation measures' (6.20) and warns extra dwellings will cause increased pressure. (Improvements at Courage Park will not suffice – children would not be a stone's throw from home and would have to cross main road) – EN8 seriously contravened.

Serious **HARM TO OUTLOOK** will occur under these proposals, and are not in accordance with CC8 of the Local Plan. For example:

6.76 of report admits a visually dominant change in outlook to parked cars/movement of vehicles (previously trees/ open space).

6.78 admits a more overbearing outlook and acknowledges this as a shortfall.

6.81 admits a 'more urbanised feel'.

4.47 The report states that the **NET LOSS OF 91 TREES** would be considered unacceptable by the National Environment Officer'. Even with conditions suggested by the NEO, policy EN14 would be seriously contravened.

Please reject this application (see rejected applications 171219/182114 for precedents).

From Paul Krykant

First of all, I would like to thank the committee for giving me time to allow for this representation from the Coley Park Residents group.

More than 650 have signed a pre-submission petition and a further 350 have sent in objections after the application was made. The people of Coley Park almost universally reject these plans.

We believe that the proposed plans should be rejected on numerous material considerations detailed in our submission of the 3rd March 2020. Our document highlights serious safety issues and demonstrates that many Local Policies will be contravened.

Residents of Coley Park have broadly welcomed recent local developments at Rembrandts Way, Swallows Croft and the new "Ministry" development, however they have expressed dismay, disbelief and incredulity at this proposed plan, particularly given that other far more suitable Council owned brown field sites are available. It is widely acknowledged the Council would be hard pushed to find an area less suitable for this kind of development.

The Officer's Report acknowledges that the proposal will result in damage to the existing environment citing a significant reduction in open green space, removal of play facilities, loss of trees, increased density of development, making the living environment more overbearing for some residents and a loss of garage facilities. The officer concludes that the benefit of building 46 affordable homes outweighs the damage to the existing area and also cites the environmental credentials as part of his recommendation.

There are many other issues that were not considered properly in the summary such as flood risk assessments, the introduction of new shared space roads, unsafe winds on the new roads, failure of daylight standards, an effective reduction in car parking spaces and a major rat infestation amongst many others.

It is difficult to understand how sustainability credentials tip the balance in favour of the proposal. Large amounts of green community space, many trees and nesting bat habitats will be removed. The Natural Environment Officer has confirmed that Local Policy EN8 will be contravened due to the net loss of greenspace and trees.

Key stakeholders have expressed concerns which were simply dismissed. These include Reading Buses who have concerns about the practicality and safety of new routes; Sports England have asked that replacement facilities be secured and Thames Water have major issues about waste water and sewer diversions.

There is a proposal to re-site the lost play facilities at Courage Park, a remote location out of sight of the flats. This is clearly not a credible proposal as young children will potentially travel unsupervised across roads and out of sight of their guardians.

This development will considerably damage the local environment way beyond acceptable levels; the introduction of a new road network will increase danger to pedestrians; numerous Local Policies will be contravened and the local community have rejected this proposal as well as lodging an unprecedented number of objections, we therefore ask that the committee listen to the overwhelming verdict of the local residents and key stakeholders and reject this scheme.

From Paul Dalfsen

This application contravenes so many planning policies and has incomplete and missing reports. I therefore would ask that all members of the committee read through the 4 documents submitted by The Coley Rise Residents group as not all of the objections to material considerations and policies contravened are recorded in the report.

- 1.The group objection which outlines how local policy is contravened.
- 2.Contamination letter
- 3.Reply to Reading Buses report
- 4.Refusal of Tilehurst application for six houses which was a unanimous refusal as over dominant and so much against it -which has similarities, however this application has over 350 objections, a petition and survey.

If these haven't been read then may I suggest a deferment until you've had chance to do so, to enable you to have a complete understanding of concerns. and how this will have such a detrimental effect on residents, the people who will have to live with this through the disruption of the build to the overdevelopment of the loop area.

Many of the reports are flawed, have inaccuracies or incomplete. Many Local Planning policies have been contravened and highlighted in the Mr Markwell's report, but just noted as shortcomings. This simply mocks the idea of a Local plan. Also Coley is not named for development in the local plan.

This development will ruin the community, increase mental health issues due to overcrowding and with Covid 19 the highest in Coley the removal of little green space will only exacerbate the situation. Our area already struggles with severe lack of parking and current need underestimated in the reports. Residents requested a site visit prior to lockdown, but this was refused.

The report identifies five areas of harm to residents
Significant reduction in open space
Removal of play facilities
loss of trees
Increased density, making the living environment more overbearing
Loss of garage facilities

It will cause employment issues due to removal of storage and parking issues with the removal of 3 car parks and 29 garages. This will affect people's livelihoods who depend on vehicles for work and storage for work related items. Suggestion of one alternative per household does not address the need for these garages, and should be given the same as alternative, although still not ideal; many households have numerous adults due to not being able to buy or rent a home of their own, so this would penalise them further and is unjust.

This site appears to have been chosen to avoid upsetting private areas, by keeping social housing in a predominantly social housing estate with no regard for the well being of existing residents and the harm it will cause them.

Living in an overpopulated area which will turn into a building site 8-6 will make life unbearable as unable to open windows due to noise rebounding of high rises.

Residents have highlighted alternative sites, such as Southcote library, land on Bath Road between flats and prospect park both would not have a negative impact on others.

From Linda Earley

Regarding the application I would like the committee to know I am totally opposed to the development in Wensley Road.

I have lived and worked in Coley Park for most of my life and I am now 59 years old. I have watched Coley Park struggle to cope with additional housing to the point of combustion. As open spaces vanished, community spirit drained from its residents as a result.

This development would pressure the quality of life of residents as rats, rubbish, anti social behaviour, parking and noise levels are already a serious concern.

The small open space in which children play will be reduced and the families living in the flats need an area large enough for their children to be able to get out and take part in outdoor activities.

I am opposed to the felling of trees in this area to support the development as this will add to the concrete jungle appearance of Wensley Road and we will lose the shady areas where residents sit in summer. This will also affect the bats, owls, a variety of birds and various other wildlife living in these trees.

I am opposed to the noise and chaos this will bring to residents during the building stage and the fact that construction transport will cross the path of the local primary school and childrens centre numerous times each day for approximately 2 years.

I understand there is a genuine need for housing but the Wensley Road development will not provide an answer to existing problems it will add a huge pile of negatives to an over populated area.

From James Penn

Facts on the ground

All councillors need to be aware of a wrought iron fence about 5 feet high which was erected around the area of the High Rise flats back in the 1960's This fence was provided to ensure the safety of children whose families lived in the flats (approx 270) Each block had a short Roadway entrance to enable service vehicles to visit the Flats (ie refuse lorries), a pedestrian entrance pathway was also provided. The only other entry point for pedestrians through the fence was adjacent to the bus terminus

It is beyond belief that a new roadway is designed to pass within about 12 from the from the pedestrian entrance door to block 193 which will be used by all traffic including buses (three per hour) is considered suitable and safe

It is evident during the period of the pandemic, residents are travelling at speed along Wensley Road without regard to the speed humps. National newspapers have reported a trend across the country of speeding by motorists.

In Coley the car population has been increasing year on year. Traffic speed has been a subject of concern at meetings of the Minster Ward Community Safety meetings over many years.

It should also be noted Reading Transport have not considered the proposed roadway to be satisfactory.

For councillors to grant this aspect of the Planning Application will put the lives of Coley children at risk for generations to come.

James is a Senior Citizen, an active member of the Community Association, a member of the Minster Ward Community Safety Committee, a past member of the Neighbourhood Action Group He is on the Board of Reading Health Watch

From Christina Pepper

Further to the concerns I've already raised regarding the development of additional housing on Wensley Road which outlined the negative impact it would have to the environment, the strain it would put on local services, and the need to address the overpopulation and anti-social behavior in the area, Covid-19 has added an additional reason for why this development should not be agreed. The high number of deaths in Coley Park in relation to other areas in Reading needs to be looked into and understood before adding more people to the area. The number of cases could be linked to the high population density and close living conditions. More housing with only exacerbate this. I would urge that until we know about the pandemic that agreement on this development be put on hold.

From Dina Frappiano

While acknowledging there is a need for social housing, surely this shouldn't be to the detriment of existing residents, who will lose the little green space nearby/trees/garages/parking spaces/flats carparks. We feel we've had little or no say in this development. It's a densely populated area, with little green space which is constantly used, and is an absolute necessity for our mental/physical wellbeing. Residents did request a site visit prior to lockdown.

This development will cause a cramped, overly dominant, overdeveloped site for existing residents. It resembles refused applications (171219/182114) Thorpe House, and if passed would highlight a difference in the way RBC's and private applications are decided upon. Currently the view from our home is of trees, camouflaging garages, which will be replaced by a road junction with bright lights shining through, 3 storey houses facing 2 storey houses and rising behind them 4 storey flats and increasing the density by at least 222people.



Preplanning highlighted the need for alternative storage for demolished, it suggests one per household - inadequate, should be like for like. A deficit in parking has already by demonstrated worsened recently by closing of part of flats carpark which increased the parking by garages and on verges. Applications 190720/171313 for Wensley Road state 2 spaces per house why is it different for 200122?

Errors in reports question their validity.

Ecosa report was completed in December however an email from Joanne Richmond, Ecologist from ECOSA Ltd dated 25/02/20 states ***“these surveys can only be undertaken between May-September when bats are fully active”***

Tree report details some trees lifespan 20 to 40+ years, however now determined as diseased, How can this differ so greatly in a matter of months?

Current houses misrepresented to make new homes seem to fit in. Old houses have render and proposed rooflines not in keeping with current.



Discrepancies in contamination report, incorrect number of dwellings and layout. This connotes that the calculations and elements of the report are flawed.

Identifies soil collapsing during “Drainage Soakage test with incomplete drainage cycles” highlighting the fact that other studies are required over several months, unable to complete due to covid19, therefore this report is **incomplete**. It would be reckless to consider plans without complete testing carried out. “The potential for flooding” reported. Outdated flood assessments 2016/2017 and incorrect mapping do not incorporate recent flooding events in January/February.

Road subsidence identified by ward councillors has not been investigated.



Mitigation identified as needed NOW for dangerous wind velocity. Building another tall building opposite will worsen the wind tunnel especially in shared space area, raising safety issues however, now removed from revised report. How can this differ so greatly?

Noise and Ground Gases reports **not** completed, noise already rebounds off the highrises,

If passed it would demonstrate a disregard of RBC’s own guidelines set out in the local policy which would set a **precedent** for future developers and applications.

From Alok Sharma MP

Rt Hon Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Planning Applications Committee
Reading Borough Council

(Sent by email to: Planning.Administration@reading.gov.uk)

5 August 2020
Our ref: JI/AS65672

Dear Members of the Planning Applications Committee,

Planning Application Ref: 200122

Based on the concerns expressed to me by my constituents, I am writing to object to the above planning application for the demolition of 29 garages and development of 46 new dwelling units on Wensley Road.

As I explained in my letter of objection, dated 11 February 2020, I understand that local residents opposed the proposals because the garages are currently in use by residents, and there are concerns about increased traffic and congestion, a lack of parking in the area, and the worsening of local environmental issues. I am informed that the Coley Park Residents' Group submitted a substantive objection on behalf of local residents.

A number of residents have contacted me to raise their concerns that the revised documents were only uploaded onto the Council's Planning Portal on Friday 31 July, only giving interested residents 12 days to review the documents before the application is due to be considered by the Planning Applications Committee on 12 August.

However, in light of the revised documents, I have been approached by a member of the Coley Park Residents' Group who has suggested an alternative proposal, as set out below:

"In view of changes to building regulations, a suggestion (although still not ideal due to density) would be to build 2 floors onto the 2 storey block of flats along the straight road where less congested than the loop. These 2 storey blocks are set back from the road with large green verges in front and a couple have woodland behind, so would not impact on anyone. This would provide a solution without having a negative effect on the existing residents who will lose facilities and much used green space which. I think you will appreciate has been demonstrated as valuable especially for those in the flats in the current pandemic."

I would be grateful for the Planning Applications Committee to take this written statement into consideration.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Alok Sharma MP

**Statement from Applicant's Agent
Planning Committee Statement**

Wensley Road



Note Title	Wensley Road	Note Author	Sarah Eley
Note Date	10 th August 2020		

Good evening,

My name is Sarah Eley and I am planning consultant at HTA Design, representing the applicant Reading Borough Council.

This application is for 46 new affordable homes on the Coley Rise site on Wensley Road. The new homes, play spaces, parking and landscaping are the first phase of regeneration, with a second phase of improvements to the existing residential towers to follow. The scheme also forms part of a wider regeneration strategy of council owned housing sites across the Borough.

All dwelling will be designed to achieve net zero carbon, using a combination of renewable energy sources and applying fabric first (passivhaus) principles to the building construction. This is key in terms of the climate emergency declared by Reading, and it will also significantly reduce the energy bills of future residents thereby helping to alleviate fuel poverty. The housing is also designed to a high quality, and its siting and location minimises impact on the amenity of existing residents.

There is a clear need for housing in Reading. Policy identifies a shortfall of 230 dwellings that cannot be provided within the Borough itself during the plan period as it is a tightly defined urban area and sites for new development are limited. Therefore policy supports suburban renewal. The land at Coley Rise has been identified as suitable for regeneration and the 46 new homes at Coley Rise will reduce the housing shortfall.

There is a critical need for affordable housing within Reading and wider Berkshire: 406 affordable homes are required per annum, and this requirement will not be met. This application for 100% affordable homes, which will benefit from Homes England funding, will provide both much needed affordable family homes of 3 bedrooms, and smaller units of 1 and 2 bedrooms.

The Coley Rise proposal will increase the overall density within the redline boundary from 113 units per hectare to 132 units per hectare. The proposed density exceeds the indicative density ranges which are set out in policy. However the local plan is clear that 'these will not be applied as hard and fast rules and the particular characteristics of a site...may well mean that a density outside these ranges is appropriate'.

The proposed density is appropriate on this site as it is well connected to the town centre by a regular bus route. The siting, height and massing of the new dwellings has been carefully considered in relation to the characteristics of the site and ensures that the amenity of surrounding dwellings is maintained.

Development will be facilitated by a number of key moves.

Firstly, the communal amenity and open space will be consolidated into the centre of the site providing a well integrated space for the existing and proposed development. It will be designed to be safe and accessible with facilitates for a range of ages. The removal of the MUGA has been in consultation with Reading Borough's Parks Team. Under the guidance of their strategy which is to focus resources for older (teenage) children at Courage Park, the play space at Wensley Road will be equipped for toddlers and juniors.

And secondly, the reconfiguration of the Wensley Road loop and the reorganisation of car parking spaces creates space for the proposed housing development. A total of 230 parking spaces are

Planning Committee Statement

Wensley Road



proposed, which comprises re-provision of the 192 existing car parking spaces on site and an additional 38 spaces for the new development at a ratio of 0.83 vehicles per dwelling. This ratio reflects census data on car ownership at this location and it is higher than currently exists on site. Of the total parking spaces, 16 will be wheelchair accessible which meets the policy requirements and 36 electric vehicle charging points will be provided, which exceeds policy.

The proposal improves permeability through the site by creating an increased number of access points into the site and two new through-routes. Surface treatment changes will be introduced for traffic calming purposes. Permeable paving will be provided where new roads are created, acting as attenuation, and reducing surface water.

As part of the reconfiguration of the open space, there is a requirement to remove a total of 66 individual trees and 209 trees within groups which will also facilitate Phase 2 works. Separate to this, three Turkey Oak trees are proposed for removal by Reading Borough Council due to health and safety reasons that are not associated with the proposed development. A total of 184 new trees will be planted as part of the proposed development; a further 75 trees will be secured by condition, providing 279 new trees in total, an overall net gain.

A survey has been undertaken on site to assess for the presence of bats. All trees being removed have been assessed as providing low or negligible suitability for roosting bats and require no further survey.

The development also requires the demolition of existing garages. Every household that currently holds the tenancy of a garage within the red line boundary will be offered an alternative garage within the Coley area.

The submitted soil report notes that the presence of asbestos has been found in the Made Ground at a location on the western side of the application site. Analysis indicates that based on the concentration of asbestos, the soil would be considered non-hazardous although it may be prudent to undertake further testing for asbestos and prepare a Remediation Method Statement.

Provision has been made to ensure that waste and wheelie bins are secure, and it will not encourage further problems from rodents which we are aware are an issue in the existing bin stores on the Estate.

Comprehensive consultation has been undertaken with residents who have been supportive of the proposal, and the design and layout of the scheme has been informed by their ideas, comments and suggestions through a series of very well attended public consultation events. We have listened to their views on the proposed scheme, which has been amended to reflect their comments.

Applicants worked with officers to ensure that a comprehensive application pack has been prepared, and the proposal is in accordance with the adopted Local Plan and national policies.

Therefore we respectfully ask for the application to be approved, in line with the Officer's recommendation for approval.