

Update Report

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 21st July 2021

Ward: Peppard

App No.: 210018

Address: Reading Golf Club, 17 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-led scheme (C3 use to include affordable housing) and the provision of community infrastructure at Reading Golf Club

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

Deadline: Original 16 week date 18/5/2021 - Extended to 30/7/2021

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Amended Reason 1.

The application site forms a significant area of Undesignated Open Space within Reading Borough. The application proposals would lead to the loss of a significant part of this space through built form and related enclosed domestic gardens, roads and driveways. The proposal fails to demonstrate that replacement open space of a similar standard and function can be provided at an accessible location close by; or that improvements to recreational facilities on remaining open space can be provided to a level sufficient to outweigh the loss of the open space and that the off-site compensation arrangement is deliverable. The Layout applied for in this application proposal will therefore lead to an unacceptable loss of undesignated open space in the site/in the local area, contrary to Policy EN8 (Undesignated Open Space) of the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

New Reason 6

6. The proposal has failed to demonstrate that the development has been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change; provide sufficient justification of the proposed decentralised energy provision and aimed zero carbon homes contrary to Policy CC3 Adaptation to Climate Change, CC4 Decentralised Energy H5 Standards for New Housing and the adopted 'SPD Sustainable Design and Construction' 2019.

1.0 Corrections:

- Second Para 4.23 the Public consultation event by the applicant was undertaken on 11th February 2020
- 6.11.3 should read 'clarity is required in...'
- Due to the number of letters required to be sent out to notify of the item coming to this Committee a small batch was posted out prior to others.

2.0 Further comments received

Chiltern Conservation Board Revised date 11th July

Thank you for consulting the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB). The application site is located to the south east of the AONB, varying between 1 km and 2 km, at the nearest point to the existing boundary. The landscape area to the south and south-

east of the AONB boundary around Kidmore End, is sensitive and falls within the wider setting of the AONB. Much of this landscape would justify the status of a 'valued landscape', consistent with the guidance in the NPPF at 170. Some of this landscape has considerable potential to be a candidate for the AONB boundary review, as announced by the Secretary of State and Natural England on 24th June 2021. The CCB would consider this a matter of material relevance. The landscape character to the south and south-east of Kidmore End enjoys a landscape character that is consistent with the nationally protected landscape of the Chilterns AONB.

The CCB has looked at the application papers and the Environmental Statement (Volume 3 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment), especially. We also give weight and authority to our own Position Statement (2011) on '*Development affecting the setting of the Chilterns AONB*'. We have concluded that the application site here falls broadly within the wider setting of the AONB and sits next to or just beyond a wider valued landscape, itself a part of the setting and contained within the National Character Area 110 and with a landscape character that shares much with the South Oxfordshire LCA Chilterns Plateau with Valleys.

The topography, local vegetation and built form in and around the current planning application site impacts the immediate visual relationship to the AONB. The CCB has concluded that there is a landscape character relationship here, accepting the more direct visual relationship is affected by distance and topography. The application site clearly enjoys a visual link, due to its open character, with the valued landscape between the AONB and the edge of the built settlement.

We would recommend that the status of the wider valued landscape is given weight in any planning decision and that a landscape master-plan and management plan protects and indeed enhances the relationship between the existing site edge and the wider landscape. We note that the applicant has submitted a constraints plan and it is an important landscape consideration that these landscape boundary issues are taken into account.

In summary, the valued landscape status and the potential for an AONB boundary review are matters of relevance and weight can be attached.

Our duties.

The CROW section 87 (2) establishes that, A conservation board, while having regard to the purposes mentioned in subsection (1), shall seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the area of outstanding natural beauty and shall for that purpose co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the area of outstanding natural beauty.

The Chilterns AONB is nationally protected as one of the finest areas of countryside in the UK. Public bodies and statutory undertakers have a statutory duty of regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB (Section 85 of CroW Act).

Emmer Green Surgery dated 16th July 2021

Over the last 2/3 years the Emmer Green Surgery has taken on a significant increase in patient numbers owing to the closure of two other practices in the area and when we became aware of the proposed development on the local golf course and the added impact this would have on patient numbers we engaged with the all parties

involved at an early stage to identify what the impact on the local healthcare requirements might be and how we might help to resolve those issues.

We met with representatives from our CCG along with Susanna Bedford from RBC, Jonathan Walton from the Pegasus group, senior representatives from the golf club and Fairfax.

It was interesting to view the draft plans for the golf course which included a range of facilities and social areas etc to cater for the proposed residents and indeed the wider Reading population including provision for some new healthcare facilities on site although this was not something we were personally interested in moving to or even managing as a satellite site to our own existing Practice.

We explained that we did have an alternative solution to resolve any increase in healthcare requirements resulting from this proposed development on the golf course and that was to purchase the property next to our existing surgery and expand our existing facilities but in order to do this we would need the support from all parties attending the meeting to achieve it.

Since that early meeting the Pegasus group in particular has helped us to prepare our own development plans for submission to the RBC for consideration and we have now had feedback from Suzanne Bedford as to what adjustments would need to be made to make them fully acceptable and we have also entered into discussions regarding financial support in order to deliver this project.

We have not answered all the questions yet but clearly with the ongoing help and support of the people concerned we can at least say that the future healthcare requirements for the area do not have to present an issue to any of the plans submitted for either of the proposed projects but from our perspective there is a time limit on our solution being viable as our neighbours are keen to progress their own moving requirements now that we are emerging from the Pandemic.

I thought this input might be useful, so you have a full picture of all the background work that has been going on to try and ensure that everyone's needs are best catered for in the future as the population continues to grow and both housing and healthcare services continue to be in great demand.

Statement of Ian Lawson of 23 Brooklyn Drive and Caversham Preparatory School dated 20th July 2021 - Extract

- 1.1 It is agreed with the officers recommendation to refuse the application
- 1.2 I wish to make a statement concerning the change of use of the land which may be inappropriate in light of recent events in Germany were climate change events have cause considerable damage due to flooding -
- 1.3 I have lived in Emmer Green for over 9 years and have seen minor flooding on the golf course and at my school in Peppard Road the latter caused by altering the solid depth due to new building work in neighbouring properties.
- 1.4 After the rain storms which occurred this year the water table was at surface level in Brooklyn Drive and on the golf course.
- 1.5 I believe these issues may not have been given the correct consideration given the land has been in recreational use for over 100 years.
- 1.6 I believe that significant development on the course will cause flooding in adjacent properties as has happened in my school in Peppard Road.
- 1.7 Properties in the vicinity of the new development will be blighted by the development and inundated by water which will undoubtedly fall in climate change events.

Group Responses:

Keep Emmer Green dated 6th July

Reiterate previous objections however the conclusion of each paper has been summarised:

Trees: The applicant has increased the number of trees to be removed including removal of additional canopies therefore the impact on trees has become worse NOT better.

Transport: Maintain objections to previous comments.

Land contamination: If the land at RGC has been subjected to regular treatment with chemicals, then a full analysis of the soil at different depths and at multiple locations (100+) should be undertaken. With similar rigor, a full investigation of the groundwater for potential contaminants should be undertaken. In the interim, the building of any dwelling and the creation of private and public open space on potentially contaminated land would be unwise.

Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: As part of its Programme, Natural England announced on 24th June 2021 that it will explore a 'boundary extension of the Chilterns AONB.

Compliance checklist: do not consider the proposal is in accordance with numerous local plan policies.

Kidmore End Parish Council dated 10th July 2021

Maintain previous objections

3.0 Officer Assessment

3.1 Sustainability

3.1.1 As set out in the main report Local Plan Policy H5 'Standards for New Housing' seeks that all new-build housing is built to high design standards. In particular, new housing should adhere to national prescribed space standards, water efficiency standards in excess of the Building Regulations, zero carbon homes standards (for major schemes), and provide at least 5% of dwellings as wheelchair user units. Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) and Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that development proposals incorporate measures which take account of climate change. Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) seeks that developments of more than 20 dwellings should consider the inclusion of combined heat and power plant (CHP) or other form of decentralised energy provision.

3.1.2 Amendments to the initial Energy and Sustainability Report were submitted in March 2021. The amended information specifies:

To reduce energy consumption through appropriate design measures, in this case, adherence to higher 'u-value' standards, plus provision of PV arrays and Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) on properties throughout the site. This approach ensures an 83% reduction in CO2 emissions over a Part L compliance baseline for the proposed homes, with a net 75 TCO2 per annum liable for an offset payment to comply with Reading Policy H5 (£135,000).

Decentralised heating was considered, but discounted for a number of reasons including:

• Distribution losses - CP1: Heat Networks: Code of Practice for the UK sets the target for 10% distribution losses which is challenging for designers to achieve on schemes, and in reality is often exceeded in operation. Even on schemes where a 10% distribution loss target is met - this is still a significant loss of energy. The proposed local generation of heat for the dwellings reduces these transmission losses.

• Development Density - District heating networks are more feasible where there is a higher density of development - for example, in large apartment blocks. This is linked strongly with the issue of distribution losses.

3.1.3 Officers consider that it is an improvement that there has been a significant increase in solar installation on site. However, the proposal should be assessed using SAP12 calculations to determine the specified reduction in CO2 emissions. The proposal using SAP10 is not considered to be in accordance with the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD in this respect and the S106 sum is therefore not agreed. Further detailed water efficiency and number of wheelchair accessible units could be conditioned and secured at Reserved Matters stage.

3.1.4 In relation to decentralised energy, district heating is not proposed within the development and, in this instance, it is accepted that the density of development is a prohibitive factor. It is noted that air source heat pumps have been included within the scheme however ground source heat pumps are not proposed, and it is not considered that sufficient justification has been submitted to demonstrate why ground source heat pumps are not viable. There is also limited information in relation to how the development been designed to optimise the use of the energy from the sun and limit heat losses or how the development has been designed to optimise natural daylighting, energy efficient lighting, external lighting and natural ventilation.

3.1.5 Officers are therefore not satisfied that the proposals demonstrate a sufficient standard of sustainability and the development is not considered to be compliant with policies H5 *Standards for New Housing*, CC3 *Adaptation to Climate Change* and CC4 *Decentralised Energy* and the adopted 'SPD Sustainable Design and Construction.

3.2 Health Care

The comments of Emmer Green Surgery are noted above.

3.3 Education

Education officers have calculated that the range of primary pupils expected from the development is 59 - 88. Therefore, as set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Section 106 Planning obligations SPD' the Council will use CIL monies for education infrastructure for Early years, primary and secondary education.

3.4 S106 /CIL

The applicant has confirmed agreement to the following additional condition as sought by Transport officers in the main report:

£50,000 towards MOVA and pedestrian cycle improvements at the Peppard Road / Henley Road/ Westfield Road junction

£50,000 a year towards the bus services serving the site for the duration of the build for a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 5 years

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 Subject to amendments in the recommendation box above, officer recommendation as per the main report.