

COUNCIL MEETING – 27 JUNE 2023

(A) PETITIONS

None

(B) QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None

(C) QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

1. Councillor Robinson to ask the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport: Former Land of Reading Golf Club

Given the imminent initial construction phase of more than 220 homes on the former land of Reading Golf Club in Emmer Green and the continuing - indeed, increasing - concerns amongst nearby residents living in Kidmore End Road and the surrounding area over what they believe will be inevitable safety and heavy congestion issues arising from the construction traffic, Emmer Green Ward Councillors are this evening asking Council to do all within its power to minimise such problems, not least by working with the developers Vistry to reconsider the development's proposed construction traffic routing.

At the planning applications meeting held on the 29th March there was a request by myself to defer the agreement of the development's Construction Method Statement; my request being based on no agreement having been made over how traffic would safely travel to and from the site. My request, however, was refused, although we, as local Councillors, were promised that we would be kept fully informed and included in all decisions that would directly affect our residents.

To date the only correspondence the Ward Councillors have seen is from being copied into emails between the Council Leader Councillor Brock and Helen Lambert from CADRA who remains highly concerned over what plans are being made to facilitate safe travel to and from the site. This is not what local ward councillors expected or were promised.

So far, following contact between Transport Development Control and Vistry, we understand that only a Temporary Traffic Restriction Order (TTRO) has been proposed for Kidmore End Road, one which would remove available parking during the day and create a small passing place in an already very narrow road. From the correspondence we have seen, officers accept that the TTRO will only be "simply managing" the area most likely to be affected. This is not good enough.

Nor, apparently, has any further consideration been given to having construction vehicles come into and out of the area on a one-way circuit, something which would at least halve the traffic flow coming from both directions into Kidmore End Road.

Council will not need reminding that the administration's decision to grant planning permission last year was a highly contentious one with more than 4,000 objections received. Residents in Emmer Green remain extremely worried about what is shortly to begin literally on their doorsteps.

So, the Emmer Green Ward Councillors are asking Council a three-part question:

(1) Please update us on what recent decisions have been made, if any?

- (2) Will officers now actively work with the developers to consider the imposition of a one-way circuit route on construction traffic?
- (3) Please explain to the Ward Councillors why we have not been contacted by the relevant teams in RBC so that we can advise our residents accordingly?

REPLY by Councillor Ennis Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport.

Since the application to discharge the CMS condition was discussed at the Planning Applications Committee on 29th March 2023, Highway Officers have been in frequent dialogue with the developer Vistry Homes. They have been trying to seek ways to minimise the impact of the construction works on local residents as much as possible, particularly in relation to the Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO). The developer also has an interest regarding congestion surrounding the site as this could have a significant impact on their deliveries and as such have a detrimental impact on the programme of development.

The extent of the TTRO however has only recently been confirmed between Highway Officers and Vistry Homes and this forms part of their updated Construction Method Statement. This version was issued to Ward Councillors on 20th June 2023 for their review/comment, as agreed at the Planning Applications Committee.

The introduction of the passing place is considered by officers to be the best approach to mitigate the potential increase in congestion given that any physical traffic control could only be undertaken by way of temporary traffic lights or stop and go boards. Both methods are likely to have a far greater impact on congestion within the vicinity of the site as they would require multi phasing of the said method of control therefore increasing any delays.

Therefore, in relation to the three specific questions I respond as follows:

- (1) No decisions have been made to date with the Construction Method Statement with the latest draft being issued to Ward Councillors on 20th June 2023 for their review / comment.
- (2) Neither the Highway or Planning Authority have the power to impose specific routes on the developer hence why a one-way route cannot be stipulated. It can however be advised that through discussion with the developer the Construction Method Statement does now include the option of utilising other routes to and / or from the site to ease congestion on Kidmore End Road. This is something that can be reviewed during the development.
- (3) Ward Councillors have not been contacted until this point given that the details of the TTRO and the Construction Method Statement have only just progressed to a point at which Officers and Vitry Homes are in agreement.

2. Councillor Magon to ask the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport:

EV Charging Points at Palmer Park

Green Councillors have welcomed the new swimming pool and leisure centre in East Reading at Palmer Park, opening in December of last year. One of the important contributions to reducing carbon emissions are the 11 Electric Vehicle charge points in the car park. Six months after opening these still aren't live, can the Lead Councillor responsible please update us on why not, and when residents and visitors will be able to charge their electric vehicles in Palmer Park? Is this the responsibility of the leisure centre or the Council?

REPLY by Councillor Ennis Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport.

It's great to hear that Green Councillors welcomed the opening of Palmer Park Leisure Centre and pool despite the fact that Green Councillors consistently voted against building the pool. I suppose Labour Councillors know what residents want far better than the Greens do and you're having to play catch-up now.

We are expecting the EV charger points to become live at the end of July which is later than we had hoped. Throughout the build process at Palmer Park Swimming Pool and Stadium GLL and Pelikaan, like many other construction organisations, have had to deal with numerous supply and cost pressures. Despite that together we have delivered a fantastic new centre to BREEAM excellent standards including solar PV generation, additional air source heat pumps, upgraded building controls and many other measures all contributing to a significantly lowered Carbon emissions. We now have a facility that is excellent in terms of quality, services available and environmental impact in line with the Council's response to the climate emergency.

The opening of the charging points represents the last of the planned developments at the centre.

**3. Councillor McElroy to ask the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport:
Tackling Telecoms Company Disruption**

Multiple companies such as CityFibre, Grain and BT have been repeatedly digging up the same roads and parks, sometimes with complete disregard for the amenity of conservation areas, to install their own internet cables for private gain. Please can the Lead Councillor update me on what the Council is doing to minimise disruption ? Since this has been going on over multiple years why has the Council still not become a 'permit authority' to give it more control over these roadworks ?

REPLY by Councillor Ennis Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport.

I thank Councillor McElroy for his question.

As I am sure Councillor McElroy is aware, there is a national Government drive/initiative to increase the roll out of super-fast telecommunication networks across the Country and funding is being provided to stimulate the industry into delivering this infrastructure. Telecommunications is an area that is considered of national economic importance and the increase of homeworking, voice-over-internet taking over from copper-wired landline telephones, video and music streaming and other content-rich websites is driving the need to future proof these networks and provide ever faster telecommunications services. As Statutory Undertakers, City Fibre, Grain Connect, BT Openreach and others have powers to lay and maintain apparatus within the Public Highway. We do not have jurisdiction to refuse or stop these works from taking place and must facilitate and aid coordination around other planned works/events on the network as best as possible to minimise disruption for all users of the Public Highway. Where possible, we will always encourage utilities to work collaboratively to minimise disruption.

The Introduction of a permit scheme is a significant undertaking and requires many pre-processes to be undertaken, consultation with stakeholders impacted including statutory undertakers and neighbouring local authorities, and application for a regulatory change. It is a journey that Reading will be undertaking, and work on this will commence later in 2023 with delivery and roll up next financial year. The StreetWorks team will continue to co-ordinate all works on the public highway using the Street Manager system which continues to provide a good control mechanism for the enormous demand on the public highway road space within Reading.