APPLICATION NO:
VAR/2001/3562

LOCATION:
Land North Of County Sports Ground Sonning Lane, Sonning Reading.

APPLICANT:
Holme Park Sonning Ltd C/O Gregory Gray Associates

PROPOSAL:
Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.

EARLIEST DATE FOR DECISION: **16/04/2001**

APPLICATION WILL HAVE EXPIRED ON:
09/05/2001

CASE OFFICER: **Nicola Lake**

RAILEX
Marbleboard

EASIFILE EP7

1379

Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 21 January 2003

by Linda Wride Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the First Secretary of State

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Date
07 MAR 2003

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/A/02/1093573
Land north of sports ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission under section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for the development of land without complying with conditions subject to which a previous planning permission was granted.
- The appeal is made by Holme Park Sonning Limited against the decision of Wokingham District Council.
- The application (Ref. VAR /2001/3562), dated 9 March 2001, was refused by the Council by notice dated 12 June 2002.
- The application sought the variation of a condition attached to a planning permission (Ref. 45032), dated 4 July 1996, for change of use to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.
- The condition in dispute is No 1 which states that: The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.
- The reason given for the condition was: This condition is deemed to be attached by virtue of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Summary of Decision: The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

1. The application to extend the period for the commencement of development was made within five years of the date of the original permission, and so is, in effect, a proposal for renewal. It was agreed at the Hearing that the relevant advice is set out in paragraph 60 of Circular 11/95 *The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions*. This states that, as a general rule, permission should only be refused where, among other things, there has been a material change in planning circumstances.

2. At the Hearing an application for costs was made by Holme Park Sonning Limited against Wokingham District Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issue

3. I consider that the main issue in this appeal relates to the implications of the proposed use in respect of the water environment.

Planning Policy

4. The Development Plan for the locality comprises the Berkshire Structure Plan (1991-2006), originally adopted in 1995 and incorporating Alterations adopted in 1997, together with the Loddon Area Plan, adopted in 1995. The Local Plan was intended to cover the period up to 1996. At the Hearing, the Council confirmed that it had resolved that the Loddon Area Plan should continue in force pending the adoption of the emerging Local Plan, except for matters relating to land for housing. A number of Development Plan policies have been drawn to my attention, the most relevant of which is Structure Plan Policy EN2 *Protection from Environmental Nuisance*, which states that development should not give rise to unacceptable levels of water pollution, among other things.

5. The emerging Local Plan is the Wokingham District Local Plan (WDLP). The Plan has been the subject of a Public Local Plan Inquiry, the Inspector's report was received in October 2001, and the Council resolved to accept the Inspector's recommendations in December 2002. Policy WOS6 of the WDLP resists development proposals which would give rise to an unacceptable pollution of the environment and seriously harm the character and amenities of an area, or the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. The Inspector recommended that this policy be amended in respect of light pollution (which is not relevant to this appeal), but no other changes were proposed or recommended. Since it is likely to be adopted in the near future without further change, I give it significant weight.

6. As the site is located in the Sonning Conservation Area, I am required by section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special consideration to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. In reaching my decision, I have also had regard to Planning Policy Guidance 9 *Nature Conservation* (PPG 9), Planning Policy Guidance 23 *Planning and Pollution Control* (PPG 23), Planning Policy Guidance 25 *Planning and Flood Risk* (PPG 25), Circular 11/95 *The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions*, and *The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994* (The Habitats Regulations).

Reasons

7. The appeal site is an L-shaped area of open grassland, some 1.9 hectares in extent, bounded by hedgerows on three sides with an open frontage to the track running along its southern boundary. It is located to the south of the built up area of Sonning, bordered by playing fields to the east and south, and the grounds of Reading Blue Coat School, on the opposite side of Sonning Lane, to the east. To the north of the appeal site, and separated from it by a hedge and ditch, is an area of public open space managed as a local nature reserve by Sonning Parish Council. The geology in this area of Sonning is Upper Chalk, overlaid by Reading Beds (also known as Lambeth Beds), which comprise an impervious mix of sand and clay, over which is a porous layer of Plateau Gravel (sometimes referred to as Boyne Hill Gravel) which supports a seasonal, perched water table. Where the Reading Beds come close to the surface, springs arise. I observed one such spring on my visit to the locality, which included the nature reserve adjoining the appeal site.

8. The proposed layout plan for the woodland burial ground indicates a small hard surfaced area adjacent to the southern boundary to provide parking for 10 vehicles, accessed off the track, with the remainder of the site to be used for burials. This would require the excavation of land, usually to a depth of 2m, for graves. The Environment Agency recognises that ground water in close proximity to graves may contain concentrations of nitrogen, chloride and sulphate which exceed accepted water quality standards. It recommends that a 2m zone between the lowest part of any grave and the top of the water table be maintained at all times, to prevent polluting the water environment. It is evident from correspondence between the Council and the Environment Agency that while the water table in the Upper Chalk is known to be some 20m below ground level, there is no information about the level of the perched water table beneath the appeal site. Nevertheless, the Environment Agency did not object to the original application to use the land as a burial ground, or the subsequent application to renew the permission, provided that any permission was subject to a planning condition in accordance with its recommendations. The 1996 planning permission included such a condition (Condition 4 on Permission Ref. 45032), and I consider that this condition is a necessary requirement to enable the development to go ahead.

9. At the Hearing, the appellant confirmed that, for financial reasons, the ground conditions at the appeal site had not been investigated before submitting the original application in 1995. No steps had been taken since the grant of permission in 1996 to establish whether or not it would be possible to satisfy condition 4 on this permission. PPG 23 recognises that the impact of any discharge which may pose a threat to current and future surface or

underground water resources is a material planning consideration. It stresses that there must be sufficient information on which to base development control decisions. The level of the perched water table at the appeal site is unknown, and there is no evidence to demonstrate that the Environment Agency's recommended condition could be satisfied.

10. At the Hearing, Sonning Parish Council presented the results of monitoring water levels in a borehole on adjacent land, close to the appeal site boundary, between July 2001 and January 2002. The perched water table level was within 2m of the surface of the ground throughout this period. Since early October it had risen significantly. Photographs taken on 1 January 2003 show the water in the test pipe about level with the surrounding ground. I observed a similar level on my site visit. While noting the appellant's concerns about the scientific rigour of this exercise, the Parish Council's methodology generally followed the National River Authority's advice on how to establish the level of the perched water table. I acknowledge that the ground conditions at the appeal site may not be identical to those at the nature reserve, and that there is a difference in level of about a metre between the level of the borehole and the highest part of the appeal site. Even making a generous allowance for variations between the sites and within the appeal site, these results suggest that, generally, the level of the perched water table beneath the appeal site is within 4m of the surface of the ground. In these circumstances, I consider it unlikely that a survey of ground conditions at the appeal site, as suggested by the appellant at the Hearing, would demonstrate that the Environment Agency's recommended condition could be satisfied. Circular 11/95 advises that a planning condition may be unreasonable if it is unduly restrictive. Bearing in mind the likelihood that the water table level is within 4m of the surface of the appeal site, I consider that the restrictions on the use of the site for woodland burials imposed by condition 4 would be likely to nullify the benefit of the permission.

11. The Environment Agency considers that provided an unsaturated depth of 2m can be maintained between the bottom of any grave and the water table, the risk to water quality would be acceptable. By implication, if an unsaturated buffer of this depth cannot be maintained between the graves and the water table, ground water could be contaminated by pathogens as a result of the proposed use, and this would affect water quality. Assessing the potential risk to human health as a result of such pollution falls outside the Agency's remit. In the absence of any assessment of the risk to human health posed by this type of contamination, the potential harm to public health reinforces my concerns about the implications of the proposed use in respect of the water environment.

12. Since permission was granted in 1996, a nature reserve has been created on the adjoining Parish land. Great crested newts breed in the wildlife pond at the reserve. The great crested newt is a protected species under the 1994 Habitats Regulations. PPG 9 advises that the presence of a protected species is a material planning consideration in such circumstances, and recommends consultation with English Nature. At the Hearing, the Council clarified the presence of a protected species on the adjoining land had not been drawn to the attention of English Nature as part of the consultation on the appeal application. In these circumstances, I give limited weight to the fact that English Nature had no objection at the time. In the absence of any assessment of the effect of the development on the nearby newt population, the potential harmful effect of the development on wildlife, and a protected species in particular, adds weight to my concerns about the risk of contamination.

13. In the light of advice in Circular 11/95 concerning the renewal of planning permissions, I have considered whether there has been a material change of circumstance since the original permission was granted which might justify refusing to extend the period within which the development can commence. At a national level, the publication of PPG 25 in July 2001 highlighted the impact of climate change on rainfall. It drew attention to scenarios which suggest an increase of up to 10% in annual rainfall by 2050 and a shift in the seasonal pattern of rainfall, with wetter autumns and winters over the whole of the UK. This has implications for water table levels which are material to this appeal, given the nature of the development and the long term risk of pollution. The publication of PPG 25 reflects an

increased awareness generally about the risks of flooding, and the associated risks of contamination, which has arisen as a result of serious flooding in recent years. At a local level, this increased awareness is reflected the introduction of Policy WOS6 in the emerging Local Plan which requires that proposals do not give rise to unacceptable pollution of the environment. As noted already, the nature reserve on the adjoining land was developed after planning permission was originally granted, and the arrival of a protected species close to the appeal site has happened since then.

14. PPG 23 highlights the importance of preventing pollution at source and minimising the risk to human health and the environment. It also stresses that the Government's approach to pollution is a precautionary one and there is a need to prevent or limit harm, even where scientific knowledge is inconclusive. Taking into account all these matters, I am satisfied that in this case, the changes in circumstance since 1996 justify a more cautious approach to dealing with pollution, rather than assuming that this matter could be addressed by planning conditions. As it has not been demonstrated that a depth of 2m could be maintained at all times between the bottom of any grave and the top of the perched water table, I conclude that the proposed use would have unacceptable implications for the water environment in the area. As such, the proposal would conflict with the objectives of Structure Plan Policy EN2 and Policy WOS6 of the emerging Local Plan.

15. In reaching my conclusion, I have taken into account that the woodland burial ground venture might be viable if only part of the site could be used for burials, given the relatively low capital outlay and running costs. However, the application relates to the site as a whole, and in consequence, I do not find this argument compelling.

Other matters

16. In my view, bringing the land into beneficial use would reduce the risk of fly tipping and vehicular activity, which have been the cause of problems at the site. Given the limited amount of above-ground development, and the type of landscaping and maintenance regime envisaged, I am satisfied that the proposal would enhance the character and appearance of the Sonning Conservation Area. I acknowledge that there is a need for burial grounds, and that such a use in this location would not conflict with adopted or emerging policies concerning development in the countryside and the separation of settlements. Provided that the times of burials do not coincide with school starting and finishing times, I am satisfied that the use would not prejudice highway safety in Sonning Lane. While noting the existing problems with surface water run-off in the area, I do not consider that the proposed use would increase this to a significant degree, given the relatively small area of hard surfacing proposed. However, these matters are not sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified.

Conclusions

17. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Formal Decision

18. In exercise of the powers transferred to me, I dismiss the appeal.

Information

19. A separate note is attached setting out the circumstances in which the validity of this decision may be challenged by making an application to the High Court.

Linda Wride

Inspector

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Mr S M Leedale MSc DipTP BEd (Hons) MRTPI	Associate, Gregory Gray Associates, Chartered Town Planning Consultants, 'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hampshire GU13 9SL

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Mr S Andrewartha BA(Hons) Dip TP MRTPI	Principal Planning Officer, Wokingham District Council

INTERESTED PERSONS:

Cllr David Penny	Sonning Parish Council, The Council Office, Pearson Road, Sonning, Reading, RG4 6UL
Cllr Nigel Rose MA C Eng MIMechE MCMI	District Councillor for Sonning, Wokingham District Council, Spinney Side, Holme Park Farm Lane, Sonning, Reading, RG4 6SY

DOCUMENTS

Document 1	List of persons present at the hearing.
Document 2	Council's letter of notification and list of persons notified.
Document 3	Letters of representation received in response to the notification letter.
Document 4	Appendices 1-5 to the Appellant's Statement.
Document 5	Appendices 1-6 to the Council's Statement.
Document 6	Water table levels at Sonning Nature Reserve.

PLANS

Plans A1/2	Drawing Nos SL/00/180/01 and L1743/001 submitted with application VAR/2001/3562.
Plan B	Plan submitted by Sonning Parish Council at the Hearing showing the location of the nature reserve, pond, borehole and ditch adjoining the appeal site.
PHOTOGRAPHS	Photographs submitted by Sonning Parish Council at the Hearing

Costs Decision

Hearing held on 21 January 2003

by Linda Wride Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the First Secretary of State

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Date

07 MAR 2003

Costs application in relation to Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/A/02/1093573
Land north of sports ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning

- The application is made under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, sections 78, 322 and Schedule 6 and the Local Government Act 1972, section 250(5).
- The application is made by Holme Park Sonning Limited for a full award of costs against Wokingham District Council.
- The hearing was in connection with an appeal against the refusal of the Council to vary condition 1 on permission 45032 and renew the planning permission for the change of use to a woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.

Summary of Decision: The application fails and no award of costs is made.

The Submissions for Holme Park Sonning Limited

1. The appellant's case is that the Council has failed to substantiate its reason for refusal with evidence. The decision fails to take into account the relevant Government advice on the renewal of planning permission set out in Circular 11/95. In support of the application, reference is made to Paragraph 8 of Annex 3 to Circular 8/93, in particular the requirement that in appeal proceedings local authorities will be expected to produce evidence to show clearly why the development cannot be permitted.

2. The appellant's case is on three grounds. Firstly, the refusal to renew permission is contrary to the advice set out in Circular 11/95, since there has been no material change in circumstances since the permission was originally granted. Paragraph 19 of Circular 8/93 gives this as an example of unreasonable behaviour. Secondly, while local authorities are expected to take into account the views of local residents, these views are not grounds for refusing planning permission unless founded on and supported by substantial and valid planning grounds. In this case, the council has placed far too great a weight on third party representations, which are not supported by valid, technical evidence produced by an acknowledged expert in such matters. Thirdly, Paragraph 9 of Annex 3 advises that local planning authorities are not bound to adopt or include as part of their case, the professional advice of officers or statutory consultees, including the Environment Agency. However, where a decision is taken which is contrary to that advice, local planning authorities will be expected to produce evidence to support their decision in all respects.

3. The Environment Agency has no technical objection to the proposal, in terms of run-off, flooding or ground water pollution. It has considered the risk of pollution. The Agency's position has remained the same, despite repeated attempts by the Council to persuade it to change its views. It follows that there is no technical objection to the proposal and the Council has not produced sustainable arguments or evidence to refute this. In reaching its view, the Environment Agency has specifically considered how long it would take to fill the woodland burial ground, on the basis of a standard number of burials each year. While the

Council has suggested that ground water conditions may alter during this period, the Environment Agency has not been persuaded to alter its views.

4. For these reasons, a full award of costs against Wokingham District Council is requested in respect of the appeal proceedings.

The Response by Wokingham District Council

5. The Council has set out the changes in circumstances since permission was originally granted through its submissions and at the Hearing. It has demonstrated that there are reasonable planning grounds to take the decision it did, contrary to the advice it had been given. The reason for refusal is precise, specific and relevant to the development. It was substantiated in the Council's written submissions and at the Hearing, with reference to the Development Plan and other material considerations. It is clear that the only area of concern relates to the unknown level of the water table in the area, and the Council has demonstrated that this is a justifiable planning concern in the locality, not just a whim. In these circumstances, the Council did not act unreasonably in taking these local concerns into account.

6. The Council is not bound to accept its officers' advice or that of statutory consultees. It is the Council's sole responsibility to ensure that if such advice is adopted, it is based on a complete understanding of the consultee's advice or opinion. The advice in Circular 11/95 is that conditions must meet the tests set out in the circular. A planning authority runs the risk of an award of costs for unreasonable behaviour, if it attaches planning conditions which are unreasonable or unnecessary. The Environment Agency is not an expert in planning conditions. In respect of the conditions recommended by the Environment Agency to prevent pollution, the Council explained why it did not consider the suggested conditions reasonable or enforceable, and in consequence why Members were not satisfied that these conditions would meet the tests set out in Circular 11/95. The Environment Agency conceded that its suggested condition might be difficult to enforce, and advised that if the Council considered the condition unenforceable, it could refuse permission.

7. In this context, the Council has not acted unreasonably, and an award of costs is not justified.

Conclusions

8. I have considered this application for costs in the light of Circular 8/93 and all the relevant circumstances. This advises that, irrespective of the outcome of the appeal, costs may only be awarded against a party who has behaved unreasonably and thereby caused another party to incur or waste expense unnecessarily.

9. In its written and oral representations, the Council identified various changes in circumstances since 1996, including the emerging Local Plan Policy on pollution, increased awareness of flooding and associated risks of contamination and the fact that a protected species is now breeding nearby. In my view, these changes in circumstance are sufficient justification to refuse to renew the planning permission, and I do not consider the Council acted unreasonably in this respect.

10. The risk of pollution is a material planning consideration, and, based on local experience, local residents' concerns about this risk are not without foundation. I do not consider that

the Council acted unreasonably in taking these valid planning concerns into account and giving them weight, notwithstanding the advice of its professional officers.

11. In respect of the technical advice offered by the statutory consultee, the Council agreed that the Environment Agency's recommended planning condition was necessary to prevent pollution of the water environment, but explained to my satisfaction why it now took the view that such a condition would be unreasonable.

12. I agree that the Council did not produce its own technical evidence relating to the water table level at the appeal site to substantiate the reason for refusal. In this respect, I agree that the Council acted unreasonably. However, the appellant did not produce any technical evidence of his own in writing or orally at the Hearing to refute the Council's concerns about the Environment Agency's recommended planning condition, which resulted in the refusal of the application. On this basis, I do not consider that the appellant incurred or wasted expense unnecessarily as a result of the Council's unreasonable behaviour.

Conclusion

13. I consider that unreasonable behaviour resulting in unnecessary expense, as described in Circular 8/93, has not been demonstrated and I therefore conclude that an award of costs is not justified.

Formal Decision

14. In exercise of the powers transferred to me, I refuse the application for an award of costs.

Linda Wride

Inspector

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACTS

Notification of Refusal of Permission

Holme Park Sonning Ltd
C/O Gregory Gray Associates
17 Dinorben Close
Fleet
GU52 7SL

Application Number: VAR/2001/3562

Parish:	**SONNING**
Location:	**Land North of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Reading.**
Proposal:	**Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.**

The Wokingham District Council in pursuance of their powers under the above Acts and Regulations hereby **Refuse Permission** for carrying out the above development in accordance with the application and the accompanying plans submitted to the Council, the reason for which is specified hereunder.

Reason

1. It has not been demonstrated that the water table at the site is sufficiently low throughout the entire year to ensure that the land can be safely used as a woodland burial ground. As such the proposed development would be contrary to policy WOS6 of the Wokingham District local Plan.

Informative

1. You are advised, in compliance with The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (England) (Amendment) Order 2000, that the following policies and/or proposals in the development plan are relevant to this decision:

Berkshire Structure Plan Policies C2, C5, C6, EN2, EN5, EN8 and EN9.
Loddon Area Local Plan Policies LTV2, LC1, LC2, LC10, LBE1, LBE12 and LBE14.
Deposit Draft Wokingham District Local Plan Policies WOS3, WOS6, WCC1, WCC2, WNC3, WNC5, WBE1, WHE2 and WIC2.

T. G Watson

Trevor Watson
Development Control Manager
Date: 12/06/2002

Notice checked by: _____

If this notice grants permission to proceed with the proposal the applicant is reminded that it relates to planning permission only and does not constitute approval under any other legislation including Building Regulations.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

SECTION 78 APPEAL

APPELLANT :	Holme Park Sonning Ltd.
APPEAL SITE :	Land North of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Berkshire.
REASON FOR APPEAL :	Refusal of planning permission for the proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY REFERENCE: VAR/2001/3562.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
TRANSPORT & THE REGIONS REFERENCE: APP/X0360/A/02/1093573.

1.00 LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

1.01 The site is located off Sonning Lane (B4446). Sonning Lane is a road with a single pavement to the western side which joins Bath Road (A4) to the south and leads on north to join Pearson Road which leads directly to Sonning Village.

1.02 The appeal site is accessed via an existing opening in the boundary, in the south west corner of the site. The site's opening adjoins directly onto an access road, which runs east/west and serves some of the recreation facilities and a few residential properties. The access road adjoins Sonning Lane proper just a few metres further to the west of the opening in the site boundary. The junction of the access road and Sonning Lane is again located just a few metres north of the access road which provides the main entrance to Reading Blue Coats School.

1.03 The entrance to the appeal site is currently marked by two wooden posts which are joined by a length of chain. The access to the site allows clear open views across the site to the mature landscaping on the opposite (north boundary) of the application site.

1.04 The character of the surrounding area is predominantly one of large open, undeveloped expanses of land with occasional views of residential and recreation buildings, which are largely set well within sites that are at least partially screened by mature landscaping. The mature landscaping is a dominate characteristic of the surrounding area.

1.05 The site is an approximate rectangle with the north eastern quarter of the rectangle excluded from the application site. This results in the site having an 'L' shaped appearance. The land to the north east of the site, had an nature pond created on it in 1998. Great Crested Newts have been found in both this and Thatched Cottage Pond. which is located to the north of the appeal site.

1.06 The site is identified within the Loddon Area Local Plan as being located within the Sonning Conservation Area, Rural Area, Separation of Settlements and Setting of Settlements and within the Wokingham

District Local Plan as Countryside, Sonning Conservation area and Green Gap/Wedge.

2.00 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY.

2.01 There have been four previous planning applications for the redevelopment of the appeal site, which have all been made by the current owners of the site.

Application	Description	Decision	Date.
12934	Outline application for the erection of 4 detached dwellings.	Refused. (Dismissed on appeal)	10.04.80 (25.11.80)
15548	Outline application for the erection of 6 detached dwellings.	Refused.	08.05.81
40424	Erection of 13 dwellings.	Refused. (Dismissed on appeal)	17.02.93 10.08.93
45032	Change of use from agricultural land to burial ground.	Conditional Approval.	04.07.96
VAR/2001/3562	Variation of condition 01 of application 45032 to extend time of start of change of use to burial ground.	Refused (Subject of this appeal)	12.06.02

3.00 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY.

3.01 The appeal needs to be considered in the context of Policies EN2 – 'Protection from Environmental Nuisance' and OS1 – 'The overall Strategy' of the Berkshire Structure Plan, which was adopted by the Berkshire County Council in November 1995.

3.02 Material Consideration must also be given to the emerging Wokingham District Local Plan (Deposit Draft October 1997) and as amended in April 1999. The County Council issued a statement of general conformity with the Structure Plan in May 1997 and the document has formed the basis of Development Control decisions since the 21

October 1997. The Public Inquiry for the plan commenced on the 6 October 1998 and was closed on the 29 November 2000. The inspector's report on part 2 of the Local Plan Inquiry has now been received and was published on the 22 November 2001. (Part 1 of the Inspector's statement referred to chapter 5 of the Wokingham District Local Plan which covered housing development). The recommendations are currently being considered.

3.04 Policy WOS6 – 'Environmental Nuisance and Pollution Control' should also be considered.

3.05 The Local Plan Inspector's report is also a material planning consideration. The Inspector recommendation for policy WOS6 was that the plan be amended in line with the Council's proposed amendment PA1/8.

4.00 THE APPLICATION.

4.01 The application which is the subject of this appeal, was registered by the Council on the 14 March 2001.

4.02 During the consultation period 6 letters of objection were received from local residents. The application was placed on the agenda for the Development Control Committee of the 12 September 2001. The Committee Members resolved to defer the application to allow officers to re-consult the Environment Agency to gain their view about the potential safety of the site for the proposed use in light of the prolific flooding in the area and the potential pollution of run off water from the site, which local residents had stated runs the application site and into their gardens.

4.03 The officers entered into further discussion with the Environment Agency. Copies of the Environment Agency's responses to correspondence on this application are included in the appendix 5. The Agency stated in their letter of the 18 March 2002, that the Agency recognises that the recommended condition that "a minimum depth of 2 metres shall always be maintained between the bottom of any grave and the water table" would be difficult to enforce. However they

continued on to state that in their opinion the proposed condition, in association with adequate investigation of the ground conditions and monitoring of ground water level, would safeguard ground water in the area. The application returned to the Development Control Committee of the 12 June 2002. At this committee the Members resolved to refuse planning permission for the variation of the condition to allow an extension of time to start the change of use of the land, due to their concerns over the potential impact of the development upon the ground water table. The reason for refusal was stated as follows:

1. It has not been demonstrated that the water table at the site is sufficiently low throughout the entire year to ensure that the land can be safely used as a woodland burial ground. As such the proposed development would be contrary to policy WOS6 of the Wokingham District Local Plan.

5.00 THE CASE FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY.

5.01 The site is currently undeveloped grass land, with mature landscaping along each of its boundaries. The application which is the subject of this appeal sought permission to vary condition 01 of application 45032 to extend the period before which the change of use of the site must be begun.

5.02 The original application (45032) was for the change of use of 1.9 hectares of land from agricultural land to woodland burial, with an associated parking area large enough for 10 cars. There would be a maximum of 50 burials a year. A document – 'Woodland Burial. A feasibility study for Introduction and future Development.' (January 1991) by The City of Carlisle Council was written by Mr Ken West MBE who was the Woodland Burial concept designer. Using the likely projection figures, it is estimated that approximately 900 burials could take place per acre of woodland burial site. Using this figure, the proposed development site would be able to hold approximately 4,275 graves. At a rate of 50 burials a year it would take over 85 years for the site to be full developed.

5.03 It is the view of the Local Planning Authority that the main issue in the consideration of this appeal would be the suitability of the site for use as a woodland burial ground.

5.04 The Council is of the opinion that insufficient information is currently available to demonstrate that the site could be safely used as a burial ground, due to the seasonally variable ground water level. Local residents and the workers who supervised the creation of the nature pond on the adjacent site have stated that they have local knowledge that at certain times of the year the water table on the adjacent site is very high (See photographs in appendix 6) and that frequently run off water flows from the site out onto Sonning Lane and on into the gardens of local residents.

5.05 The Committee Members considered that the officer recommended conditions would not provide the degree of certainty that would be required, to ensure that the proposed development would not lead to the pollution of the ground water table within this area, by the decomposition process, for such a sensitive and emotive use of the site.

5.05 Proposed condition 03 of the officer's committee report required a ground water survey to be carried out for a full 12 consecutive month period, prior to the start of development on the site. The survey would have to be carried out in accordance with a method statement (condition 02) that was to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The purpose of the survey was to ensure that at the time of burial a minimum 2metre gap could be attained between the bottom of the grave and the water table (condition 04 of the committee report of the 12 June 2002 and application 45032).

5.06 The original suggested wording for condition 04 was provided by the Environment Agency (the statutory consultee on these matters) and the original condition on application 45032 was: *"A minimum depth of 2m shall be maintained at all times between the bottom of any grave and the water table"*. There are two main concerns regarding the approval of the application with this condition. Firstly, it was considered that it would not be possible to monitor this situation, as once a body had

been placed in the grave and buried, it would be very difficult to tell where the water table would be in relation to the bottom of the grave. The second concern was regarding the enforceability of the condition, should the water table rise above the bottom of the grave. It would not be possible to restrict the movement of the water table, so the only option to prevent pollution of the ground water would be to exhume the body from the grave, which would undoubtedly cause significant upset to the relatives and local residents. There was also concern over the potential pollution of the water table by bodies being submerged while they decompose and the resultant effect upon the water run off from the site.

5.07 While the recommended method statement (condition 02) and the survey (condition 03) would help to ensure that it may be possible to maintain a gap of 2m from the bottom of the grave and the water table, the condition would not prevent the survey being carried out during a particularly dry year. There would be no way of ensuring that the survey was carried out during a year which had a comparatively average rainfall. The survey would also be unable to forecast the likely changes in levels of the ground water table over the potential 85 years or more that it could take to fully use the site.

5.08 The main change in circumstance, which has occurred since the determination of the previous application (45032), has been the increase in general awareness of flood risk and the associated risk of pollution to the ground water table. The recent floods that took place in November 2000, the publication of PPG25 – Development and Flood Risk in July 2001, and the general considered opinion that water levels are rising has further increased public awareness and concern regarding these maters. The Council considers that prior to the approval of planning permission for the creation of a burial ground at this site, it should be substantiated that the site is suitable for this use now and for the duration of its use.

5.09 Therefore it was considered that the conditions as recommended by the Environment Agency would fail to provide certainty that the proposed development would not result in the contamination of the

ground water table by the decomposition of bodies and that it would not have a resultant harmful effect upon the surrounding environment.

5.10 Conditions are attached to applications to overcome reason for refusal. The Council considers that the condition recommend by the Environment Agency to maintain a minimum of 2m between the bottom of the grave and the water table is neither monitorable or enforceable and as such would not be able to satisfy the concern that the Environment Agency must have to have first recommended it imposition. As such the proposed development should not be granted planning permission until a full and detailed Ground Water Pollution Risk Assessment has been carried out, to prove that the site is suitable for use as a burial ground for the foreseeable future.

5.11 This has not been done and therefore the proposed development would not be in accordance with the requirements of Policy WOS6 of the Wokingham District Local Plan, which states that the Council will only permit development proposals where they do not give rise to an unacceptable pollution of the Environment.

6.00 CONCLUSION.

6.01 The proposed development raises one fundamental issue, the suitability of the site for use as a woodland burial site and its potential impact upon the ground water table.

6.02 The proposed development would result in the use of a site with a seasonally variable water table as a burial ground for an unlimited period of time. It is considered that without a full Ground Water Pollution Risk Assessment being carried out prior to the determination of the application it is not possible to assess the acceptability of the site for use as a burial ground and to ensure that there is no contamination of the ground water table by decomposing bodies.

6.03 It is therefore, respectfully requested that the present appeal be DISMISSED.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS IN THE EVENT OF THE APPEAL BEING ALLOWED, WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE COUNCIL'S CASE.

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

2. No burials shall take place on the site until a method statement regarding the carrying out of a ground water survey and preparation of a report by a specialist consultant has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The statement shall consider all aspects necessary to demonstrate compliance with conditions 03, 04, 05, 06 and 07 at all times of the year.

3. No burials shall take place on the site until the ground water survey has been carried out and a report submitted in accordance with the approved method statement and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This ground water survey shall cover a full twelve consecutive month period to ensure that it is possible to attain a minimum depth of 2metres between the bottom of any grave and the watertable below. It shall also detail any drainage mitigation measures, which may be required in order to ensure compliance.

4. At the time of excavation of any grave a minimum depth of 2metres shall be attained between the bottom of the grave and the water table below.

5. No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table at the time of excavation, and soakaways shall not in any event exceed 3metres in depth below the ground level of the site as exists at the date of this approval.

6. No burials shall take place within 10metres of a land drain or ditch.

7. No burial shall take place within 250metres of any well, borehole or spring used for potable water supply, nor within 30metres of any other spring.

8. Burials shall not take place until the areas within the site that comply with condition 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 and 07 have been identified on a plan which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No burial shall take place on the site outside those areas agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority based on the approved ground water survey.

9. No burial shall take place other than in accordance with an overall design specification to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority with regards to the dimensions, depth, spacing and location of all graves. The burials shall be thereafter carried out in accordance with the approved overall design specifications.

10. No burials shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, a scheme of landscaping, which shall include details of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land.

11. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the creation of the car parking area on the site. Any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the first burial on the site, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with others of a similar size or species.

12. No burial shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of the proposed indiginous boundary hedging. All planting comprised in the approved details shall be carried out in the first planting season following the creation of the car park area on the site. Any trees and planting which within a period of 5 years from the first burial on the site, die, are removed or becomes seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with other of a similar size or species.

13. Only indigenous trees shall be used to mark each grave.

14. A landscaping, maintenance and ecological management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any burials taking place on the site, and the site shall thereafter be managed in accordance with the agreed management plan.

15. The proposed car parking shall be provided on the site prior to any burials taking place and details of surfacing materials to be used on the car park shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to work commencing on site, and only those approved surfacing materials shall be used.

16. Details of any memorial walls shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any such provision on site and only those approved memorials or memorial walls shall be provided on site.

17. Burials shall only take place on the site between the hours of 10.00am and 2.30pm.

18. The site shall remain available as informal amenity space with unrestricted public access at all times following commencement of burials on the site.

19. No machinery shall be stored at the site at any time.

20. Prior to the start of development on the site a full newt survey and mitigation scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall then be implemented on site in accordance with a timetable to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reasons.

1. In pursuance of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2, 3, 4 & 8. In the interest of proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

5. To prevent pollution of groundwater.

6 & 7. To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

9. In the interests of the proper planning of the area in terms of decency and amenity.

10, 11 & 12. In the interests of visual amenity.

13 & 14. In order to protect the character and amenity of the locality.

15. In order to secure the appropriate parking provision on the site and to ensure its satisfactory appearance.

16. In order to protect the character and amenity of the locality.

17. In the interests of surrounding residential amenity and to avoid peak time traffic movements on the surrounding highway network in the interest of the road safety.

18 & 19. In accordance with the submitted details and to ensure the appropriate use of the site.

20. In the interests of the future health and safety of a protected species.

Informatives.

1. You are advised, in compliance with the Town and Country Planning (General Development procedure)(England) (Amendment) Order 2000, that the following policies and/or proposals in the development plan are relevant to this decision:
Berkshire Structure Plan: C2, C5, C6, EN2, EN5, EN8, EN9.
Loddon Area Local Plan: LTV2, LC1, LC2 LC10, LBE1, LBE12, LBE14.
Wokingham District Local Plan: WOS3, WCC1, WCC2, WNC3, WNC5, WBE1, WHE2 and WIC2.

2. The site is with 30 metres of a known Great Crested Newt breeding pond. As such the applicants must secure a DEFRA licence prior to the start of any works upon the site.

3. The is evidence that the site is within an area that has a high water table. It is for this reason that conditions 02, 03 and 04 are very important. The failure to comprehensively carry out the required surveying of the site, under condition 07 could result in the pollution of the water table within the area.

APPENDICES.

1. Location plans 1:1250 and 1:2500.

2. Policies OS1 and EN2 of the Berkshire Structure Plan.

3. Policy WOS6 of the Wokingham District Local Plan.

4. Local Plan Inspector's comments on policy WOS6 of the Wokingham District Local Plan.

5. Copies of the Environment Agencies correspondence.

6. Extract from 'Woodland Burial. A feasibility study for Introduction and future Development.' (January 1991) by The City of Carlisle Council was written by Mr Ken West MBE.

Application Number: VAR/2001/3562.
~~Conditions~~/Reasons for Refusal

No	Std Con	Std Reas	Non Std Conditions / Reasons for Refusal
1	→		It has not been demonstrated that the water table at the site is sufficiently low throughout the active year to ensure that the land can be safely used as a woodland Burial Ground. As such the proposed development would be Contrary to Policy WOS6 of the Wokingham District Local plan.

Informatives.

1. You are advised, in compliance with the Town and Country Planning (General Development procedure)(England) (Amendment) Order 2000, that the following policies and/or proposals in the development plan are relevant to this decision:
Berkshire Structure Plan: C2, C5, C6, EN2, EN5, EN8, EN9.
Loddon Area Local Plan: LTV2, LC1, LC2 LC10, LBE1, LBE12, LBE14.
Wokingham District Local Plan: WOS3, WCC1, WCC2, WNC3, WNC5, WBE1, WHE2 and WIC2.
^
WOS6.

OBS

LILAC COTTAGE,
PEARSON ROAD,
SONNING,
READING, BERKS., RG4 6UH
0118 969 8441

PL
CS
12 JUN 2002
11 June 2002
COPIES TO
ACK: 12/6
FILE:

Attention Mrs Nicola Lane
Planning & Transport Development.
Wokingham Hinitary.

VAR/2001/3562.

Dear Sirs / Madam

Holme Parle Sonning Ltd

Thank you very much for lending copies of the relevant documents in this matter.

I have no grounds for objecting to an extension of time in this matter. It cannot but be wrong to have – I regret to put it this way – decaying bodies in land from which water drains into the heart of the village. I have had water through my cottage next to the Grove in very wet weather. It mainly comes down the hill in Sonning Lane + into Pearson Road. The drains are not sufficient in any case, because it is not possible to keep them clear at all times: débris comes down

in heavy rain & broiles them.

This has to be a serious health hazard.

I would remind the Council of other occasions where different pollutants have caused damage to wildlife & people. I think of the Galapagos Islands where it has taken some years to discover the disastrous effects of oil pollution. Decaying bodies are no different.

Yours faithfully

J. A. Clement Davies

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE – 12 June 2002

MEMBER'S UPDATE.

MINUTE 12. - 58 EASTHEATH AVENUE, WOKINGHAM.
Page 428.

Under the resolved action a Section 106 agreement is referred to. This is incorrect. Members are asked to amend the minute to read as follows;

RESOLVED: That Application No: 2001/5540 be approved subject to the conditions set out on Agenda pages 213 to 219.

LAND TO THE NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
Application VAR/2001/3562. Pages 433-471.
1 further letter of objection has been received, which was forwarded to the case officer from both the Highways Authority and Sonning Parish Council. The writers are concerned about the high water table in the field and the drainage problems that effect the adjoining areas. They state *"There is the additional problem of surface water, particularly during heavy rainfalls, whereby the water cascades down Sonning Lane..."*

WESTERN SITE, HEADLEY ROAD EAST, WOODLEY.
Application O/2001/3322. Pages 472-523.
Woodley Town Council: "Members have some concern about this proposal and recommended that the condition should remain."

7 further letters of objection have been received from local residents. These objection are as follows:

- The road is already in use by HGV 24 hours a day, with Christmas Day being the only exception. The proposal would further increase the HGV's and would increase noise, congestion and pollution, to the residential properties.
- The HGV's tend to use Viscount Way as a parking and rest area, which leads to litter.
- Adverse impact upon the safety of children walking to school.
- The bakery is concerned that the removal of the condition would lead to operational difficulties between the users of the entrance and the Bakeries traffic flow and road safety.

These issues have been largely addressed in the appraisal. However the operational difficulties regarding the bakery's security building and barriers is a civil issue between the applicant and the bakery company, as the applicant states that they have a right of way over the land.

LAND AT CHURCH LANE/HOLLOW LANE
Application No. RM/2002/6040 – Pages 524-580

1 additional letter from local resident who has already written. Asks for gable ends of houses next to Hollow Lane to be changed to hips and some detail in brickwork to soften aspect, in view of higher ground level. Also asks for shrub planting in Church Lane to be interspersed with semi-mature deciduous trees. Other comments already covered in report.

LAND ADJACENT TO 15 LINCOLN GARDENS, TWYFORD.
Application O/2002/5603. Pages 581-594.
Section I of the appraisal should read as follows:

I. Concerns of local residents and Twyford Parish Council.

Not Woodley Town Council.

An additional condition is recommended to restrict the height of the dwelling on plot 11. The reasoning for this is set down in Section C, Paragraph 2 and in the Conclusion of the appraisal. The proposed condition is as follows:

22. The proposed details of the dwelling unit on plot 11, submitted in compliance with condition 1 shall have a ridge height no greater than 6m from the existing ground level and shall have no windows or other openings within the roof slope.

    Reason: To safeguard the open character and appearance of the adjacent open area

BALCOMBE NURSERIES
Application No. F/2002/6245

Council's tree officer advises no objection in relation to tree survey.

Additional letter from Parish Council:
"The Parish Council has evidence that the area is a valuable habitat for wildlife and therefore if the application is approved, would ask you to ensure that conditions are included in order that the minimum amount of disruption to wildlife is caused. This especially refers to wild birds which are present in the surrounding hedges and thicket."

Additional letter from Oak Cottage concerned that some trees on adjacent properties have not been identified that could be affected by the proposed development. Also querying ownership boundary.
Response: Applicant has confirmed that ownership boundary is correct. Therefore recommend add the following informative No.2:
"The applicants are advised to verify that they own all the land within the boundary of the application site."

1 LONGFIELD ROAD, TWYFORD.
Application F/2001/5573. Pages 642-656.
Condition 4 should be amended to read

"The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the additional dwelling and shall be maintained in perpetuity.

Condition 8 Should also be amended to read as follows:

8. Development shall not be begun until a parking scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No part of the building hereby permitted shall be occupied or used until the vehicle parking and turning spaces have been provided on site and shall thereafter be permanently maintained and used for no other purpose.

SOUTHLAKE SCHOOL: AMENDMENTS
Application No. F/2002/6075 Pages 657- 667
As the extensions are needed for occupation in September 2002 the Education Department have requested that the conditions relating to the provision of a School Travel Plan and Traffic Management scheme are amended to give them more time to fulfil these obligations.

It is therefore suggested that condition 6 is amended to read as follows:

6. Within one year of the occupation of the extensions hereby permitted a traffic calming/ management scheme shall be implemented in and around Campbell Road/ Highgate Road/ Nightingale Road, in accordance with the plans that have been subject to public consultation and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

And that condition 9 is changed to read as follows:

9 Within one year of the occupation of the extensions hereby permitted the applicant shall prepare and submit for approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority a School Travel Plan which shall include measures, along with targets, to increase the amount of travel to and from school by pupils, parents and staff by means other than the private car. The approved plan shall be implemented and permanently maintained thereafter.

The Highways Officer has no objection to these suggested amendments.

LOWER EARLEY LIBRARY: PROPOSED WINDOW SHUTTERS
Application No. F/2002/6174 Pages 668- 673

Four further letters of objection have been received from residents in Elm Lane (to the north of the library). The issues raised are as follows:

- Better lighting and CCTV should be investigated and the area outside the library should be better maintained this would encourage more people to walk through the courtyard at night;
- Metal shutters will make the area appear unsafe and 'run down';
- Metal shutters would 'admit' defeat to vandals;
- Metal shutters will attract graffiti;
- The shutters will move vandalism to other locations such as Trinity Church, the Community Centre, Asda or local properties;
- An alternative outlet should be provided for youths to graffiti;
- The Council should approach Asda and try to work together to find a solution;
- The removal of the wall on the Asda side would open the area up more and prevent vandalism.

ST NICHOLAS C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL, SCHOOL ROAD, HURST.
Application No. F/2002/6260 Pages 674- 683

The western boundary of the school site shared with 'Westward Ho' has a dense hedge and there is a temporary classroom unit located close to this hedge.

The proposed extensions will not be seen from 'Westward Ho'.

20 November 2001.

Telephoned and spoke to Mathew Rose. I explained that what was required was a comprehensive explanation as to why the site is acceptable and why they feel the survey would be sufficient to adequately predict the future acceptability of the site over the next 80 years.

Nicola Lake

From: Nigel Rose [Nigel.Rose@ukgateway.net]
Sent: 22 April 2001 11:10
To: Nicola Lake
Cc: John R Mitchell
Subject: Proposed Burial Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning: VAR/2001/3562

Nicola,

As discussed, I should be pleased if this application could go to Committee should you be minded to approve this Variation.

As you know, a condition was originally made which required the applicants to check the water table before proceeding. I cannot understand why this has not been done during the last 5 years, even if the applicants did not wish to proceed with the final scheme at that stage.

Current conditions must be appropriate for checking the "worst case" scenario and this should be done before any consideration is given to an extension of time.

I should be pleased if you would keep me briefed on this application as matters proceed.

Kind regards,

Nigel Rose

The information in this e-mail is confidential and may be legally privileged. It is intended solely for the addressee. Unless expressly authorised in writing, disclosure, copying, distribution and/or retention, in part or in whole, of this e-mail is prohibited and may be unlawful.

Nigel Rose cannot guarantee that any files attached to this e-mail are free from viruses or any other program code that may be harmful to your computer and, as such, is not liable for any damage that may be caused as a result.

Please delete this e-mail if it is not intended for you.

Nicola Lake

From: Ian Jordan
Sent: 19 April 2001 12:16
To: Natalie Brown; Joss Miller; Nicola Lake; George Allpress
Subject: APPLICATIONS TO BE ADVERTISED IN THE READING CHRONICLE AND HENLEY STANDARD

Importance: High

The following applications were supposed to be advertised in the Reading Chronicle;

2001/3562 - Nicola Lake - County Sports Ground, Burial Ground.
2001/3534 - Joss Miller
2001/3490 - Natalie Brown

2001/3611 - George Allpress - was supposed to be advertised in the Henley Standard.

Due to a cock-up (that's the technical word for it !) the company responsible for placing the adverts missed the editions on the 12.4.2001 and didn't notify us until today. This means that we have also missed the editions for this week as well so the adverts will not be published until 26.4.2001, the 21 days for comments will have to be started from the 26th and the earliest date that a decision can now be made will be the 17th May.

I'm not going to arse about with new site notices but this may mean that some applications go over the 8 weeks so sorry about that.

Ian

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (NORTH) SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1ST MAY 1996 FROM 7.30 PM TO 9.10 PM

Present: Mr.S.R.Conway (Chairman), Mr.N.D.Rose (Vice-Chairman), Mrs D.F.Carpenter, Mrs.S.M.Dovey, Mrs A.N.M.C.Drake, Mr.J.R.Hill, Carol.A.Jewell, Mr.K.K.K.Kerr, Mrs.J.A.Lissaman, Mr.G.Parkinson and Fiona Rolls.

Also present under Standing Order 45(4) - Simon Etheridge.

140 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 3rd April 1996 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

141 APPLICATION NO. 45032 PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF VACANT AGRICULTURAL LAND TO BURIAL GROUND, LAND BETWEEN COUNTY SPORTS GROUND AND THATCHED COTTAGE, SONNING LANE FOR HOLME PARK SONNING LTD

The Sub-Committee considered a report about this application, set out on pages 730 to 739 of the Agenda.

Members noted that six further letters of objection and a letter from the applicant's agent, which was circulated at the meeting, had been received. No further formal comments had been received from Berkshire County Council.

Members were of the view that as the only reason submitted to support a refusal was on ecological grounds they were minded to approve the application subject to appropriate conditions being included.

RESOLVED: That Application No. 45032 be approved subject to the following conditions amongst others:

1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission;

2) A management plan to be submitted to and approved by the District Council;

3) A groundwater survey to be carried out before any burials take place;

4) Size and location of any memorial or memorial wall to be approved by the District Council;

5) Material used on the car park to be approved by the District Council;

6) Operating hours to be between 10.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. only;

7) Tree types to be approved by the District Council.

NOTE: Mr.N.D.Rose asked to be recorded as voting against the decision of the Sub-Committee.

142 APPLICATION NO. 45078 PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF EXISTING RETAIL UNIT AND CONSTRUCTION OF THREE RETAIL UNITS, 57-61 (MAXWELLS) CROCKENHAMWELL ROAD, WOODLEY FOR TAYLOR WOODROW PROPERTY CO LIMITED

The Sub-Committee considered a report about this application, set out on pages 740 to 747 of the Agenda.

Members noted additional observations received from the Town Council.

RESOLVED: That Application No. 45078 be approved subject to the condition set out in the Agenda.

143 APPLICATIONS NOD. 96/63409/F & 96/63551/CAC PROPOSED ERECTION OF ASSISTED SHELTERED HOUSING, DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS WITHIN CONSERVATION AREA, COOKS NURSERY, WARGRAVE ROAD, REMENHAM FOR BEECHCROFT LIMITED

The Sub-Committee considered a report about this application, set out on pages 748 to 757 of the Agenda.

Members noted that a further three letters of objection and three letters of support, together with a letter from the applicant had been received.

Simon Etheridge, a local Member attended the Meeting and spoke in support of the recommendation.

Members requested that the application be deferred to enable a site visit to be carried out.

RESOLVED: That Applications Nod. 96/63409/F & 96/63551/CAC be deferred to enable a site visit to be carried out.

NOTE: The Site Visit will take place at 6pm on Wednesday, 8th May.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12TH JUNE 2002 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.00 PM

Present: Mr AJ Ross (Chairman), Mrs ANMC Drake, (Vice-Chairman), Mrs DC Beatty, Mr MJ Bryant, Mr SR Conway, Mr. JL Earnshaw, Mr. RFN Eke, Mrs JL Lissaman, Mr KA Malvern, Mrs M Robertson, Mr ND Rose, and Rob Stanton

Also present under Rules of Procedure: Fiona Rolls.

PART I

23. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22ND May 2002 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the amendment of minute 12 under resolved to read;

RESOLVED: *"That Application No: 2001/5540 be approved subject to the conditions set out on Agenda pages 213 to 216."*

24. APPLICATION NO: 2001/3562, PROPOSED VARIATION OF CONDITION 01 OF CONSENT 45032 TO ALLOW FOR EXTENSION OF TIME TO START CHANGE OF USE TO A WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK, LAND TO THE NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND SONNING LANE SONNING, FOR: HOLME PARK SCONNING LTD

The Committee considered a report about this application set out on Agenda pages 433 to 471.

In explaining the report, Officers informed Members that since the dispatch of the Agenda, one further letter of objection had been received raising concerns regarding the level of the water table at the location and risk of run off into Sonning Lane.

Member's attention was also drawn to correspondence received from the Environment Agency set out on Agenda pages 438 to 449.

Mr. David Penny representing Sonning Parish Council attended the meeting gave that authority's views in opposition to the proposal.

Before general discussion on the item began, the Chairman clarified that the proposal was for the variations of condition no 1of the previous permission at the site.

During the debate on the application a number of Members expressed serious concerns regarding various aspects of the proposal and suggested that in the circumstances a precautionary approach was justifiable, particularly so in the light of the scale of public opposition to the proposal. Concern was expressed that a change in weather conditions had occurred since the original permission, that the level of the water table at the location was high, and that the impact of the proposal on the current state of bio-diversity would be detrimental. They went onto comment that there was a potential risk of polluted water run off from graves into neighbouring areas and raised concerns regarding the technical aspects of the proposal. Whilst noting the comments of the Environment Agency, Members expressed surprise that the Agency had not opposed the proposal.

In response to a question, Officers clarified that both nationally and locally a shortage of burial space existed and as such it would be difficult to maintain a case that demand for burial provision at

the site could not be established. Other Members commented that in the circumstance of permission being granted it would be for the applicant to demonstrate that conditions could be and were being followed and if they could not, the permission would not be able to be implemented.

After further discussion it was;

RESOLVED: That Application No: 2001/3562 be refused on the grounds that it had not been demonstrated that the water table at the site is sufficiently low throughout the entire year to ensure that the land can be used safely as a woodland burial ground.

Received by Wokingham District Council

Application No: VAR/2001/3562

Proposal:
Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.

Location:
Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Reading.

The application is available for inspection at Wokingham District Council's offices during the following times:

PLANNING DEPARTMENT, SHUTE END, WOKINGHAM TEL (0118) 974 6428
8.30 - 5.00 Monday - Thursday & 8.30 - 4.00 Friday

WOODLEY LIBRARY HEADLEY ROAD WOODLEY (9.30am - 7.00pm Mon, Thurs & Fri. 9.30am - 5.00pm Tues, 9.30am - 1.00pm Saturday. closed all day Wednesday). If you intend to view this application at Woodley Library (see details above) please allow 4 days from the date of this notice for delivery of plans.

Comments should be sent in writing QUOTING THE APPLICATION NUMBER to the Case Officer Nicola Lake P.O. Box 157 Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham Berkshire, RG40 1WR to arrive on or before 16/04/2001. Written comments submitted will become available for public inspection.

In view of the very large number of planning applications and letters of comment received, it will not normally be possible for an individual reply to observations made. However any comments will be taken into account when the application is determined and you will be notified of the decision.

Head Planning and Transportation

23 March 2001

Our ref: SU77NE/1/16
Your ref: NL/VAR/2001/3562

Date: 18 March 2002

PLANNING SERVICES | HPT 54433
POL | TLS
DC NL | ENF
APP |
CS |
20 MAR 2002
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ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Nicola Lake
Wokingham District Council
Environmental Services Department
Planning Services
PO Box 157
Shute End, Wokingham
Berks. RG40 1WR

Dear Ms Lake

WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND ON LAND NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND, SONNING

I write further to Sarah Paxman's letter of 16 January 2002, and your recent discussions with Jo Marshall.

I can confirm that the Agency's position in relation to this proposed development has not changed from that as set out in our earlier correspondence, in particular in respect of the proposed condition requiring a 2 metre minimum depth between the bottom of any graves and the water table.

I understand that your Council has concerns about the enforceability of such a planning condition. The Agency recognises that this condition may be difficult to enforce, but considers that certain measures can be carried out to help ensure compliance with this condition, such as the monitoring of groundwater levels at this site, particularly if groundwater level information is gathered, either before planning permission is given, or before use of the site starts. This is quite clearly set out in the Agency's letter of 6 August 2001. We acknowledge that there is a difference between the monitoring of existing (physical) conditions at the site, and any work that may be required in order to remediate problems that have occurred due to possible breaches of planning conditions.

However, the Agency is of the opinion that the proposed condition, in association with adequate investigation of ground conditions and monitoring of groundwater levels, will safeguard groundwater in the area. You may therefore wish to consider imposing (an) additional condition(s) requiring ground investigation and/or monitoring to be undertaken prior to the commencement of development. Alternatively if you consider that the Environment Agency's proposed condition is not valid, as you would not be able to enforce it, then you may wish to consider alternative ways of securing the protection of groundwater in the vicinity of the site, such as through the use of a S106 agreement. If you consider the risks associated with the enforcement of such a condition to be too great, then you have the option to refuse the application. If you were to refuse the application on the grounds that the proposed development may present an unacceptable risk to groundwater (or similar), and the applicant then appealed that decision, then whilst the Agency may be able to provide the

Cont/d..

Environment Agency
Frimley Office, Swift House, Frimley Business Park, Camberley, Surrey, GU16 7SQ
Tel: 01276 454300 Fax: 01276 454301

council with any factual or technical information it held relating to groundwater conditions at the site, because the Agency has not raised an objection in principle to the application, the Agency would be unable to attend any hearing or inquiry in support of your refusal.

I hope that this is satisfactory. However if you have any further queries, please contact me again.

Yours faithfully

JUDITH DENHAM
Planning Liaison Team Leader

Direct dial 01276 454326
Direct fax 01276 454352
Email: judith.denham@environment-agency.gov.uk

Our ref: SU77NE/1/16
Your ref: NL/VAR/2001/3562

Date: 16 January 2002

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

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Nicola Lake
Wokingham District Council
Environmental Services Dept
Planning Services
PO Box 157
Shute End, Wokingham
Berks RG40 1WR

Dear Ms Lake

WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND ON LAND NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND, SONNING

I refer to our various conversations and correspondence regarding the above development, and any potential risks associated with it.

I have discussed the proposals again with technical experts within the Agency, particularly with regard to risks to groundwater, and can confirm that the Agency's response to the application (our letter ref SP\2001\3440\001 dated 1 May 2001) will not change, and that an objection will not be raised.

The Agency is satisfied that the proposed condition requiring 2m between bottom of graves and the water table will safeguard groundwater in the area. As stated previously this may require the digging of trial pits or shallow boreholes, and monitoring of the water table at an appropriate time of year, to determine water table depth and hence whether the proposed development is possible.

I would refer you to the Agency's previous letter of 9 February 1996 addressing similar concerns raised in relation to the original planning application, and of 6 August 2001, which deals with these issues in detail. The letter of 6 August also addresses the issue of pathogenic risk to groundwater of burial grounds. Risk to human health is not generally within the Agency's remit, and I would advise that any further concerns on that subject be directed to your Council's environmental health department.

I hope the above is satisfactory, however please contact me if you require anything further.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Paxman
Development Planning Officer

Direct Tel : 01276 45 4323
Direct Fax : 01276 45 4352
email: sarah.paxman@environment-agency.gov.uk

Nicola Lake

From: Matthew Rose [matthew.rose@environment-agency.gov.uk]
Sent: 20 November 2001 10:17
To: Nicola.Lake@wokingham.gov.uk
Subject: Proposed Woodland Burial Ground - Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning

Dear Nicola

Your Ref: NL/VAR/2001/3562

Further to your letter of the 26th September regarding the above.

The Environment Agency feels that there is little risk associated with the development, (similar advice to that contained in Sarah Paxman's early response in early August) as long as the recommended condition is implemented.

Considering the new development is to be a burial ground, there will not be a substantial increase in impermeable area, therefore the surface water run-off will not be any greater than that at present.

If the residents have any further worries, I can only assume that the Environmental Health Department may be of some use.

Regards

Matthew Rose
Development Planning Officer

****
This message is confidential as it contains information about the person we are sending it to. If you have received this message by mistake, please delete it and do not copy it to anyone else.

If this message contains information that you have requested from us please see our standard notice for details of how you may use that information. If the notice is not attached and you require a copy please telephone 0845 9333111 and ask for the customer contact.

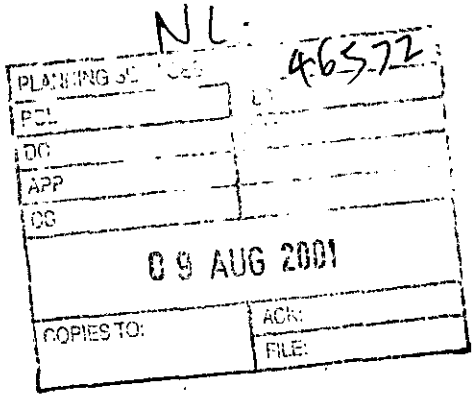
For further information about the Environment Agency call the number above or look at our web site at http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk

****

Our ref: SP/3440
Your ref: VAR/2001/3562

Date: 6 August 2001

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



Nicola Lake
Wokingham District Council
Environmental Services Dept
Planning Services
PO Box 157
Shute End, Wokingham
Berks RG40 1WR

Dear Nicola

LAND NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND - CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND

I write further to your conversation of 2nd August with my colleague Ian Doyle (Groundwater Protection) regarding the concerns raised by Wokingham District Council in relation to the above proposal. The following comments explain further the reasoning behind the Environment Agency's view of this proposal with regard to risk to groundwater, as discussed.

Geological maps indicate that the application site overlies Boyn Hill Gravel, which is in turn underlain by Lambeth Beds and the Upper Chalk. These maps indicate that the Gravel is an isolated 'patch'. The Agency only holds records of the water table depth in the Chalk aquifer – around 20m below ground level. As discussed in previous correspondence (letter dated 9 February 1996 from the Agency to Gary Raynor at Wokingham DC), the shallow water table mentioned may be perched in the Plateau Gravels.

The Agency would consider that the condition regarding distance between the graves and groundwater could be met by the digging of trial pits to prove the depth of the water table. Depending when these are dug, it may be necessary to monitor the water table depth for a period before confirming the depth (the highest seasonal water table is likely to be found in early spring).

An R&D report (ref. P223) produced for the Environment Agency regarding the pollution potential from cemeteries, suggests that the pathogenic risk to groundwater is small as there is a 'general lack of evidence in the UK and elsewhere, of widespread pathogens in groundwater around burial grounds [which] is due to the relative immobility and attenuation of the organisms in the ground'. Additionally 'once micro-organisms become separated from their hosts, they generally begin to die-off'. The report also noted that '...groundwater in close proximity to graves *may* (their italics) have increased concentrations' of a number of parameters. Comparison with accepted quality standards (e.g. those in the Water Supply regulations) indicate that the maximum admissible concentration – MAC – for ammoniacal

Cont/d..

Environment Agency
Frimley Office, Swift House, Frimley Business Park, Camberley, Surrey, GU16 7SQ
Tel: 01276 454300 Fax: 01276 45430

nitrogen is the most likely to be exceeded, with occasional exceedance of the respective MACs for chloride and sulphate.

The suggestion is that around 20 to 30 burials may take place each year (correspondence from Mark Leedale, Martin & Pole Planning to WDC, 13 September 1995), which I understand would constitute a small cemetery in burial terms.

The Agency does not view the (what is likely to be perched) water within the isolated Gravels as a major resource. Additionally from the information contained in the R&D publication, the pollution potential from small cemeteries and particularly green burial sites is small (for the reasons outlined above). Assuming the 2m condition requested by the Agency is imposed, even if the (perched) groundwater rises by 1m, there is still 1m of unsaturated zone for any contaminant breakdown. Additionally, it would seem likely that some of the contaminants would be taken up by the trees planted at the site, which would also mitigate some infiltration of surface water. It should also be noted that within the Gravels, there are a number of discharge consents for treated sewage from domestic properties, which would result in similar contaminants being discharged to groundwater as those from the cemetery.

The water from within the Gravels is likely to move somewhere rather than solely accumulate within the stratum – it may be that groundwater seeps from the Gravels to sandy bands within the Lambeth Beds, though again this is difficult to confirm without investigation. This may mean that although the perched water may rise, this is likely to be offset by seepage – i.e. the system is unlikely to a sealed one.

The Agency considers planning applications on a risk basis (flow chart from the cemetery R&D report attached) where the acceptability of the development is assessed. In this case the Agency considers the risk acceptable with the attachment of the condition (as per our letter dated 1 May 2001) and would therefore stand by its original condition for the planning application in 1995 – namely: a minimum depth of 2m being maintained between the bottom of the grave and the water table.

If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact myself on 01276 454 323 quoting the reference cited at the beginning of this letter.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Paxman
Development Planning Officer

Our ref: SP\2001\003440\001
Your ref: VAR/2001/3562
Date: 1 May 2001

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

District Planning Officer
Wokingham District Council
Council Offices, Shute End,
PO Box 157
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG11 1BN

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For the attention of: Nicola Lake

Dear Madam

PROPOSAL: Proposed Variation To Condition 1 Of Consent 45032 To Allow For An Extension Of Time To Start Change Of Use Of Land To Woodland Burial Ground With Ancillary Car-Park.
LOCATION: Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning

Thank you for your letter dated 23 March 2001, which was received on 28 March 2001. You are asked to quote the following reference in any correspondence: **SU77NE/1/16**. I apologise for the delay in replying, and trust that the Environment Agency's comments, as set out below, will still be taken into consideration.

The Environment Agency has no objection, in principle, to the proposed development provided that the following conditions are imposed on any planning permission granted:

Planning Conditions

CONDITION: No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table, and they shall not in any event exceed 3 metres in depth below existing ground level.
REASON: To prevent pollution of groundwater.

CONDITION: A minimum depth of 2 metres shall always be maintained between the bottom of any grave and the water table
REASON: To prevent pollution of groundwater.

Advice To Planning Authority: Land Drainage

We are not aware of any watercourses on the site, but should there be any, we advise that:
(1) they should not be culverted; and
(2) a buffer zone is left on either side of any watercourse, and
(3) culverted watercourses should not be built over, but should ideally be opened up and made a feature of the site.

Cont/d..

Environment Agency
Swift House, Frimley Business Park, Frimley, Camberley, Surrey GU16 7SQ
Telephone : 01276 454300 Fax : 01276 454301

In any case, you should note that culverting of a watercourse requires the prior written approval of the local authority under the terms of the Public Health Act 1936, and the prior written consent of the Environment Agency under the terms of the Land Drainage Act 1991/Water Resources Act 1991. The Agency seeks to avoid culverting, and its consent for such works will normally be withheld.

Advice To Applicant: Groundwater Protection

Surface water from the car-park and access road, should discharge via deep seal trapped gullies incorporating a minimum water seal of 85mm or similar.

Decision Notice

Would you please forward a copy of the decision notice to this office quoting our reference. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me on 01276 454323, quoting the reference cited at the beginning of this letter.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Paxman
Development Planning Officer

cc: Gregory Gray Asociates, 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, GU52 7SL

Application No. 45032 **Received 14.09.95** **SONNING**

Applicant : HOLME PARK SONNING LTD
Location : LAND BETWEEN COUNTY SPORTS GROUND AND THATCHED COTTAGE, SONNING LANE
Proposal : PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF VACANT AGRICULTURAL LAND TO BURIAL GROUND

1. **Planning History** - Since 1980 there have been 3 applications for housing on this site for 4 houses, 6 houses and 13 houses. All were refused and the 4 and 13 house schemes were dismissed at appeal.

2. **Proposal** - Is to provide a woodland burial ground on the 1.9 ha. site with an associated car park (approximately 10 parking spaces).

3. **Consultations** -
   - ***Sonning Parish Council :*** Attached.
   - ***Highways :*** Recommend refusal.
   - ***Environmental Health :*** No comments or observations.
   - ***Leisure and Technical Services :*** Require informatives.
   - ***Berkshire County Council :*** No strategic concerns.
   - ***National Rivers Authority :*** Requests conditions.
   - ***Neighbour/Local Comment :*** Inappropriate in Conservation Area; should be a public area; should be in control of Parish Council; offensive use; traffic problems ie. generation, poor access, increase use of A4 junction, parking problems in the area, school pupil safety, ecological impact, pollution.

4. **Appraisal** - The concept of woodland burial involves the creation of a burial ground within an evolving woodland and wildlife sanctuary. There are no head stones or memorials, and graves are identified by a small plaque at ground level. There are no formal footpaths. Maintenance is minimal with grass cutting on perhaps two occasions per year and no chemicals or manmade substances are used on the land. Bio-degradable cardboard coffins or shrouds are encouraged, as opposed to traditional wooden coffins. The whole of the area would be allowed unrestricted public access and the applicants have agreed to restrict the number of burials to a maximum of 50 per year, and times of burials to be between 10.00am and 2.30pm.

   The main determining issues are:

   A. Impact on the Conservation Area and Local Environment (Loddon Area Local Plan - LTV2, LC1, LC2, LC10, LBE1, LBE12 and LBE14; Berkshire Structure Plan - C2, C5, C6, EN2, EN5, EN8, EN9)
   B. Highway Considerations

A. The site is located in the rural area in a position designated by the Loddon Area Local Plan as being of importance to the Separation of Settlements and also the setting of the Sonning Village. The site is within the Conservation Area. There is currently no agricultural use of the land.

In terms of rural area policy the use is considered to be an appropriate exception to the restraint policy LTV2 in that it represents a purpose wholly appropriate to a rural area. That policy states that the acceptability of all proposals will also be judged against the provisions of the other relevant policies contained in Loddon Area Local Plan.

With regard to the Separation of Settlements (Policy LC1) the proposal would not detract from the undeveloped appearance of the location and the tree planting would enhance the visual separation. The small associated car park area would be unmarked and have a loose surface thereby preventing any urbanising effect. For similar reasons the setting of Sonning would not be adversely affected (Policy LC2). With regard to Policy LBE1 and the design of new development the proposal would make a positive contribution to the character and setting of the area, contribute to an attractive environment and retain important natural landscape features.

LBE12 seeks the protection and enhancement of Conservation Areas and requires that open spaces, trees and views within them be protected and enhanced. LBE14 states that inappropriate development will normally be refused. It is considered that the proposed woodland burial ground would protect and enhance the distinctive visual character of the locality.

The site has however been studied in a recent ecological survey which has identified the site as the most important piece of dry, wildflower-rich grass land in Sonning. The reuse of the site in accordance with the proposal would alter the ecology of the site, eventually to a habitat which is much more common in Sonning. The County Council has expressed an interest in studying the survey, with a mind to designating the site as a Wildlife Heritage Site.

The potential change in the ecology of the site could be judged as contravening Policies LBE1 and LBE12 in that important natural features would be lost and that an aspect of the environment that makes up the distinctive character would not be protected.

Policy LC10 states that "In considering proposals for development which would affect wildlife habitats the District Council will take into account the impact of the proposals and, where development is otherwise acceptable, will seek to ameliorate that impact and ensure, where appropriate, the creation and future management of new habitats for wildlife. If the site proves to be of sufficient nature conservation importance any proposal which would lead to damage sufficient to remove or adversely affect that importance will be refused". The proposal would certainly contravene that policy.

The attached comments from the Parish Council express concern about the contamination of local springs and watercourses because of the geology of the site. The National Rivers Authority has expressed similar concerns but does not consider the Parish comments to provide a conclusive argument. The National Rivers Authority would require a minimum of 2 metres between the bottom of the graves and the water table. The applicants are not willing to carry out a groundwater survey of the site before their planning application is considered but have agreed that a condition to ensure that an appropriate survey is carried out before burials take place. Such a survey would locate the areas of the site (if any) where the National Rivers Authority 2 metres requirement would be met.

B. The Highway Authority is opposed to the proposal because of the increase in traffic movements at the access junction with Sonning Lane, which is substandard in terms of visibility.

The access road junction is used jointly with Berkshire County Sports Ground, the Tennis Club and some residential properties. It is not considered that upto 50 burials per year and associated after visits will give rise to a level of danger which would warrant a refusal or the removal of established roadside hedges. The burials are unlikely to conflict with the peak time weekend use of the sports ground, the restricted hours of 10.00am to 2.30pm would mean that evening use of the sports ground access would not increase as a consequence of

this proposal, and would also mean that main times of school traffic and pedestrians would be avoided, and also peak am and pm traffic periods on the surrounding network would not be affected.

5. **Conclusion** - It is not considered that there are any sustainable highway objections to the proposed use and its scale. Any approval would require appropriate conditions to ensure that National Rivers Authority requirements for a minimum distance between the bottom of graves and the water table, could at all times be met, prior to burials taking place on the site. It is not considered that the proposed parking area or the planting of trees would adversely affect the setting or separation of Sonning from other settlements. No buildings are proposed in the application.

   The ecological quality of the site is high and uncommon in Sonning, whereas the woodland habitats and environment are more common. The loss of the valuable existing ecology of the site is inappropriate and unacceptable.

6. **Recommendation** - REFUSE planning permission for the following reason :

   The development of the site as proposed would alter and adversely affect the ecological and wildlife habitat value of the site and would therefore be contrary to policies LTV2, LBE1, LBE12 and LC10 of Loddon Area Local Plan; and policies C2, EN5 and EN8 of Berkshire Structure Plan

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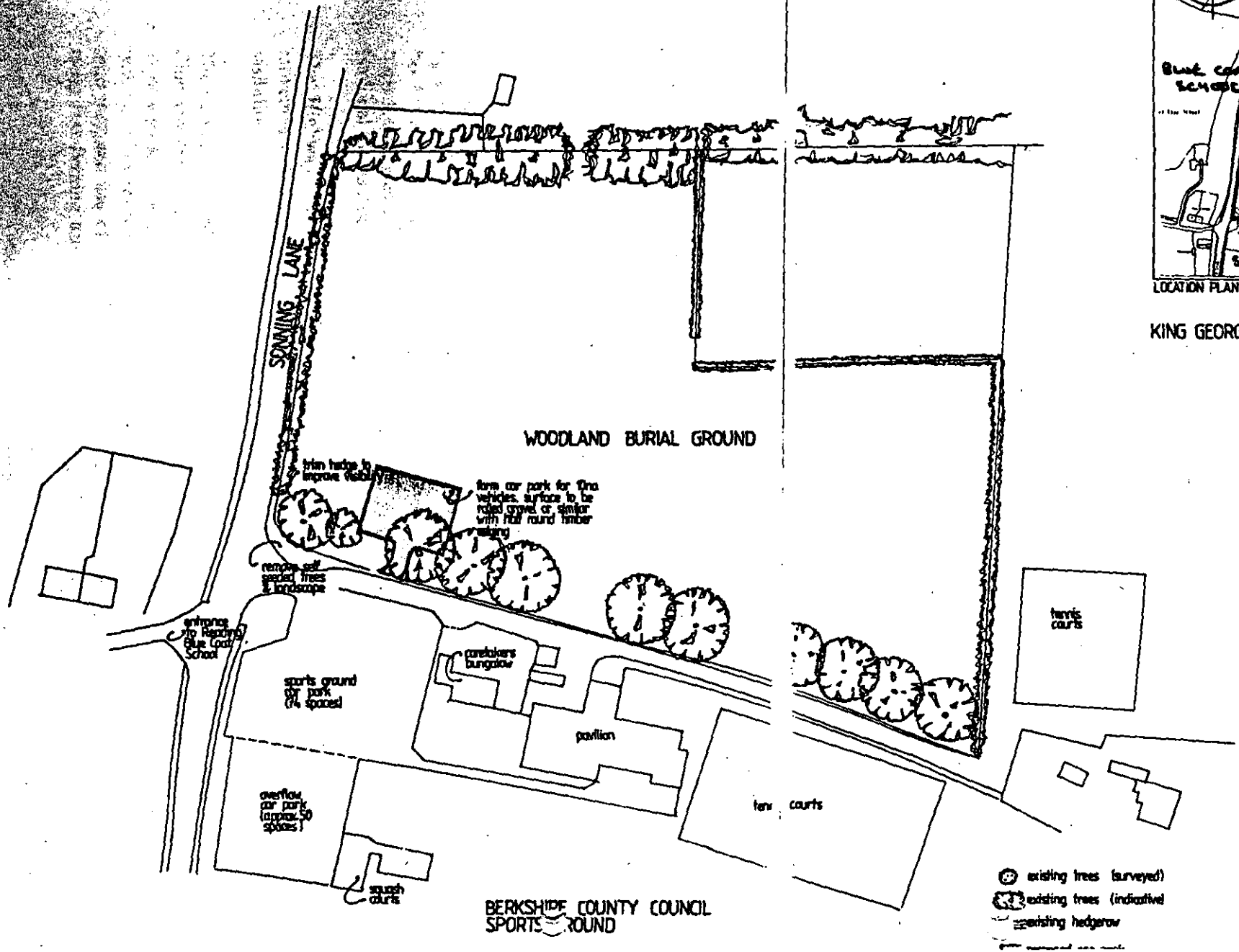

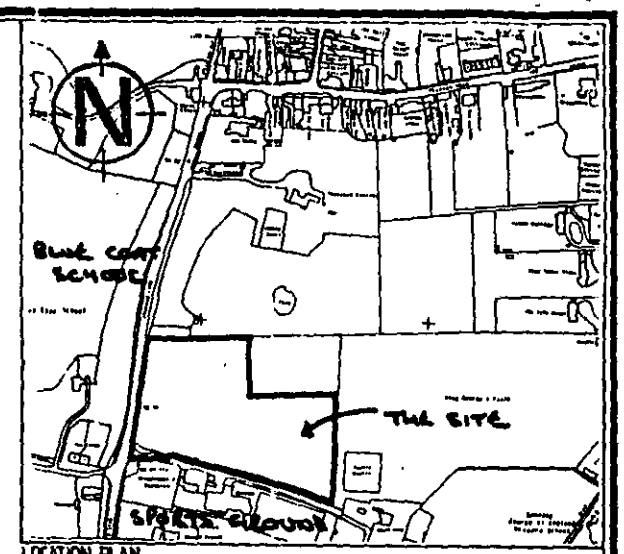

LOCATION PLAN

KING GEORGE'S FIELD

MARTIN & POLE PLANNING
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45032

Martin&Pole Planning

Oxford House, 25 Broad Street,
Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 1AU.
Tel: (0734) 771979. Fax: (0734) 771991.

SITE
Land to north of Berkshire County Council Sports Ground Sonning Lane Sonning

PROJECT
Change of use to woodland burial ground with associated car park

TITLE
Site plan & location detail

SCALE
1:500 1:2500

DATE September 1995

DWG. No. C1743/001

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATION SHEET

APPLICATION NO. 45032

PLANNING APPLICATION

Parish	SONNING
Proposal	CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
Address	LAND AT SONNING LANE SONNING
Applicant	HOLME PARK SONNING LTD

Sonning Parish Council has the following views.

1.The land concerned has the been the subject, during recent years, of at least two planning applications for housing development. Twice the applications have been turned down on appeal and on each occasion the Inspector has pointed to the importance of this piece of land as a break between settlements and as an important open aspect to the entrance to Sonning village. The Parish Council is of the view that the correct future use of this piece of land is as open managed grassland and woodland for amenity use. In keeping with the conservation area, of which it is a part, it should be maintained as a pleasant rural aspect.

2. The Parish Council opposes the use of the land for burial purposes (even for woodland burial) because for many people this will destroy its value for amenity and pleasure purposes. The Council also considers that it is highly likely that the land is unsuitable for burial because of the water table and drainage on the land. An NRA report may confirm this matter.

3. Sonning is already suffering from the effects of excess traffic and does not wish to see any further development which would bring more people and vehicles from outside the area into the village on a frequent basis more or less in perpetuity. The site is opposite the entrance to the Blue Coat School and beside the entrance to the Berkshire County Sports Ground. The road visiblity on Sonning Lane at this point is poor and it is important not to increase the traffic using the entrances. The Parish Council opposes the proposal for a parking area on the land because this would encourage more vehicles. It has to be recognised that a cemetery of any sort will create additional traffic not only at the time of burials but also to a greater extent when people come to pay respects to the memory of those buried. Any form of memorial will lead to additional people and traffic. The site is not eassily accessed by public transport nor would the Parish Council wish it to be.

continued.....

4. Though the plan attached to the application shows the owner to have ownership of part of the lane on the southern boundary of the site, (and thereby to be able to gain access to the proposed car park via the established lane) the Parish Council doubts this to be the case.

5. This land is within the conservation area and therefore there is a special requirement for particular regard to be had to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the special character of such areas. Mr Leedale, of Martin and Pole, in his covering letter to the application makes this very point. He then goes on to state that the land is unkempt and of very poor visual quality. The District Council should be aware that for the last two years the owner of the land appears to have allowed tipping of Controlled Waste on the land. The Parish Council have made representations to the County Waste Regulation Authority for this to be stopped and for the owner to be required to clear the waste. The Authority have taken no effective action and the owner appears to have taken no action to prevent tipping nor to clear the waste already dumped. The Parish Council is of the impression that under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 it is an offence for such waste to be tipped without a licence and it is also an offence for the land owner to allow such tipping without a licence. All this has been pointed out to the CWRA but to no avail. The Parish Council continues to make representations on this matter.
However the reason the piece of land is unkempt is because the owner chooses to manage it that way and to allow the tipping of waste. This is not a satisfactory reason for allowing a change of use. A few years ago when the land was in the same ownership it was maintained in good order but that is no longer the case.

6. The application makes no mention of the proposed method of digging the graves or tree planting. The Parish Council would not wish for excavator equipment to be used regularly and frequently on the land. Where would any equipment be stored? The Parish Council would not wish to see any buildings (permanent or temporary) on the land for these purposes.

7. The application is short of detail in several other respects. These include such matters as ; grave layout and markings; tree species and layout; memorial design and access details to any memorial; details of permitted remembrance tokens; long term management arrangements; management of those areas not subject to graves or trees; details of how second burials would be arranged. These details should form part of the application before it is considered.

8. The Parish Council asks the District Council to refuse the application and to take whatever action is possible to ensure that the owner manages the site to provide a pleasing aspect and complies with the law concerning waste tipping.

L. A. Bates (Clerk to the Council).

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATION SHEET

PLANNING APPLICATION APPLICATION NO. 45032

Parish SONNING

Proposal CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL SITE WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK.

Address LAND ON SONNING LANE SONNING

Applicant HOLME PARK LTD

The Parish Council wishes to make further points of objection to this proposal.

General Features.

The proposal for a cemetery is appropriate and acceptable for a township and for the use of a close urban area but is totally alien to the character and acceptable landscape of Sonning, a traditional English Thames side village with a Church, Churchyard and burial ground. The discription 'Woodland Burial Site' is a total misnomer posing many managerial and environmental problems.

Management.

The site would be, for many years, an unkempt wilderness with a grid of lettered and numbered concrete blocks (the only way of identifying a personal burial plot!). Regimented lines of excavation and burial mounds, some planted with tree whips which could not hope to mature to 7ft centres and if they did survive be in danger of being cut down!!. The site would require a building to house maintenance and records staff to accurately identify and locate burial plots and ensure against exhumation in such a concentrated use.
A further feature of a so called 'Woodland Burial Ground' is the erection of memorial walls which together with admin buildings, access roads, for hearses and funeral processions, leaves little opportunity to call the area environmental woodland and is an unacceptable proposal in a village.
It is understood that the maximum depth of burial is 4' 3" in loose earth which would give a cover of approximately 3' 0". In attracting wildlife to the site this would lead to serious and disturbing problems due to foxes and badgers in the area.

CONTINUED. .

Soil and Geology

The Ordnance Survey Geological Map identifies the geology of the site in, which the bodies will be interred, to be a strata of Plateau Gravel over laying Reading Beds which in turn over lay Upper Chalk and Flood Plain Gravel Strata. (See attached site plan and geological section). These strata are very porous and further excavation in the upper layers will make them more so.

There is an indication that the ground water flow is down the site towards Pearson Road and a cut off trench has already been excavated to some extent to divert this water to a ditch in Sonning Lane. There is also an existing pond in the vicinity of the level between the Plateau Gravel and Reading Beds which could again be associated with the ground water flowing from the proposed site. To excavate and bury in this porous ground would seriously pollute the ground water flows which permeate down towards Pearson Road. The ground and geological strata are totally unsuitable for burial purposes.

It is understood that Woodley Town Council sought expert advise for a burial site in Bulmershe and were advised that the ground was unsuitable for such use. The geology of the Bulmershe site is identical to the Sonning site i.e. Plateau Gravel under laying Reading Beds.

For these and the reasons already submitted tge Parish Council urge you to refuse this application.

L M Bates

Lesley Bates (Clerk to the Council) 20 November 1995

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACTS

NOTIFICATION OF CONSENT FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

To: Holme Park Sonning Ltd
C/o Martin & Pole Planning
Salisbury House
Milton Road
Wokingham
Berkshire RG11 1DB

Application No: 45032

Proposal: Change of use to Woodland Burial Ground with ancillary car park.

Parish: Sonning

Location: Land to North of B.C.C. Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning

The Wokingham District Council in pursuance of their powers under the above Acts and Regulations hereby GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION for carrying out the above development in accordance with the application and the accompanying plans submitted to the Council subject to compliance with the following conditions, the reasons for which are specified hereunder.

CONDITION(S)

01 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.(N4)

02 No burials shall take place within 10 metres of a land drain or ditch.

03 No burials shall take place within 250 metres of any well, borehole or spring used for potable water supply, nor within 30 metres of any other spring.

04 A minimum depth of 2 metres shall be maintained at all times between the bottom of any grave and the water table.

05 No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table, and soakaways shall not in any event exceed 3 metres in depth below the ground level of the site as exists at the date of this approval.

06 No burials shall take place on the site until a method statement regarding the carrying out of a ground water survey and preparation of a report by a specialist consultant has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The statement shall consider all aspects necessary to demonstrate compliance with Conditions 02, 03 and 04 at all times of the year.

07 No burials shall take place on the site until the approved ground water survey has been carried out and a report submitted in accordance with the approved method statement.

08 Burials shall not take place until the areas within the site that comply with Conditions 02, 03 and 04 have been identified on a plan which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No burials shall take place on the site outside those areas agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority based on the approved ground water survey.

09 No burials shall take place other than in accordance with an overall design specification to be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the dimensions, depth, spacing and location of all graves. The burials shall be thereafter carried out in accordance with the approved overall design specification.

10 No burials shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, a scheme of landscaping, which shall include details of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land.

11 All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the creation of the car park area on the site. Any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the first burial on the site die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with others of similar size and species.

12 No burials shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, details of the proposed indigenous boundary hedging. All planting comprised in the approved details shall be carried out in the first planting season following the creation of the car park area on the site. Any trees and plants which within a period of 5 years from the first burial on site, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with others of a similar size or species.

13 Only indigenous trees shall be used to mark each grave.

14 A landscaping, maintenance and ecological management plan shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any burials taking place on the site, and the site shall thereafter be managed in accordance with the agreed management plan.

15 The proposed car park shall be provided on site prior to any burials taking place and details of surface materials to be used on the car park shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to work commencing on site, and only those approved surfacing materials shall be used.

16 Details of any memorials or memorial walls shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any such provision on site and only those approved memorials or memorial walls shall be provided on site.

17 Burials shall only take place on site between the hours of 10.00am and 2.30pm.

18 The site shall remain available as informal amenity space with unrestricted public access at all times following the commencement of burials on the site.

19 No machinery shall be stored at the site at any time.

REASON(S)

01 REASON This condition is deemed to be attached by virtue of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.(N4R)

02 REASON To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

03 REASON To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

04 REASON To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

05 REASON To prevent pollution of groundwater.

06 REASON In the interest of the proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

07 REASON In the interest of the proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

08 REASON In the interest of the proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

09 REASON In the interests of the proper planning of the area in terms of decency and amenity.

10 REASON In the interests of visual amenity.(N13R)

11 REASON In the interests of visual amenity.(N13R)

12 REASON In the interests of visual amenity.(N13R)

13 REASON In order to protect the character and amenities of the locality.(N18R)

14 REASON In order to protect the character and amenities of the locality.(N18R)

15 REASON In order to secure the appropriate parking provision on site and to ensure its satisfactory appearance.

16 REASON In order to protect the character and amenities of the locality.(N18R)

17 REASON In the interest of surrounding residential amenity and to avoid peak time traffic movements on the surrounding highway network in the interest of road safety.

18 REASON In accordance with the submitted details and to ensure the appropriate use of the site.

19 REASON In the interest of the amenity of the Conservation Area.

Date 4th July 1996

C Elsmer
Head of Development Control

Note : Would you please ensure that the Red Public Notice relating to this planning application which the Council sent to you to put on display is now removed, if this has not already been done. This will avoid any confusion by local residents as to whether further applications have been made, and will assist in keeping the countryside and townscapes tidy.

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS

'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.

Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160

E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

14.MAR2001* 3562

Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham,
Berks, RG40 1WR.

PLANNING SERVICES	HPT
POL	TLS
DC	ENF
APP	
CS	
14 MAR 2001	
COPIES TO:	ACK:
	FILE:

12th March 2001

Our Ref: SL/00/180

Dear Sir,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032

I enclose on behalf of my Client, Holme Park Sonning Ltd., an application for renewal of the above.

You will be aware of the provisions of Circular 11/95 insofar as they relate to the renewal of planning permissions. At paragraph 60 it states that such applications should only be refused where:

(a) There has been a material change in circumstances such as planning policy since the original permission was granted.
(b) Continued failure to commence development would contribute to uncertainty about the future of development in the locality.
(c) The application is premature because the permission still has a reasonable time to run.

In respect of planning policy, the emerging Local Plan removes a layer of constraint – setting of settlements – although this does not materially effect the development proposal. There are no other policies in the emerging Local Plan which specifically mitigate against green burial grounds and I reiterate the ecological objectives of the same as set out in the previous application. It is in all respects a sustainable form of development.

The fact that my Client has determined not to commence development at this stage does not in any way result in uncertainty about the future pattern of development in this locality.

The application is due to expire in July of this year and its renewal is not premature.

Having regard to the foregoing I trust planning permission will be forthcoming. Please do telephone me if there is any other matter on which I can assist.

Yours faithfully,

14.MAR2001* 3562

Mark Leedale

Enc.

44927

Tel. (0118) 974 6481

Date: 20 June 2001

Your Ref:

My Ref: Nicola Lake / VAR/2001/3562

POL	
DC NL	ENF
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CS	
25 JUN 2001	
COPIES TO:	ACK:
	FILE:

ENGLISH NATURE RECEIVED 21 JUN 2001 THAMES & CHILTERNS TEAM

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

Environmental Services Department
Planning Services
P.O. Box 157
Shute End, Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WR
Tel: (0118) 974 6000
Fax: (0118) 974 6484
Minicom No: (0118) 974 6991
DX: 33506 – Wokingham

English Nature
Foxhold House
Thomford Road
Crookham Common
Newbury
Berks

PLEASE QUOTE APPLICATION NUMBER WHEN REPLYING

Dear Sir/Madam

Application Number: VAR/2001/3562

Site Address: Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Reading.

Proposal: Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park..

I enclose details of the above application and would be grateful to receive your observation within **21 days** of the date of this letter. I cannot guarantee that comments received after this date will be taken into account in determining the application.

Please quote reference number **VAR/2001/3562** in all communications and any response should be addressed to **Nicola Lake** the case officer dealing with this application at the above address.

I look forward to hearing from you.

ENGLISH NATURE

Thames & Chilterns Team
Foxhold House, Crookham Common
Thatcham, Berks RG19 8EL
Tel: 01635 268881 Fax: 01635 268940

Our ref:

To: Nicola Lake.

Thank you for the attached letter. English Nature does not wish to comment on this consultation.

Signed: Heather Rayne Conservation Officer:

Date: 21 June 01.

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

M Thorp Esq.
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

27th July 2001
Our Ref: SL/00/180

0118 974 6484 (2 pages & by post)

Dear Mr Thorp,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

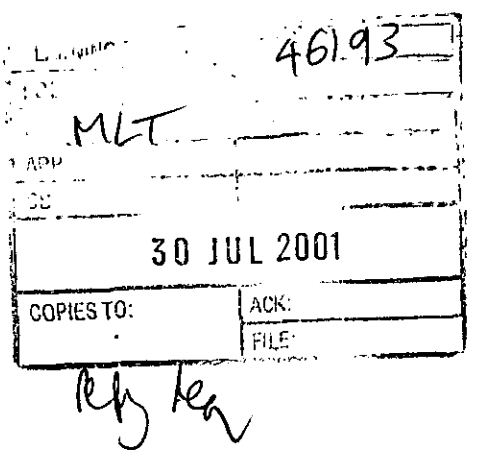
I write further to my letter of 29th June to which I have received no response. I attach a copy for ease of reference.

As Principal Planning Officer I would now ask you to intervene in what is a very straightforward application.

I look forward to your response if an appeal against non-determination is to be avoided.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale
Enc.



Gregory Gray Associates
CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe'. 17 Dinorben Close. Fleet. Hants. GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

Miss. N. Lake.
Head of Planning & Transportation.
Wokingham District Council.
Shute End.
Wokingham. Berks. RG40 1WR.

29th June 2001
Our Ref: SL/00/180

0118 974 6484 (1 page & by post)

Dear Miss. Lake.

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

I write further to our conversation on 3rd May and my letter of that date.

Please could you let me have a detailed explanation of the delay in determination of what is a straightforward application. If I do not receive a decision or confirmation that the application is to be reported to committee by 16th July I will need to consider an appeal against non-determination. In these proceedings I have regard to guidance set out in circular 8/93 - costs.

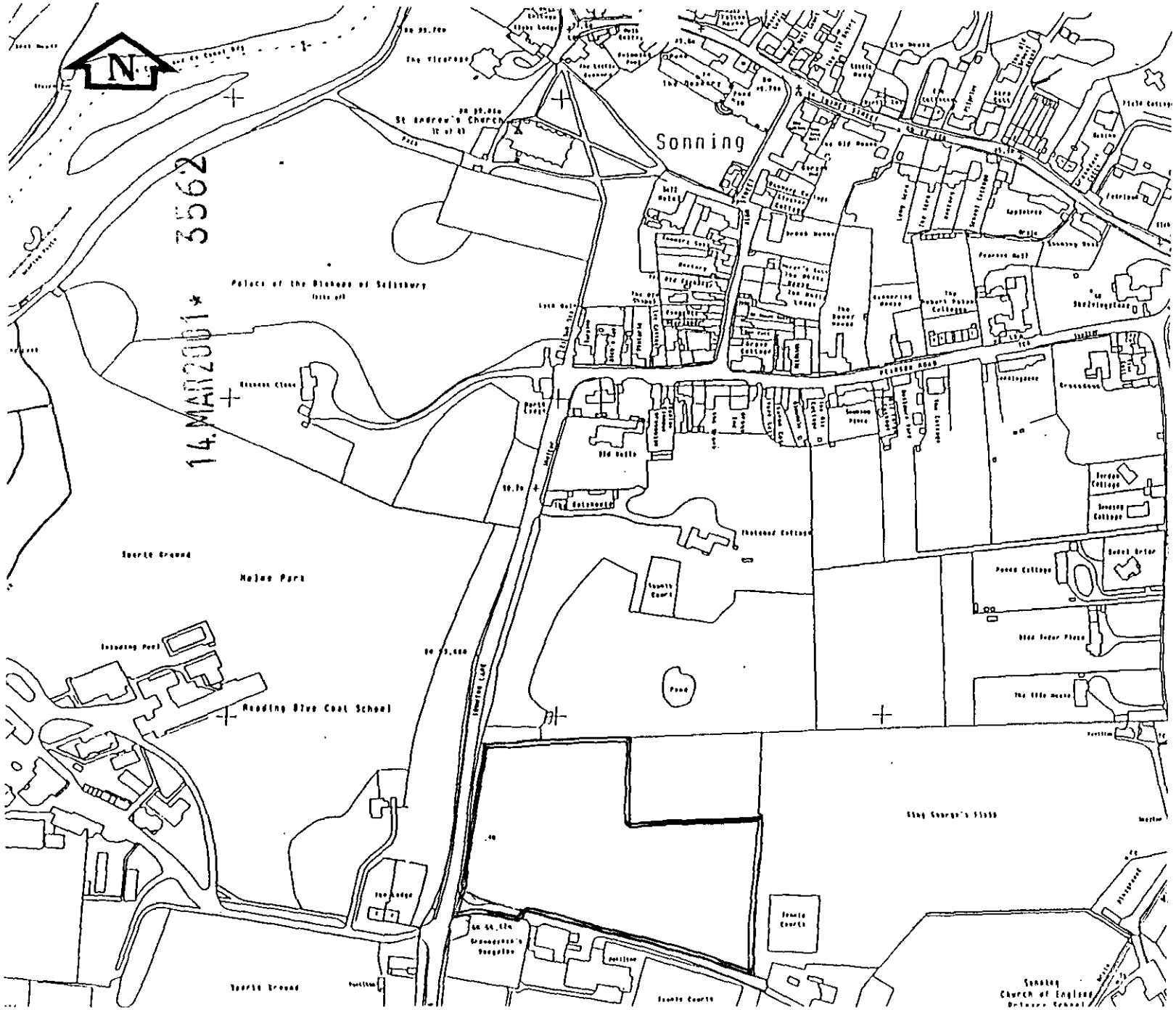
In the meantime I attach a further extract from the planning press.

Yours sincerely.

Mark Leedale
Enc.

NL

30 JUL 2001
COPIES TO: ACK: FILE:



Notes
Do not scale except for Planning and Building Regulations purposes.

Site

Revision Details			
E			
D			
C			
B			
A			

Gregory Gray Associates
Chartered Town Planning Consultants
'Redcliffe,'
17 Dinorben Close,
FLEET,
Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004
Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassociates.co.uk

Client
Holme Park Sonning Limited

Job Title
Woodland burial ground and car park

Drawing Title
Location plan

Scale
1:2,500

Date
March 2001

Drawn By
ML

Drg. No.
SL/00/180/01

Rev.

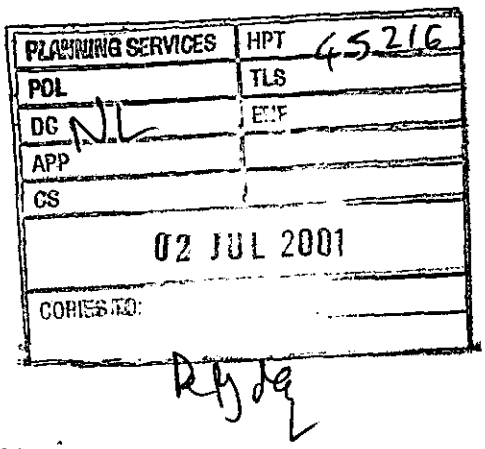
3562

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

NL

Miss. N. Lake,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.



29th June 2001
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Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale
Enc.



Hussein: likens lobbying the government to tackle burial space shortage to banging his head against a brick wall

No room for the dead

The president of the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration, Ian Hussein, tells Rob Winkley about the nationwide shortage of burial space

Only two things in life are certain: death and taxes. But while chancellor Gordon Brown appears to have no problem finding wallet space for Joe Public's hard-earned sterling, your local cemetery might experience a few difficulties in producing a burial plot once your time is up.

Ian Hussein, president of the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration, the nation's shortage of burial space is no new revelation. He has been lobbying the government to address the issue since 1993. He admits he is a "bit fed up with it all", likening the situation to banging his head against a brick wall.

It is a problem nationwide, although the situation in London makes for particularly grim reading. "If someone was to sit down and say 'what's the worst way you could organise burial provision in this great city?' you would get what we have now. It's barmy."

Hussein's solution is simple: "We need to reuse burial plots." But a law passed in 1856 expressly forbids the reuse of graves. Under present rules, cemetery managers have to make a formal approach to the Home Office for a licence to disturb remains. "All we have been putting forward for the last decade is that we reintroduce practices that were used until the 1850s," he says.

The law permits the relocation of bodies, even recent interments, to make way for buildings, he points out. "The fascinating thing is that you can clear a large area for planning purposes, such as road-widening," he says. "There were 26 applications to the Home Office last year for mass exhumations to allow office blocks and housing."

From his office in Manor Park Cemetery, where he is director of the City of London's cemeteries, Hussein hands down his verdict on the planning system. "The problem with London is that it is in a mess in terms of planning," he says. "It has 40 separate agencies running the capital's cemeteries, including the boroughs and private companies."

With a wry smile he points out that the London Borough of Lambeth runs a cemetery in neighbouring Wandsworth while Wandsworth runs a cemetery in Lambeth. "This is the situation across London because development has occurred on an ad hoc basis. In some parts of London there is a massive amount of burial space and in others there is none. In one part of London a burial might cost £500 while in a neighbouring borough it might cost nearer £3,000."

There is no obligation on local authorities to allocate space for cemeteries. But he fires off a warning to local authorities who are ignoring the problem: "If you deny people who have a religious need the provision of burial space then there will be riots." He applauds London's Jewish community for taking matters into its own hands and creating burial societies, to which members pay an annual fee.

"Planners have completely ignored cemeteries," bemoans Hussein. He says that no-one in government has any idea how to ease a crisis which he describes as "chronic".

So is it time for a complete rethink of cemetery provision? "Definitely," he says. "Are they going to be subsidised, or is the user going to pay? A public inquiry would be the best way to get a fundamental independent assessment. How about a minister for bereavement, or a national inspectorate for cemeteries and crematoria? We have been left entirely to self-regulation."

One planner to escape Hussein's invective is Giles Dolphin from the Greater London Authority, who he acknowledges has raised awareness of the deepening crisis and whose evidence to last year's House of Commons select committee inquiry into burial space came at a critical juncture in the debate.

Hussein hails the select committee report (*Planning*, 6 April, p1) as progress in itself. The previous one was more than 150 years ago. He also thinks that the media deserves credit for flagging up the issue and believes the pressure forced former Home Office minister Paul Boateng to promise a consultation paper addressing the whole spectrum of cemetery management and provision. "But the issue is never that big," he laments. "The number of people who die or are bereaved at any one time is small, so as a political force they have very little power."

Despite his obvious lack of confidence in Westminster, Hussein remains hopeful that a solution will eventually be found. "I would like to see legislation before the end of my term as president, but that is pie in the sky," he says. "Even if a consultation paper is issued before the end of the year we are looking at three or four years before a law is passed, by which time the problem will be worse."

Britain's cemeteries should be the best in the world, according to Hussein. But he says that lack of government direction, poor policies and a paucity of forward thinking make them third-rate. "Politicians only ever look as far ahead as the next election, never 15 years down the road," he says, pointing out that politicians do not see the issue as a vote-winner. "A future government will have to take responsibility for this cock-up. Look at any of the political manifestos from the election. Did any party talk about death, bereavement or mortuaries unless it was related to the health service?" he asks.

"One morning people will wake up, turn on the radio and hear that the last burial space in London will be used today," he predicts. "Then there will be a panic and the government will probably rush into a policy decision."

It seems that even when he is away from work Hussein has problems getting away from death. "Funnily enough, I went to see *Hamlet* last night for the first time," he says. "In one of the scenes you see the grave-digger come across some old remains. Of course, he puts them to one side ready for the next interment. I had to a have a giggle."

Previous form

Status: Married with two children.
Age: 37
Birthplace: Hackney.
Education: Masters degree in public services management; doctorate in professional studies from Middlesex University.
Career Details: Joined Greater London Council (GLC) from school to work in recreation, arts and open spaces; Redeployed to cemeteries in 1986 after the break-up of the GLC.
Hobbies: The arts, running, cycling and reading historical novels.

Application No	Received	Sonning	Listed By
VAR/2001/3562	14 03 01		Cllr Rose.

Applicant: **Holme Park Sonning Ltd.**
Location : **Land to the North of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning.**
Proposal : **Proposed variation of condition 01 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.**

1. **Planning History** – There have been three previous applications for the redevelopment of the site for residential dwellings. The most recent being in 1993, for the erection of 13 detached houses. All of these applications have been refused planning permission. However in 1996 planning permission was granted, subject to conditions, for the change of use of a 1.9ha site of agricultural land to Woodland Burial ground (45032). The committee report and decision notice are attached.

2. **Proposal** – The proposed application is for the variation of condition 01 of application 45032, which is the standard 'development must be begun before the expiration of five years' condition to extend the validity of the planning permission. The proposed development is for the creation of a woodland burial site, which involves the creation of a burial ground within an evolving woodland and wildlife sanctuary, on a 1.9hectare site. There would also be an ancillary car park with approximately 10 spaces.

3. **Consultations** -
   - ***Sonning Parish Council:*** Object to the proposed development (see attached comments).
   - ***Highways:*** A highways objection to the proposed development would be unlikely to be upheld on appeal.
   - ***Minerals:*** No objection.
   - ***Environmental Health:*** No objection.
   - ***Policy and Plans:*** No objection.
   - ***Conservation Architect:*** No objection.
   - ***Environment Agency:*** No objection subject to conditions.
   - ***Ecologist:*** The site is located within 30m of a known Great Crested Newt breeding pond
   - ***English Nature:*** 'No comment.'
   - ***Letters:*** There have been 6 letters of objection received. These objections can be summarised as follows:
     - Impact upon the highway safety of the road.
     - Impact upon the water table.
     - There is no need for an additional burial ground.
     - Impact upon the ecology of the area.

4. **Appraisal** – Main issues:

   A. Change in Circumstances Since Original Approval.
   B. Concerns of the Parish Council and Local Residents.

A. Change in Circumstances Since Original Approval.

The concept of a woodland burial ground was outlined during the original application as 'a burial ground within an evolving woodland and wildlife sanctuary'. The burial ground would have no headstones, memorials or formal footpaths. The graves would be identified by small plaques at ground level. The maintenance of the site would be kept to a minimum, with grass cutting occurring around twice a year, with no chemicals or manmade substances used on the land. Bio-degradable cardboard coffins and shrouds are encouraged, as opposed to traditional wooden coffins. The whole of the area would be allowed unrestricted public access and the applicants had agreed to restrict the number of burials to 50 per year, and the times of burial to between 10.00am and 2.30pm.

The circumstances for the determination of this application, remain largely unchanged from those at the time of the determination of the original application. The site is identified within the Loddon Area Local Plan (adopted) as being within the Separation of Settlements, Setting of Settlements and the Sonning Conservation Area. These designations have remained largely unchanged within the emerging Wokingham District Local Plan, with the site still being located within the Green Gap/Wedge and within the Sonning Conservation area. However the site is no longer identified within the emerging plan as the setting of settlement. Therefore the main policy emphasis on this site has remained largely unchanged.

The main change in circumstance is that the site is now within 30m of the a known breeding ground for the Great Crested Newt. As such, the development would require a licence from the DEFRA. Therefore, it is suggested that an additional condition be imposed requiring a full newt survey and mitigation scheme for the creation and running of the woodland burial ground. This scheme should be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the start of development.

B. Concerns of the Parish Council and Local Residents.

One of the main concerns regarding this proposed development, from both the Parish Council and local residents has been the level of the water table on the application site. It has been stated from a number of sources that the application site has a high or varying water table, which maybe at risk of pollution should the graves be below the water level. The Environment Agency withdrew their objections to the original development on the first application and have maintain their 'no objection' subject to conditions stance on this subsequent application.

A second concern of local residents centres on the increase in traffic movements along Sonning Lane. The Highway Authority objected to the original application. However the planning officer considered that the highway's objection to the use and scale of the development was not sustainable and that the proposed condition controlling the hours of burials to outside peak times, between 10.00am and 2.30pm, would limit the proposed development's impact to an acceptable level.

5. **Conclusion** – There has been no material change in circumstance since the approval of the previous application, for the creation of a woodland burial ground. As such the proposed development, subject to the imposition of suitable conditions would have no significant detrimental impact upon the character and amenity of the conservation area or the highway safety of the surrounding road network.

6. **Recommendation** – To GRANT planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

2. No burials shall take place within 10metres of a land drain or ditch.

3. No burial shall take place within 250metres of any well, borehole or spring used for potable water supply, nor within 30metres of any other spring.

4. At the time of excavation of any grave a minimum depth of 2metres shall be attained between the bottom of any grave and the water table below.

5. No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table at the time of excavation, and soakaways shall not in any event exceed 3metres in depth below the ground level of the site as exists at the date of this approval.

6. No burials shall take place on the site until a method statement regarding the carrying out of a ground water survey and preparation of a report by a specialist consultant has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The statement shall consider all aspects necessary to demonstrate compliance with conditions 02, 03, and 04 at all times of the year.

7. No burials shall take place on the site until the approved ground water survey has been carried out and a report submitted in accordance with the approved method statement and the approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority of these details.

8. Burials shall not take place until the areas within the site that comply with condition 02, 03 and 04 have been identified on a plan which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No burial shall take place on the site outside those areas agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority based on the approved ground water survey.

9. No burial shall take place other than in accordance with an overall design specification to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority with regards to the dimensions, depth, spacing and location of all graves. The burials shall be thereafter carried out in accordance with the approved overall design specifications.

10. No burials shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, a scheme of landscaping, which shall include details of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land.

11. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the creation of the car parking area on the site. Any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the first burial on the site, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with others of a similar size or species.

12. No burial shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of the proposed indiginous boundary hedging. All planting comprised in the approved details shall be carried out in the first planting season following the creation of the car park area on the site. Any trees and planting which within a period of 5 years from the first burial on the site, die, are removed or becomes seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with other of a similar size or species.

13. Only indigenous trees shall be used to mark each grave.

14. A landscaping, maintenance and ecological management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any burials taking place on the site, and the site shall thereafter be managed in accordance with the agreed management plan.

15. The proposed car parking shall be provided on the site prior to any burials taking place and details of surfacing materials to be used on the car park shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to work commencing on site, and only those approved surfacing materials shall be used.

16. Details of any memorial walls shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any such provision on site and only those approved memorials or memorial walls shall be provided on site.

17. Burials shall only take place on the site between the hours of 10.00am and 2.30pm.

18. The site shall remain available as informal amenity space with unrestricted public access at all times following commencement of burials on the site.

19. No machinery shall be stored at the site at any time.

20. Prior to the start of development on the site a full newt survey and mitigation scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall then be implemented on site in accordance with a timetable to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reasons.

1. In pursuance of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2, 3 & 4. To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

5. To prevent pollution of groundwater.

6, 7 & 8. In the interest of proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

9. In the interests of the proper planning of the area in terms of decency and amenity.

10, 11 & 12. In the interests of visual amenity.

13 & 14. In order to protect the character and amenity of the locality.

15. In order to secure the appropriate parking provision on the site and to ensure its satisfactory appearance.

16. In order to protect the character and amenity of the locality.

17. In the interests of surrounding residential amenity and to avoid peak time traffic movements on the surrounding highway network in the interest of the road safety.

18 & 19. In accordance with the submitted details and to ensure the appropriate use of the site.

20. In the interests of the future health and safety of a protected species.

Informatives.

1. You are advised, in compliance with the Town and Country Planning (General Development procedure)(England) (Amendment) Order 2000, that the following policies and/or proposals in the development plan are relevant to this decision:
   Berkshire Structure Plan: C2, C5, C6, EN2, EN5, EN8, EN9.
   Loddon Area Local Plan: LTV2, LC1, LC2 LC10, LBE1, LBE12, LBE14.
   Wokingham District Local Plan: WOS3, WCC1, WCC2, WNC3, WNC5, WBE1, WHE2 and WIC2.

2. The site is with 30 metres of a known Great Crested Newt breeding pond. As such the applicants must secure a DEFRA licence prior to the start of any works upon the site.

3. The is evidence that the site is within an area that has a high water table. It is for this reason that conditions 02, 03 and 04 are very important. The failure to comprehensively carry out the required surveying of the site, under condition 07 could result in the pollution of the water table within the area.

Nicola Lake.

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATION SHEET

PLANNING APPLICATION. APPLICATION No. VAR/2001/3562

Officer NICOLA LAKE

Parish SONNING

Proposal VARIATION TO CONDITION 1 OF CONSENT 45032 TO ALLOW FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME TO START CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK

Address LAND NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND SONNING LANE

Applicant HOLME PARK SONNING Ltd C/O GREGORY GREY ASSOCIATES

The Parish Council has the following comments.

1. The original application to permit woodland burials was strongly opposed by the Parish Council and parishioners on the grounds that the site was unsuitable for such use.

2. In spite of this permission was granted. One of the conditions was that a borehole should be sunk in order to confirm that the water table was lower than that required permitting such burials.

3. Since that permission was granted the Parish Council have installed a pond in the area adjacent to the site. When excavation commenced the contractor became aware of water two feet below the surface. The pond covers a large area and the conditions were the same in all parts. This indicates that the whole area is situated above a perch water table where such burials should not be permitted.

4. The ditch, which runs along side the application site and into ditches in Sonning Lane, is presently full of flowing water, only one or two feet below the ground level of the site. This is due to the extreme weather conditions experienced this year but indications are that this will continue. It is essential that Officers view this for themselves as it clearly illustrates that the water level is only two feet, below ground level. This would make it totally impossible to comply with the requirement that a minimum depth of two metres be maintained between the bottom of any graves and the water table.

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11-APR-01 23:19 David Bates 01189697753 PAGE: 2

5. It is understood that highways initial objections were withdrawn. It is now five years since the original application was granted and in that time traffic through Sonning has increased considerably. Changes to the road system in Reading have resulted in a noticeable increase in traffic in Sonning Lane. With further development in Thames Valley Park and other areas it is anticipated that traffic in Sonning will rise by 17% in the next few years. A recent approval for a Rowing Lake in Sonning Eye will add a further 5% to that figure.

6. The site has continued to deteriorate under the current ownership and is presently under an enforcement notice. If WDC are of a mind to approve this variation it is essential that additional conditions, to ensure that action is taken to clear and fence the site securely prior to any on site work being commenced, are added to the existing ones.

7. For the above reasons, Sonning Parish Council urges Wokingham District Council to refuse this application

L. A. Bates (Clerk to the Council). 11 April 2001

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11-APR-01 23:20 David Bates 01189692753 PAGE: 3

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATION SHEET

PLANNING APPLICATION. APPLICATION No. VAR/2001/3562

Officer NICOLA LAKE

Parish SONNING.

Proposal VARIATION TO CONDITION 1 OF CONSENT 45032 TO ALLOW FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME TO START CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO WOODLAND BUTIEL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK

Address LAND NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND SONNING LANE

Applicant HOLME PARK SONNING Ltd C/O GREGORY GREY ASSOCIATES

The Parish Council has the following comments.

1. The original application to permit woodland burials was strongly opposed by the Parish Council and parishioners on the grounds that the site was unsuitable for such use.

2. In spite of this permission was granted. One of the conditions was that a borehole should be sunk in order to confirm that the water table was lower than that required permitting such burials.

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7. For the above reasons, Sonning Parish Council urges Wokingham District Council to refuse this application

L. A. Bates (Clerk to the Council).

11 April 2001

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David Bates
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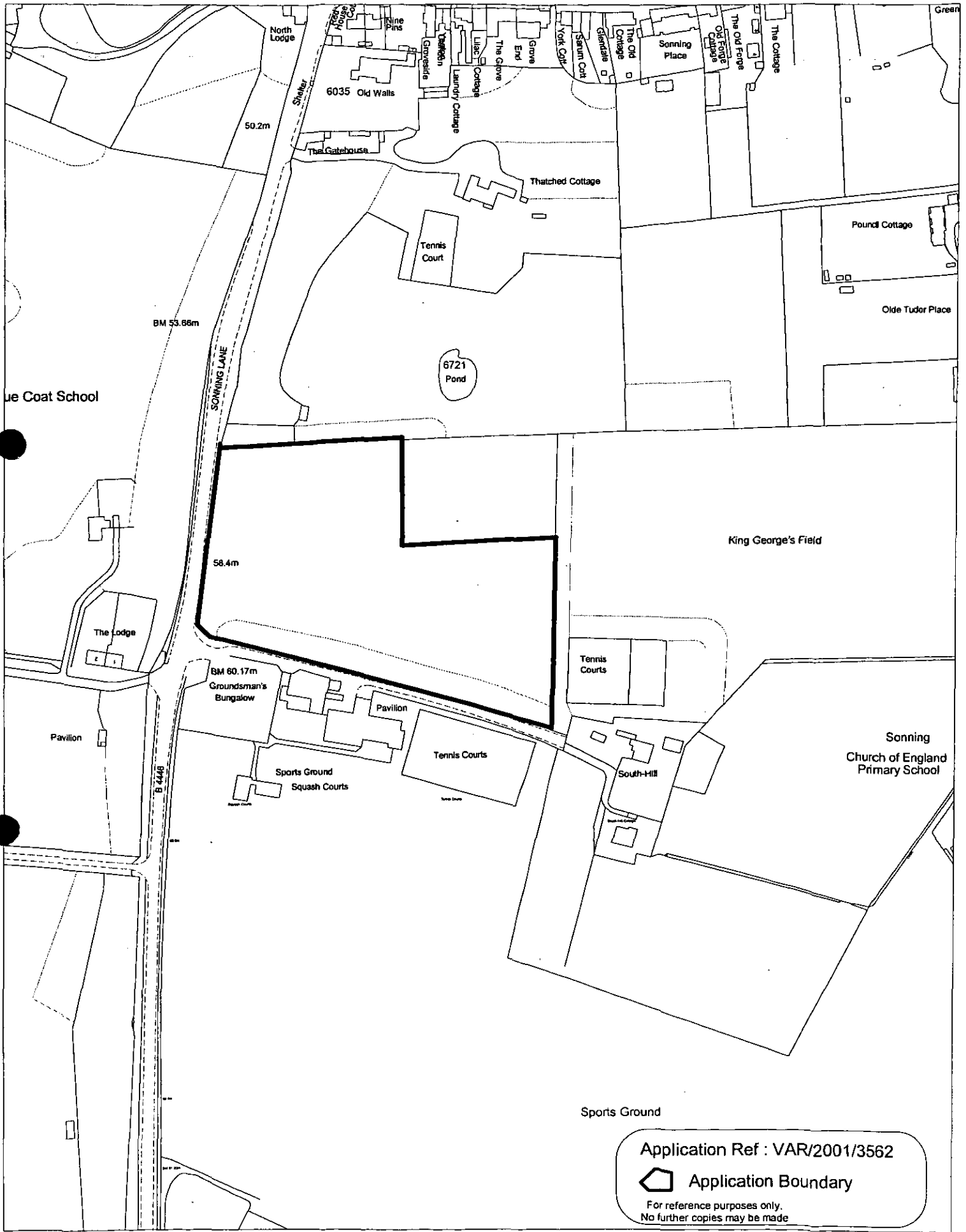
PAGE: 3



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Development Control Section, Environmental Services, Wokingham District Council.

12 September 2001 Scale: 1 : 2500

N W E S

Application No. 45032 **Received 14.09.95** **SONNING**

Applicant : HOLME PARK SONNING LTD
Location : LAND BETWEEN COUNTY SPORTS GROUND AND THATCHED COTTAGE, SONNING LANE
Proposal : PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF VACANT AGRICULTURAL LAND TO BURIAL GROUND

1. **Planning History** - Since 1980 there have been 3 applications for housing on this site for 4, houses, 6 houses and 13 houses. All were refused and the 4 and 13 house schemes were dismissed at appeal.

2. **Proposal** - Is to provide a woodland burial ground on the 1.9 ha. site with an associated car park (approximately 10 parking spaces).

3. **Consultations** -
   - ***Sonning Parish Council :*** Attached.
   - ***Highways :*** Recommend refusal.
   - ***Environmental Health :*** No comments or observations.
   - ***Leisure and Technical Services :*** Require informatives.
   - ***Berkshire County Council :*** No strategic concerns.
   - ***National Rivers Authority :*** Requests conditions.
   - ***Neighbour/Local Comment :*** Inappropriate in Conservation Area; should be a public area; should be in control of Parish Council; offensive use; traffic problems ie. generation, poor access, increase use of A4 junction, parking problems in the area, school pupil safety, ecological impact, pollution.

4. **Appraisal** - The concept of woodland burial involves the creation of a burial ground within an evolving woodland and wildlife sanctuary. There are no head stones or memorials, and graves are identified by a small plaque at ground level. There are no formal footpaths. Maintenance is minimal with grass cutting on perhaps two occasions per year and no chemicals or manmade substances are used on the land. Bio-degradable cardboard coffins or shrouds are encouraged, as opposed to traditional wooden coffins. The whole of the area would be allowed unrestricted public access and the applicants have agreed to restrict the number of burials to a maximum of 50 per year, and times of burials to be between 10.00am and 2.30pm.

   The main determining issues are:

   A. Impact on the Conservation Area and Local Environment (Loddon Area Local Plan - LTV2, LC1, LC2, LC10, LBE1, LBE12 and LBE14; Berkshire Structure Plan - C2, C5, C6, EN2, EN5, EN8, EN9)
   B. Highway Considerations

A. The site is located in the rural area in a position designated by the Loddon Area Local Plan as being of importance to the Separation of Settlements and also the setting of the Sonning Village. The site is within the Conservation Area. There is currently no agricultural use of the land.

In terms of rural area policy the use is considered to be an appropriate exception to the restraint policy LTV2 in that it represents a purpose wholly appropriate to a rural area. That policy states that the acceptability of all proposals will also be judged against the provisions of the other relevant policies contained in Loddon Area Local Plan.

With regard to the Separation of Settlements (Policy LC1) the proposal would not detract from the undeveloped appearance of the location and the tree planting would enhance the visual separation. The small associated car park area would be unmarked and have a loose surface thereby preventing any urbanising effect. For similar reasons the setting of Sonning would not be adversely affected (Policy LC2). With regard to Policy LBE1 and the design of new development the proposal would make a positive contribution to the character and setting of the area, contribute to an attractive environment and retain important natural landscape features.

LBE12 seeks the protection and enhancement of Conservation Areas and requires that open spaces, trees and views within them be protected and enhanced. LBE14 states that inappropriate development will normally be refused. It is considered that the proposed woodland burial ground would protect and enhance the distinctive visual character of the locality.

The site has however been studied in a recent ecological survey which has identified the site as the most important piece of dry, wildflower-rich grass land in Sonning. The reuse of the site in accordance with the proposal would alter the ecology of the site, eventually to a habitat which is much more common in Sonning. The County Council has expressed an interest in studying the survey, with a mind to designating the site as a Wildlife Heritage Site.

The potential change in the ecology of the site could be judged as contravening Policies LBE1 and LBE12 in that important natural features would be lost and that an aspect of the environment that makes up the distinctive character would not be protected.

Policy LC10 states that "In considering proposals for development which would affect wildlife habitats the District Council will take into account the impact of the proposals and, where development is otherwise acceptable, will seek to ameliorate that impact and ensure, where appropriate, the creation and future management of new habitats for wildlife. If the site proves to be of sufficient nature conservation importance any proposal which would lead to damage sufficient to remove or adversely affect that importance will be refused". The proposal would certainly contravene that policy.

The attached comments from the Parish Council express concern about the contamination of local springs and watercourses because of the geology of the site. The National Rivers Authority has expressed similar concerns but does not consider the Parish comments to provide a conclusive argument. The National Rivers Authority would require a minimum of 2 metres between the bottom of the graves and the water table. The applicants are not willing to carry out a groundwater survey of the site before their planning application is considered but have agreed that a condition to ensure that an appropriate survey is carried out before burials take place. Such a survey would locate the areas of the site (if any) where the National Rivers Authority 2 metres requirement would be met.

B. The Highway Authority is opposed to the proposal because of the increase in traffic movements at the access junction with Sonning Lane, which is substandard in terms of visibility.

The access road junction is used jointly with Berkshire County Sports Ground, the Tennis Club and some residential properties. It is not considered that upto 50 burials per year and associated after visits will give rise to a level of danger which would warrant a refusal or the removal of established roadside hedges. The burials are unlikely to conflict with the peak time weekend use of the sports ground, the restricted hours of 10.00am to 2.30pm would mean that evening use of the sports ground access would not increase as a consequence of

this proposal, and would also mean that main times of school traffic and pedestrians would be avoided, and also peak am and pm traffic periods on the surrounding network would not be affected.

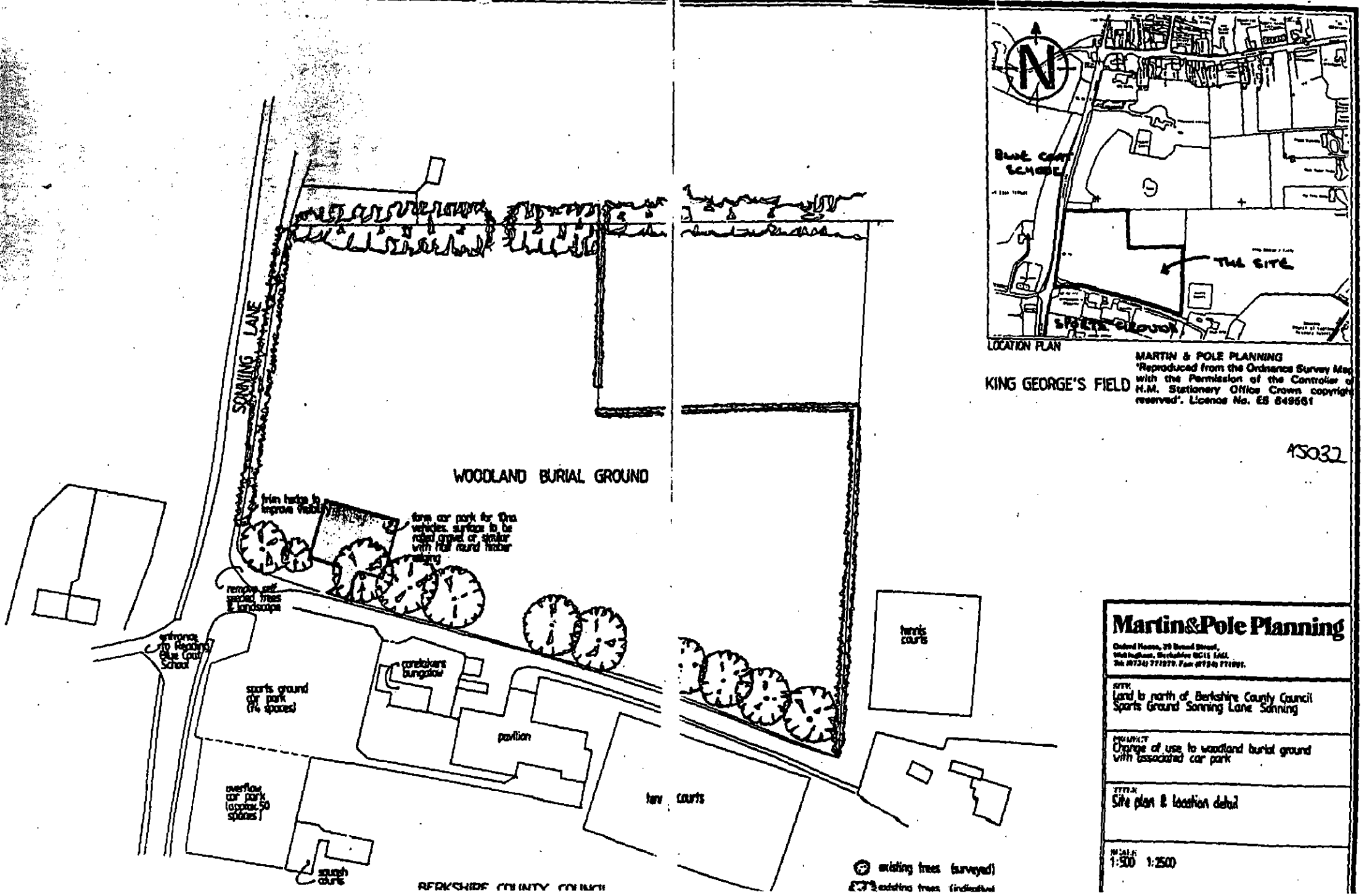
5. Conclusion - It is not considered that there are any sustainable highway objections to the proposed use and its scale. Any approval would require appropriate conditions to ensure that National Rivers Authority requirements for a minimum distance between the bottom of graves and the water table, could at all times be met, prior to burials taking place on the site. It is not considered that the proposed parking area or the planting of trees would adversely affect the setting or separation of Sonning from other settlements. No buildings are proposed in the application.

The ecological quality of the site is high and uncommon in Sonning, whereas the woodland habitats and environment are more common. The loss of the valuable existing ecology of the site is inappropriate and unacceptable.

6. Recommendation - REFUSE planning permission for the following reason :

The development of the site as proposed would alter and adversely affect the ecological and wildlife habitat value of the site and would therefore be contrary to policies LTV2, LBE1, LBE12 and LC10 of Loddon Area Local Plan; and policies C2, EN5 and EN8 of Berkshire Structure Plan

GR/TAM
18.4.96.



LOCATION PLAN

MARTIN & POLE PLANNING

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KING GEORGE'S FIELD

4S032

Martin&Pole Planning

Oxford House, 39 Broad Street, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 1AU. Tel (0734) 771979. Fax (0734) 771981.

SITE: Land to north of Berkshire County Council Sports Ground Sonning Lane Sonning

PROPOSAL: Change of use to woodland burial ground with associated car park

TITLE: Site plan & location detail

SCALE: 1:500 1:2500

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATION SHEET

PLANNING APPLICATION APPLICATION NO: 45032

Parish SONNING

Proposal CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK

Address LAND AT SONNING LANE SONNING

Applicant HOLME PARK SONNING LTD

Sonning Parish Council has the following views.
1.The land concerned has the been the subject, during recent years, of at least two planning applications for housing development. Twice the applications have been turned down on appeal and on each occasion the Inspector has pointed to the importance of this piece of land as a break between settlements and as an important open aspect to the entrance to Sonning village. The Parish Council is of the view that the correct future use of this piece of land is as open managed grassland and woodland for amenity use. In keeping with the conservation area, of which it is a part, it should be maintained as a pleasant rural aspect.

2. The Parish Council opposes the use of the land for burial purposes (even for woodland burial) because for many people this will destroy its value for amenity and pleasure purposes. The Council also considers that it is highly likely that the land is unsuitable for burial because of the water table and drainage on the land. An NRA report may confirm this matter.

3. Sonning is already suffering from the effects of excess traffic and does not wish to see any further development which would bring more people and vehicles from outside the area into the village on a frequent basis more or less in perpetuity. The site is opposite the entrance to the Blue Coat School and beside the entrance to the Berkshire County Sports Ground. The road visiblity on Sonning Lane at this point is poor and it is important not to increase the traffic using the entrances. The Parish Council opposes the proposal for a parking area on the land because this would encourage more vehicles. It has to be recognised that a cemetery of any sort will create additional traffic not only at the time of burials but also to a greater extent when people come to pay respects to the memory of those buried. Any form of memorial will lead to additional people and traffic. The site is not eassily accessed by public transport nor would the Parish Council wish it to be.

continued.....

4. Though the plan attached to the application shows the owne to have ownership of part of the lane on the southern boundar of the site, (and thereby to be able to gain access to th proposed car park via the established lane) the Parish Counci doubts this to be the case.

5. This land is within the conservation area and therefore ther is a special requirement for particular regard to be had to th desirability of preserving or enhancing the special character o such areas. Mr Leedale, of Martin and Pole, in his coverin letter to the application makes this very point. He then goes o to state that the land is unkempt and of very poor visua quality. The District Council should be aware that for the las two years the owner of the land appears to have allowed tippin of Controlled Waste on the land. The Parish Council have mad representations to the County Waste Regulation Authority for thi to be stopped and for the owner to be required to clear th waste. The Authority have taken no effective action and the owne appears to have taken no action to prevent tipping nor to clea the waste already dumped. The Parish Council is of the impressio that under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 it is a offence for such waste to be tipped without a licence and it i also an offence for the land owner to allow such tipping withou a licence. All this has been pointed out to the CWRA but to n avail. The Parish Council continues to make representations o this matter.
However the reason the piece of land is unkempt is because th owner chooses to manage it that way and to allow the tipping o waste. This is not a satisfactory reason for allowing a chang of use. A few years ago when the land was in the same ownershi it was maintained in good order but that is no longer the case

6. The application makes no mention of the proposed method o digging the graves or tree planting. The Parish Council would no wish for excavator equipment to be used regularly and frequentl on the land. Where would any equipment be stored? The Paris Council would not wish to see any buildings (permanent o temporary) on the land for these purposes.

7. The application is short of detail in several other respects These include such matters as ; grave layout and markings; tre species and layout; memorial design and access details to an memorial; details of permitted remembrance tokens; long ter management arrangements; management of those areas not subjec to graves or trees; details of how second burials would b arranged. These details should form part of the applicatio before it is considered.

8. The Parish Council asks the District Council to refuse th application and to take whatever action is possible to ensur that the owner manages the site to provide a pleasing aspect an complies with the law concerning waste tipping.

L. A. Bates (Clerk to the Council).

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATION SHEET

PLANNING APPLICATION APPLICATION NO. 45032

Parish	SONNING
Proposal	CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL SITE WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK.
Address	LAND ON SONNING LANE SONNING
Applicant	HOLME PARK LTD

The Parish Council wishes to make further points of objection to this proposal.

General Features.

The proposal for a cemetery is appropriate and acceptable for a township and for the use of a close urban area but is totally alien to the character and acceptable landscape of Sonning, a traditional English Thames side village with a Church, Churchyard and burial ground. The discription 'Woodland Burial Site' is a total misnomer posing many managerial and environmental problems.

Management.

The site would be, for many years, an unkempt wilderness with a grid of lettered and numbered concrete blocks (the only way of identifying a personal burial plot!). Regimented lines of excavation and burial mounds, some planted with tree whips which could not hope to mature to 7ft centres and if they did survive be in danger of being cut down!!. The site would require a building to house maintenance and records staff to accurately identify and locate burial plots and ensure against exhumation in such a concentrated use.
A further feature of a so called 'Woodland Burial Ground' is the erection of memorial walls which together with admin buildings, access roads, for hearses and funeral processions, leaves little opportunity to call the area environmental woodland and is an unacceptable proposal in a village.
It is understood that the maximum depth of burial is 4' 3" in loose earth which would give a cover of approximately 3' 0". In attracting wildlife to the site this would lead to serious and disturbing problems due to foxes and badgers in the area.

CONTINUED.

Soil and Geology

The Ordnance Survey Geological Map identifies the geology of the site in, which the bodies will be interred, to be a strata of Plateau Gravel over laying Reading Beds which in turn over lay Upper Chalk and Flood Plain Gravel Strata. (See attached site plan and geological section). These strata are very porous and further excavation in the upper layers will make them more so.

There is an indication that the ground water flow is down the site towards Pearson Road and a cut off trench has already been excavated to some extent to divert this water to a ditch in Sonning Lane. There is also an existing pond in the vicinity of the level between the Plateau Gravel and Reading Beds which could again be associated with the ground water flowing from the proposed site. To excavate and bury in this porous ground would seriously pollute the ground water flows which permeate down towards Pearson Road. The ground and geological strata are totally unsuitable for burial purposes.

It is understood that Woodley Town Council sought expert advise for a burial site in Bulmershe and were advised that the ground was unsuitable for such use. The geology of the Bulmershe site is identical to the Sonning site i.e. Plateau Gravel under laying Reading Beds.

For these and the reasons already submitted tge Parish Council urge you to refuse this application.

L J Bates

Lesley Bates (Clerk to the Council) 20 November 1995

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (NORTH) SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1ST MAY 1996 FROM 7.30 PM TO 9.10 PM

Present: Mr.S.R.Conway (Chairman), Mr.N.D.Rose (Vice-Chairman), Mrs D.F.Carpenter, Mrs.S.M.Dovey, Mrs A.N.M.C.Drake, Mr.J.R.Hill, Carol.A.Jewell, Mr.K.K.K.Kerr, Mrs.J.A.Lissaman, Mr.G.Parkinson and Fiona Rolls.

Also present under Standing Order 45(4) - Simon Etheridge.

140 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 3rd April 1996 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

141 APPLICATION NO. 45032 PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF VACANT AGRICULTURAL LAND TO BURIAL GROUND, LAND BETWEEN COUNTY SPORTS GROUND AND THATCHED COTTAGE, SONNING LANE FOR HOLME PARK SONNING LTD

The Sub-Committee considered a report about this application, set out on pages 730 to 739 of the Agenda.

Members noted that six further letters of objection and a letter from the applicant's agent, which was circulated at the meeting, had been received. No further formal comments had been received from Berkshire County Council.

Members were of the view that as the only reason submitted to support a refusal was on ecological grounds they were minded to approve the application subject to appropriate conditions being included.

RESOLVED: That Application No. 45032 be approved subject to the following conditions amongst others:

1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission;

2) A management plan to be submitted to and approved by the District Council;

3) A groundwater survey to be carried out before any burials take place;

4) Size and location of any memorial or memorial wall to be approved by the District Council;

5) Material used on the car park to be approved by the District Council;

6) Operating hours to be between 10.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. only;

7) Tree types to be approved by the District Council.

NOTE: Mr.N.D.Rose asked to be recorded as voting against the decision of the Sub-Committee.

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACTS

NOTIFICATION OF CONSENT FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

To: Holme Park Sonning Ltd
C/o Martin & Pole Planning
Salisbury House
Milton Road
Wokingham
Berkshire RG11 1DB

Application No: 45032

Proposal: Change of use to Woodland Burial Ground with ancillary car park.

Parish: Sonning

Location: Land to North of B.C.C. Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning

The Wokingham District Council in pursuance of their powers under the above Acts and Regulations hereby GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION for carrying out the above development in accordance with the application and the accompanying plans submitted to the Council subject to compliance with the following conditions, the reasons for which are specified hereunder.

CONDITION(S)

01 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.(N4)

02 No burials shall take place within 10 metres of a land drain or ditch.

03 No burials shall take place within 250 metres of any well, borehole or spring used for potable water supply, nor within 30 metres of any other spring.

04 A minimum depth of 2 metres shall be maintained at all times between the bottom of any grave and the water table.

05 No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table, and soakaways shall not in any event exceed 3 metres in depth below the ground level of the site as exists at the date of this approval.

06 No burials shall take place on the site until a method statement regarding the carrying out of a ground water survey and preparation of a report by a specialist consultant has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The statement shall consider all aspects necessary to demonstrate compliance with Conditions 02, 03 and 04 at all times of the year.

07 No burials shall take place on the site until the approved ground water survey has been carried out and a report submitted in accordance with the approved method statement.

08 Burials shall not take place until the areas within the site that comply with Conditions 02, 03 and 04 have been identified on a plan which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No burials shall take place on the site outside those areas agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority based on the approved ground water survey.

09 No burials shall take place other than in accordance with an overall design specification to be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the dimensions, depth, spacing and location of all graves. The burials shall be thereafter carried out in accordance with the approved overall design specification.

10 No burials shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, a scheme of landscaping, which shall include details of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land.

11 All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the creation of the car park area on the site. Any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the first burial on the site die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with others of similar size and species.

12 No burials shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, details of the proposed indigenous boundary hedging. All planting comprised in the approved details shall be carried out in the first planting season following the creation of the car park area on the site. Any trees and plants which within a period of 5 years from the first burial on site, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with others of a similar size or species.

13 Only indigenous trees shall be used to mark each grave.

14 A landscaping, maintenance and ecological management plan shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any burials taking place on the site, and the site shall thereafter be managed in accordance with the agreed management plan.

15 The proposed car park shall be provided on site prior to any burials taking place and details of surface materials to be used on the car park shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to work commencing on site, and only those approved surfacing materials shall be used.

16 Details of any memorials or memorial walls shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any such provision on site and only those approved memorials or memorial walls shall be provided on site.

17 Burials shall only take place on site between the hours of 10.00am and 2.30pm.

18 The site shall remain available as informal amenity space with unrestricted public access at all times following the commencement of burials on the site.

19 No machinery shall be stored at the site at any time.

REASON(S)

01 REASON This condition is deemed to be attached by virtue of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.(N4R)

02 REASON To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

03 REASON To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

04 REASON To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

05 REASON To prevent pollution of groundwater.

06 REASON In the interest of the proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

07 REASON In the interest of the proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

08 REASON In the interest of the proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

09 REASON In the interests of the proper planning of the area in terms of decency and amen ity.

10 REASON In the interests of visual amenity.(N13R)

11 REASON In the interests of visual amenity.(N13R)

12 REASON In the interests of visual amenity.(N13R)

13 REASON In order to protect the character and amenities of the locality.(N18R)

14 REASON In order to protect the character and amenities of the locality.(N18R)

15 REASON In order to secure the appropriate parking provision on site and to ensure its satisfactory appearance.

16 REASON In order to protect the character and amenities of the locality.(N18R)

17 REASON In the interest of surrounding residential amenity and to avoid peak time traffic movements on the surrounding highway network in the interest of road safety.

18 REASON In accordance with the submitted details and to ensure the appropriate use of the site.

19 REASON In the interest of the amenity of the Conservation Area.

Date 4th July 1996

Head of Development Control

Note : Would you please ensure that the Red Public Notice relating to this planning application which the Council sent to you to put on display is now removed, if this has not already been done. This will avoid any confusion by local residents as to whether further applications have been made, and will assist in keeping the countryside and townscapes tidy.

Date: 06 June 2002

Your Ref:

My Ref: **Nicola Lake - VAR/2001/3562**

Holme Park Sonning Ltd
C/O Gregory Gray Associates
17
Dinorben Close
Fleet
GU52 7SL

WOKINGHAM UNITARY
Environmental Services Department
Planning Service
Aiming for Excellence
P.O. Box 157
Shute End, Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WR
Tel: (0118) 974 6000
Fax: (0118) 974 6484
Minicom No: (0118) 974 6991
DX: 33506 – Wokingham

Dear Sir/Madam

Application Number: VAR/2001/3562

Site Address: Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Reading.

Proposal: Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park..

Your application is to be determined at the Development Control Sub-Committee meeting on the 12.06.02 and will start at 7.00pm. The application has been recommended for approval and you can see a copy of the committee report at the Environmental Services Department, Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, or at your local library.

You may attend the Committee meeting and speak if you wish. A leaflet explaining the process is enclosed.

IF YOU WISH TO ARRANGE TO SPEAK contact Kevin Jacob in the Policy & Members' Services Section on (0118) 974 6058 no later than 5.00pm on the last working day (Tuesday) prior to the meeting.

IF YOU WISH TO DISCUSS THE APPLICATION contact the Development Control Section on (0118) 974 6446 or (0118) 974 6453 quoting the application number at the head of this letter and ask for the case officer dealing with the proposal.

Yours faithfully,

Anna Cronin

Head of Planning & Transportation

Applicationo	Name & Address
VAR/2001/3562	J A Clement Davies Lilac Cottage Pearson Road Sonning READING Berkshire RG4 6UH
VAR/2001/3562	Mrs H Lee May Tree Cottage Sonning Lane SONNING Berkshire RG4 6ST
VAR/2001/3562	Alistair Driver Conservation Manager Environment Agency
TRANSFERRED TO	MKA
COMMITTEE LETTERS SENT	06.06.02

WOKINGHAM UNITARY
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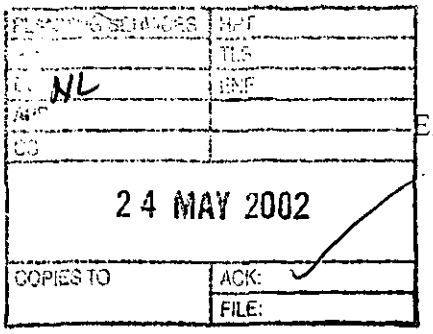
C.14 WDC



Elizabeth & Barton **Guthrie**
Nine Pins
Pearson Road
Sonning
RG4 6UH

Mrs L A Bates
Clerk
Sonning Parish Council
Pearson Road
Sonning - ***by hand***

22 May 2002

Dear Madam Clerk,

Application Renewal VAR 2001/3562 / Wokingham District Council / Woodland Burial Ground / Sonning Lane

It has come to our attention that a renewal application has been filed in respect of the above and this *concerns us greatly*. We have written previously on this matter, (including to Wokingham District Council), **totally opposing the application** and summarising our reasons why.

Take for example/s the high water table in the field and the drainage problems which have affected the adjoining areas. There is the additional problem of surface water, particularly during heavy rainfalls, whereby the water cascades down Sonning Lane (incl. past your own residential property), gushes past our immediate neighbours property (Red House Cottage) on the cnr. of Sonning Lane/Pearson Road, past our property and onwards. Despite attempts by WDC's Engineering Services department, this matter alone has not resolved itself and this, as recently as today. (Messrs. Moon and Napper are familiar with the circumstances, as is Cllr. Nigel Rose). **We dread to think what may occur in this context should the above renewal application be approved !!**

We are available for discussion with you/SPC in person should it prove helpful and meanwhile, I am sending a copy of this letter to WDC, Cllr. Rose and to selected others.

Yours faithfully,

Elizabeth & Barton Guthrie

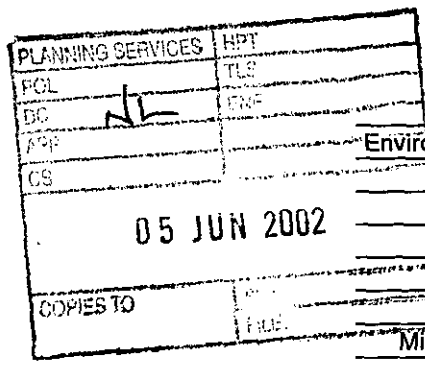
Elizabeth & Barton **Guthrie**

Tel. 0118 974 6316 (Direct Line) Fax. 0118 974 6313

Date. 5th June 2002

Your Ref.

My Ref. MM/JG/H10/1.20022315



Environmental Services Department
Engineering Services
P.O. Box 153
Shute End, Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WL
Tel: (0118) 974 6000
Minicom No: (0118) 974 6991
DX: 33506 – Wokingham

Mr and Mrs B Guthrie
Nine Pins
Pearson Road
Sonning RG4 6UH

Dear Mr and Mrs Guthrie

I have been passed a copy of your letter dated 22nd May by the Clerk of the Parish Council.

Your letter is obviously intended as an objection to a planning application VAR 2001/3562 and, therefore, I have passed a copy to the planning officer who is considering this application.

The issue regarding surface water in Sonning Lane and Pearson Road is the subject of ongoing consideration by Engineering Services and it is our intention to re-establish grips which will direct the water away from the road and I hope that this will improve the situation which you have identified.

Yours sincerely

Mark Moon
Head of Engineering Services

c.c. [Planning Officer]
Roger Johnson, Senior Engineer
Mrs Lesley Bates, Clerk to Sonning Parish Council
Cllr Nigel Rose, Member for Sonning Ward

Elizabeth & Barton **Guthrie**
Nine Pins
Pearson Road
Sonning
RG4 6UH

Mrs L A Bates
Clerk
Sonning Parish Council
Pearson Road
Sonning - *by hand*

22 May 2002

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Application Renewal VAR 2001/3562 / Wokingham District Council / Woodland Burial Ground / Sonning Lane

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Yours faithfully,

Elizabeth & Barton Guthrie

Elizabeth & Barton **Guthrie**

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HD/Drainage

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MM.

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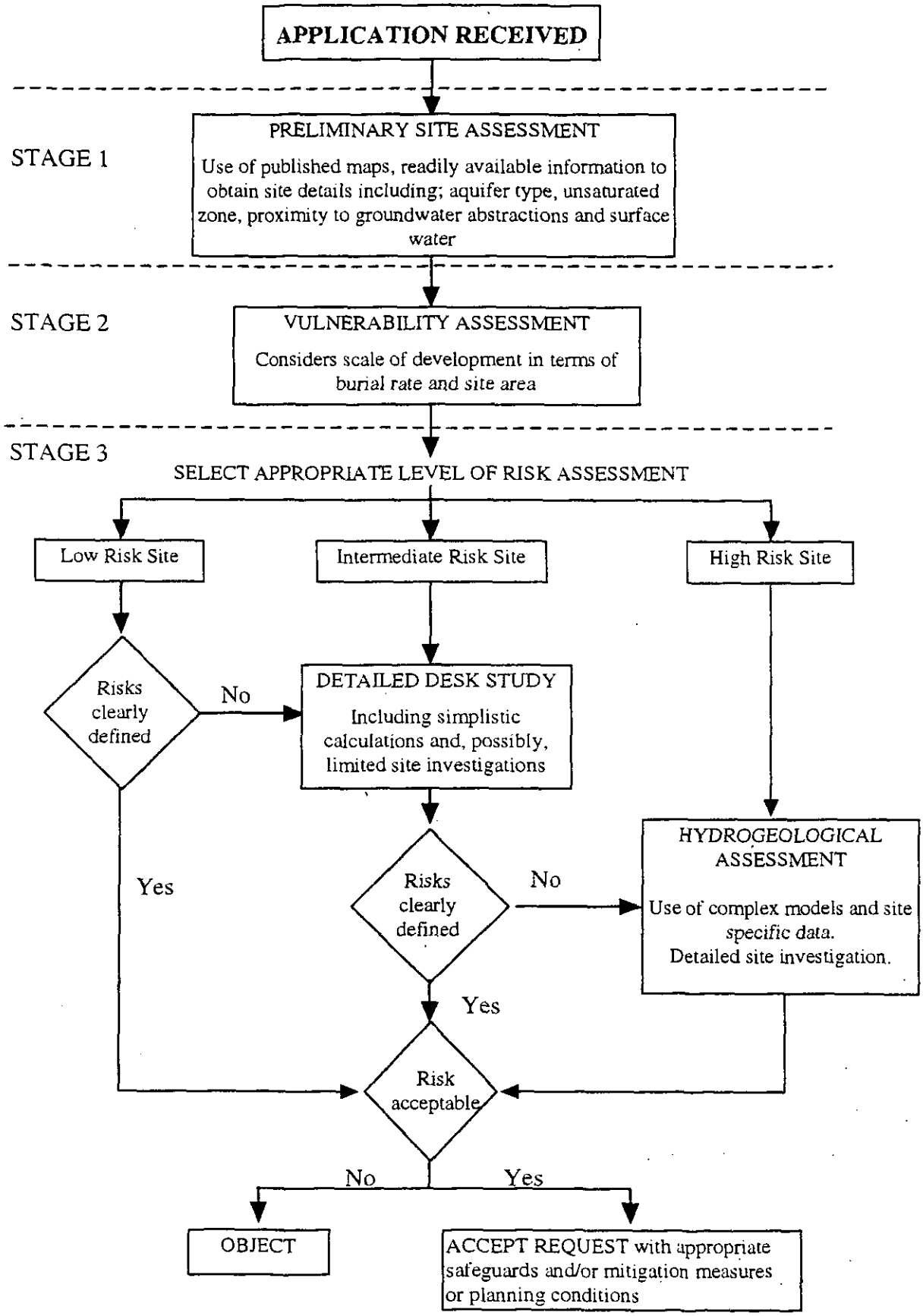

Figure 5.1 Flow chart for assessment of proposals

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

PLANNING SERVICES REF 42930
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DC NL | ENF
APP |
CS |
04 MAY 2001
COPIES TO: | ACK:
FILE:

Miss. N. Lake,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

3rd May 2001
Our Ref: SL/00/180

0118 974 6484 (3 pages)

Dear Miss. Lake,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

I write in respect of the above application and our telephone conversation today.

For ease of reference I attach the Environment Agency letter confirming that they have no objection subject to imposition of conditions. These were imposed on the extant permission.

I also reiterate the nature of this application. You will be aware of the provisions of Circular 11/95 insofar as they relate to the renewal of planning permissions. At paragraph 60 it states that such applications should only be refused where:

(a) There has been a material change in circumstances such as planning policy since the original permission was granted.
(b) Continued failure to commence development would contribute to uncertainty about the future of development in the locality.
(c) The application is premature because the permission still has a reasonable time to run.

The material change in circumstances are;

(1) removal of a layer of constraint in the emerging local plan; and
(2) an acknowledged shortfall in burial space to which I have referred you.

On this basis I trust permission will be forthcoming.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale
Enc.

Our ref: SP\2001\003440\001
Your ref: VAR/2001/3562
Date: 1 May 2001

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

District Planning Officer
Wokingham District Council
Council Offices, Shute End,
PO Box 157
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG11 1BN

For the attention of: Nicola Lake

Dear Madam

PROPOSAL: Proposed Variation To Condition 1 Of Consent 45032 To Allow For An Extension Of Time To Start Change Of Use Of Land To Woodland Burial Ground With Ancillary Car-Park.
LOCATION: Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning

Thank you for your letter dated 23 March 2001, which was received on 28 March 2001. You are asked to quote the following reference in any correspondence: **SU77NE/1/16**. I apologise for the delay in replying, and trust that the Environment Agency's comments, as set out below, will still be taken into consideration.

The Environment Agency has no objection, in principle, to the proposed development provided that the following conditions are imposed on any planning permission granted:

Planning Conditions

CONDITION: No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table, and they shall not in any event exceed 3 metres in depth below existing ground level.
REASON: To prevent pollution of groundwater.

CONDITION: A minimum depth of 2 metres shall always be maintained between the bottom of any grave and the water table
REASON: To prevent pollution of groundwater.

Advice To Planning Authority: Land Drainage

We are not aware of any watercourses on the site, but should there be any, we advise that:
(1) they should not be culverted; and
(2) a buffer zone is left on either side of any watercourse, and
(3) culverted watercourses should not be built over, but should ideally be opened up and made a feature of the site.

Cont/d..

Environment Agency
Swift House, Frimley Business Park, Frimley, Camberley, Surrey GU16 7SQ
Telephone : 01276 454300 Fax : 01276 454301

In any case, you should note that culverting of a watercourse requires the prior written approval of the local authority under the terms of the Public Health Act 1936, and the prior written consent of the Environment Agency under the terms of the Land Drainage Act 1991/Water Resources Act 1991. The Agency seeks to avoid culverting, and its consent for such works will normally be withheld.

Advice To Applicant: Groundwater Protection

Surface water from the car-park and access road, should discharge via deep seal trapped gullies incorporating a minimum water seal of 85mm or similar.

Decision Notice

Would you please forward a copy of the decision notice to this office quoting our reference. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me on 01276 454323, quoting the reference cited at the beginning of this letter.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Paxman
Development Planning Officer

cc: Gregory Gray Asociates, 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, GU52 7SL

Application No	Received	Sonning	Listed By
VAR/2001/3562	14 03 01		Cllr Rose.

Applicant: **Holme Park Sonning Ltd.**
Location : **Land to the North of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning.**
Proposal : **Proposed variation of condition 01 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.**

1. **Planning History** – There have been three previous applications for the redevelopment of the site for residential dwellings. The most recent being in 1993, for the erection of 13 detached houses. All of these applications have been refused planning permission. However in 1996 planning permission was granted, subject to conditions, for the change of use of a 1.9ha site of agricultural land to Woodland Burial ground (45032). The committee report and decision notice are attached.

2. **Proposal** – The proposed application is for the variation of condition 01 of application 45032, which is the standard 'development must be begun before the expiration of five years' condition to extend the validity of the planning permission. The proposed development is for the creation of a woodland burial site, which involves the creation of a burial ground within an evolving woodland and wildlife sanctuary, on a 1.9hectare site. There would also be an ancillary car park with approximately 10 spaces.

3. **Consultations** -
   - ***Sonning Parish Council:*** Object to the proposed development (see attached comments).
   - ***Highways:*** A highways objection to the proposed development would be unlikely to be upheld on appeal.
   - ***Minerals:*** No objection.
   - ***Environmental Health:*** No objection.
   - ***Policy and Plans:*** No objection.
   - ***Conservation Architect:*** No objection.
   - ***Environment Agency:*** No objection subject to conditions.
   - ***Ecologist:*** The site is located within 30m of a known Great Crested Newt breeding pond
   - ***English Nature:*** 'No comment.'
   - ***Letters:*** There have been 6 letters of objection received. These objections can be summarised as follows:
     - Impact upon the highway safety of the road.
     - Impact upon the water table.
     - There is no need for an additional burial ground.
     - Impact upon the ecology of the area.

4. **Appraisal** – Main issues:

   A. Change in Circumstances Since Original Approval.
   B. Concerns of the Parish Council and Local Residents.

A. Change in Circumstances Since Original Approval.

The concept of a woodland burial ground was outlined during the original application as 'a burial ground within an evolving woodland and wildlife sanctuary'. The burial ground would have no headstones, memorials or formal footpaths. The graves would be identified by small plaques at ground level. The maintenance of the site would be kept to a minimum, with grass cutting occurring around twice a year, with no chemicals or manmade substances used on the land. Bio-degradable cardboard coffins and shrouds are encouraged, as opposed to traditional wooden coffins. The whole of the area would be allowed unrestricted public access and the applicants had agreed to restrict the number of burials to 50 per year, and the times of burial to between 10.00am and 2.30pm.

The circumstances for the determination of this application, remain largely unchanged from those at the time of the determination of the original application. The site is identified within the Loddon Area Local Plan (adopted) as being within the Separation of Settlements, Setting of Settlements and the Sonning Conservation Area. These designations have remained largely unchanged within the emerging Wokingham District Local Plan, with the site still being located within the Green Gap/Wedge and within the Sonning Conservation area. However the site is no longer identified within the emerging plan as the setting of settlement. Therefore the main policy emphasis on this site has remained largely unchanged.

The main change in circumstance is that the site is now within 30m of the a known breeding ground for the Great Crested Newt. As such, the development would require a licence from the DEFRA. Therefore, it is suggested that an additional condition be imposed requiring a full newt survey and mitigation scheme for the creation and running of the woodland burial ground. This scheme should be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the start of development.

B. Concerns of the Parish Council and Local Residents.

One of the main concerns regarding this proposed development, from both the Parish Council and local residents has been the level of the water table on the application site. It has been stated from a number of sources that the application site has a high or varying water table, which maybe at risk of pollution should the graves be below the water level. The Environment Agency withdrew their objections to the original development on the first application and have maintain their 'no objection' subject to conditions stance on this subsequent application.

A second concern of local residents centres on the increase in traffic movements along Sonning Lane. The Highway Authority objected to the original application. However the planning officer considered that the highway's objection to the use and scale of the development was not sustainable and that the proposed condition controlling the hours of burials to outside peak times, between 10.00am and 2.30pm, would limit the proposed development's impact to an acceptable level.

5. **Conclusion** – There has been no material change in circumstance since the approval of the previous application, for the creation of a woodland burial ground. As such the proposed development, subject to the imposition of suitable conditions would have no significant detrimental impact upon the character and amenity of the conservation area or the highway safety of the surrounding road network.

6. **Recommendation** – To GRANT planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

2. No burials shall take place within 10metres of a land drain or ditch.

3. No burial shall take place within 250metres of any well, borehole or spring used for potable water supply, nor within 30metres of any other spring.

4. At the time of excavation of any grave a minimum depth of 2metres shall be attained between the bottom of any grave and the water table below.

5. No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table at the time of excavation, and soakaways shall not in any event exceed 3metres in depth below the ground level of the site as exists at the date of this approval.

6. No burials shall take place on the site until a method statement regarding the carrying out of a ground water survey and preparation of a report by a specialist consultant has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The statement shall consider all aspects necessary to demonstrate compliance with conditions 02, 03, and 04 at all times of the year.

7. No burials shall take place on the site until the approved ground water survey has been carried out and a report submitted in accordance with the approved method statement and the approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority of these details.

8. Burials shall not take place until the areas within the site that comply with condition 02, 03 and 04 have been identified on a plan which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No burial shall take place on the site outside those areas agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority based on the approved ground water survey.

9. No burial shall take place other than in accordance with an overall design specification to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority with regards to the dimensions, depth, spacing and location of all graves. The burials shall be thereafter carried out in accordance with the approved overall design specifications.

10. No burials shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, a scheme of landscaping, which shall include details of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land.

11. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the creation of the car parking area on the site. Any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the first burial on the site, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with others of a similar size or species.

12. No burial shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of the proposed indiginous boundary hedging. All planting comprised in the approved details shall be carried out in the first planting season following the creation of the car park area on the site. Any trees and planting which within a period of 5 years from the first burial on the site, die, are removed or becomes seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with other of a similar size or species.

13. Only indigenous trees shall be used to mark each grave.

14. A landscaping, maintenance and ecological management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any burials taking place on the site, and the site shall thereafter be managed in accordance with the agreed management plan.

15. The proposed car parking shall be provided on the site prior to any burials taking place and details of surfacing materials to be used on the car park shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to work commencing on site, and only those approved surfacing materials shall be used.

16. Details of any memorial walls shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any such provision on site and only those approved memorials or memorial walls shall be provided on site.

17. Burials shall only take place on the site between the hours of 10.00am and 2.30pm.

18. The site shall remain available as informal amenity space with unrestricted public access at all times following commencement of burials on the site.

19. No machinery shall be stored at the site at any time.

20. Prior to the start of development on the site a full newt survey and mitigation scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall then be implemented on site in accordance with a timetable to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reasons.

1. In pursuance of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2, 3 & 4. To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

5. To prevent pollution of groundwater.

6, 7 & 8. In the interest of proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

9. In the interests of the proper planning of the area in terms of decency and amenity.

10, 11 & 12. In the interests of visual amenity.

13 & 14. In order to protect the character and amenity of the locality.

15. In order to secure the appropriate parking provision on the site and to ensure its satisfactory appearance.

16. In order to protect the character and amenity of the locality.

17. In the interests of surrounding residential amenity and to avoid peak time traffic movements on the surrounding highway network in the interest of the road safety.

18 & 19. In accordance with the submitted details and to ensure the appropriate use of the site.

20. In the interests of the future health and safety of a protected species.

Informatives.

1. You are advised, in compliance with the Town and Country Planning (General Development procedure)(England) (Amendment) Order 2000, that the following policies and/or proposals in the development plan are relevant to this decision:
   Berkshire Structure Plan: C2, C5, C6, EN2, EN5, EN8, EN9.
   Loddon Area Local Plan: LTV2, LC1, LC2 LC10, LBE1, LBE12, LBE14.
   Wokingham District Local Plan: WOS3, WCC1, WCC2, WNC3, WNC5, WBE1, WHE2 and WIC2.

2. The site is with 30 metres of a known Great Crested Newt breeding pond. As such the applicants must secure a DEFRA licence prior to the start of any works upon the site.

3. The is evidence that the site is within an area that has a high water table. It is for this reason that conditions 02, 03 and 04 are very important. The failure to comprehensively carry out the required surveying of the site, under condition 07 could result in the pollution of the water table within the area.

Nicola Lake.

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATION SHEET

PLANNING APPLICATION. APPLICATION No. VAR/2001/3562

Officer NICOLA LAKE

Parish SONNING.

Proposal VARIATION TO CONDITION 1 OF CONSENT 45032 TO ALLOW FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME TO START CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO WOODLAND BUTIEL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK

Address LAND NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND SONNING LANE

Applicant HOLME PARK SONNING Ltd C/O GREGORY GREY ASSOCIATES

The Parish Council has the following comments.

1. The original application to permit woodland burials was strongly opposed by the Parish Council and parishioners on the grounds that the site was unsuitable for such use.

2. In spite of this permission was granted. One of the conditions was that a borehole should be sunk in order to confirm that the water table was lower than that required permitting such burials.

3. Since that permission was granted the Parish Council have installed a pond in the area adjacent to the site. When excavation commenced the contractor became aware of water two feet below the surface. The pond covers a large area and the conditions were the same in all parts. This indicates that the whole area is situated above a perch water table where such burials should not be permitted.

4. The ditch, which runs along side the application site and into ditches in Sonning Lane, is presently full of flowing water, only one or two feet below the ground level of the site. This is due to the extreme weather conditions experienced this year but indications are that this will continue. It is essential that Officers view this for themselves as it clearly illustrates that the water level is only two feet, below ground level. This would make it totally impossible to comply with the requirement that a minimum depth of two metres be maintained between the bottom of any graves and the water table.

01189697753
David Bates 01189697753
20-AUG-01 15:57 PAGE: 2

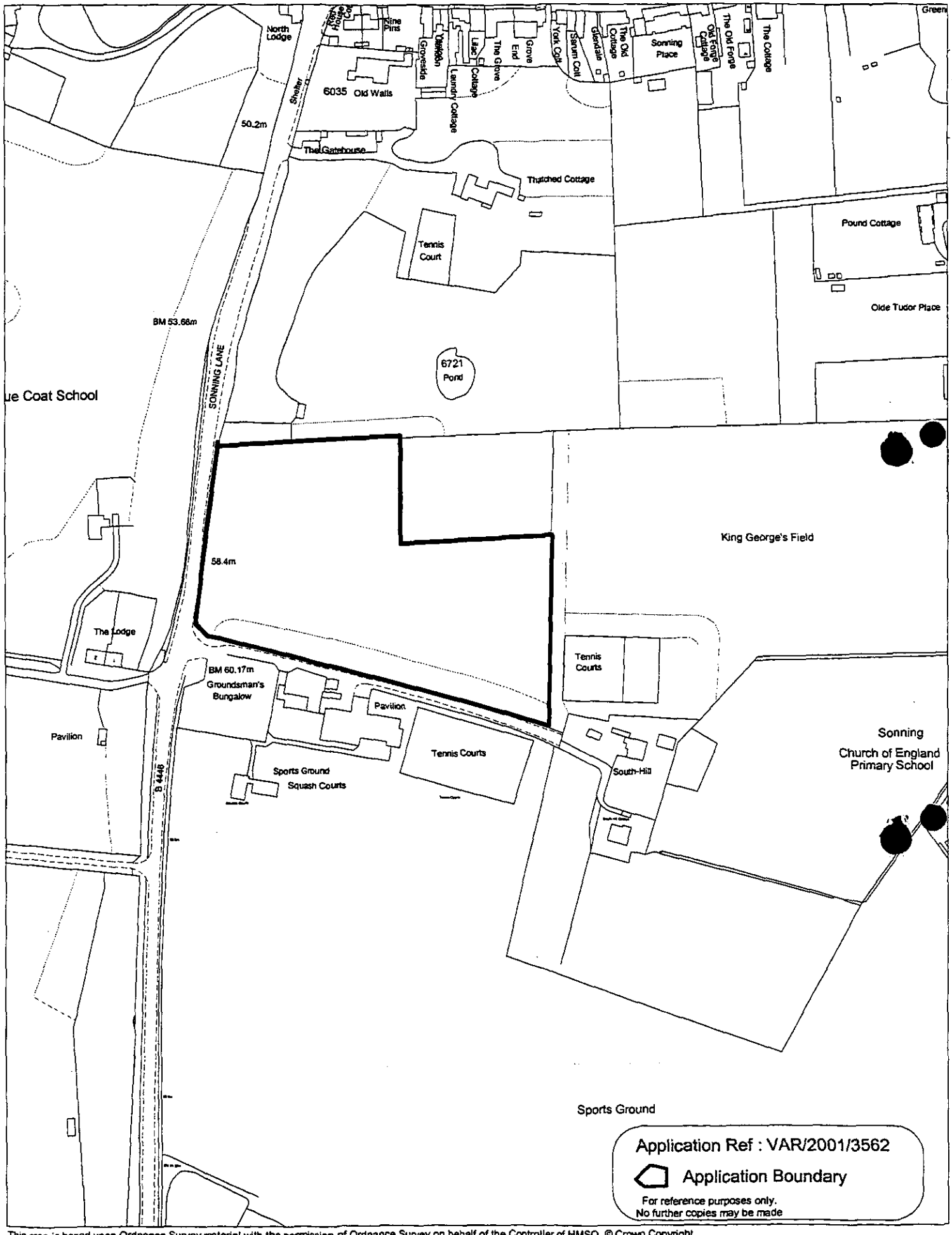
5. It is understood that highways initial objections were withdrawn. It is now five years since the original application was granted and in that time traffic through Sonning has increased considerably. Changes to the road system in Reading have resulted in a noticeable increase in traffic in Sonning Lane. With further development in Thames Valley Park and other areas it is anticipated that traffic in Sonning will rise by 17% in the next few years. A recent approval for a Rowing Lake in Sonning Eye will add a further 5% to that figure.

6. The site has continued to deteriorate under the current ownership and is presently under an enforcement notice. If WDC are of a mind to approve this variation it is essential that additional conditions, to ensure that action is taken to clear and fence the site securely prior to any on site work being commenced, are added to the existing ones.

7. For the above reasons, Sonning Parish Council urges Wokingham District Council to refuse this application

L. A. Bates (Clerk to the Council).

11 April 2001



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Development Control Section, Environmental Services, Wokingham District Council.
12 September 2001

Scale: 1 : 2500

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Application No. 45032 **Received 14.09.95** **SONNING**

Applicant : HOLME PARK SONNING LTD
Location : LAND BETWEEN COUNTY SPORTS GROUND AND THATCHED COTTAGE, SONNING LANE
Proposal : PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF VACANT AGRICULTURAL LAND TO BURIAL GROUND

1. **Planning History** - Since 1980 there have been 3 applications for housing on this site for 4, houses, 6 houses and 13 houses. All were refused and the 4 and 13 house schemes were dismissed at appeal.

2. **Proposal** - Is to provide a woodland burial ground on the 1.9 ha. site with an associated car park (approximately 10 parking spaces).

3. **Consultations** -
   - ***Sonning Parish Council :*** Attached.
   - ***Highways :*** Recommend refusal.
   - ***Environmental Health :*** No comments or observations.
   - ***Leisure and Technical Services :*** Require informatives.
   - ***Berkshire County Council :*** No strategic concerns.
   - ***National Rivers Authority :*** Requests conditions.
   - ***Neighbour/Local Comment :*** Inappropriate in Conservation Area; should be a public area; should be in control of Parish Council; offensive use; traffic problems ie. generation, poor access, increase use of A4 junction, parking problems in the area, school pupil safety, ecological impact, pollution.

4. **Appraisal** - The concept of woodland burial involves the creation of a burial ground within an evolving woodland and wildlife sanctuary. There are no head stones or memorials, and graves are identified by a small plaque at ground level. There are no formal footpaths. Maintenance is minimal with grass cutting on perhaps two occasions per year and no chemicals or manmade substances are used on the land. Bio-degradable cardboard coffins or shrouds are encouraged, as opposed to traditional wooden coffins. The whole of the area would be allowed unrestricted public access and the applicants have agreed to restrict the number of burials to a maximum of 50 per year, and times of burials to be between 10.00am and 2.30pm.

   The main determining issues are:

   A. Impact on the Conservation Area and Local Environment (Loddon Area Local Plan - LTV2, LC1, LC2, LC10, LBE1, LBE12 and LBE14; Berkshire Structure Plan - C2, C5, C6, EN2, EN5, EN8, EN9)
   B. Highway Considerations

A. The site is located in the rural area in a position designated by the Loddon Area Local Plan as being of importance to the Separation of Settlements and also the setting of the Sonning Village. The site is within the Conservation Area. There is currently no agricultural use of the land.

In terms of rural area policy the use is considered to be an appropriate exception to the restraint policy LTV2 in that it represents a purpose wholly appropriate to a rural area. That policy states that the acceptability of all proposals will also be judged against the provisions of the other relevant policies contained in Loddon Area Local Plan.

With regard to the Separation of Settlements (Policy LC1) the proposal would not detract from the undeveloped appearance of the location and the tree planting would enhance the visual separation. The small associated car park area would be unmarked and have a loose surface thereby preventing any urbanising effect. For similar reasons the setting of Sonning would not be adversely affected (Policy LC2). With regard to Policy LBE1 and the design of new development the proposal would make a positive contribution to the character and setting of the area, contribute to an attractive environment and retain important natural landscape features.

LBE12 seeks the protection and enhancement of Conservation Areas and requires that open spaces, trees and views within them be protected and enhanced. LBE14 states that inappropriate development will normally be refused. It is considered that the proposed woodland burial ground would protect and enhance the distinctive visual character of the locality.

The site has however been studied in a recent ecological survey which has identified the site as the most important piece of dry, wildflower-rich grass land in Sonning. The reuse of the site in accordance with the proposal would alter the ecology of the site, eventually to a habitat which is much more common in Sonning. The County Council has expressed an interest in studying the survey, with a mind to designating the site as a Wildlife Heritage Site.

The potential change in the ecology of the site could be judged as contravening Policies LBE1 and LBE12 in that important natural features would be lost and that an aspect of the environment that makes up the distinctive character would not be protected.

Policy LC10 states that "In considering proposals for development which would affect wildlife habitats the District Council will take into account the impact of the proposals and, where development is otherwise acceptable, will seek to ameliorate that impact and ensure, where appropriate, the creation and future management of new habitats for wildlife. If the site proves to be of sufficient nature conservation importance any proposal which would lead to damage sufficient to remove or adversely affect that importance will be refused". The proposal would certainly contravene that policy.

The attached comments from the Parish Council express concern about the contamination of local springs and watercourses because of the geology of the site. The National Rivers Authority has expressed similar concerns but does not consider the Parish comments to provide a conclusive argument. The National Rivers Authority would require a minimum of 2 metres between the bottom of the graves and the water table. The applicants are not willing to carry out a groundwater survey of the site before their planning application is considered but have agreed that a condition to ensure that an appropriate survey is carried out before burials take place. Such a survey would locate the areas of the site (if any) where the National Rivers Authority 2 metres requirement would be met.

B. The Highway Authority is opposed to the proposal because of the increase in traffic movements at the access junction with Sonning Lane, which is substandard in terms of visibility.

The access road junction is used jointly with Berkshire County Sports Ground, the Tennis Club and some residential properties. It is not considered that upto 50 burials per year and associated after visits will give rise to a level of danger which would warrant a refusal or the removal of established roadside hedges. The burials are unlikely to conflict with the peak time weekend use of the sports ground, the restricted hours of 10.00am to 2.30pm would mean that evening use of the sports ground access would not increase as a consequence of

this proposal, and would also mean that main times of school traffic and pedestrians would be avoided, and also peak am and pm traffic periods on the surrounding network would not be affected.

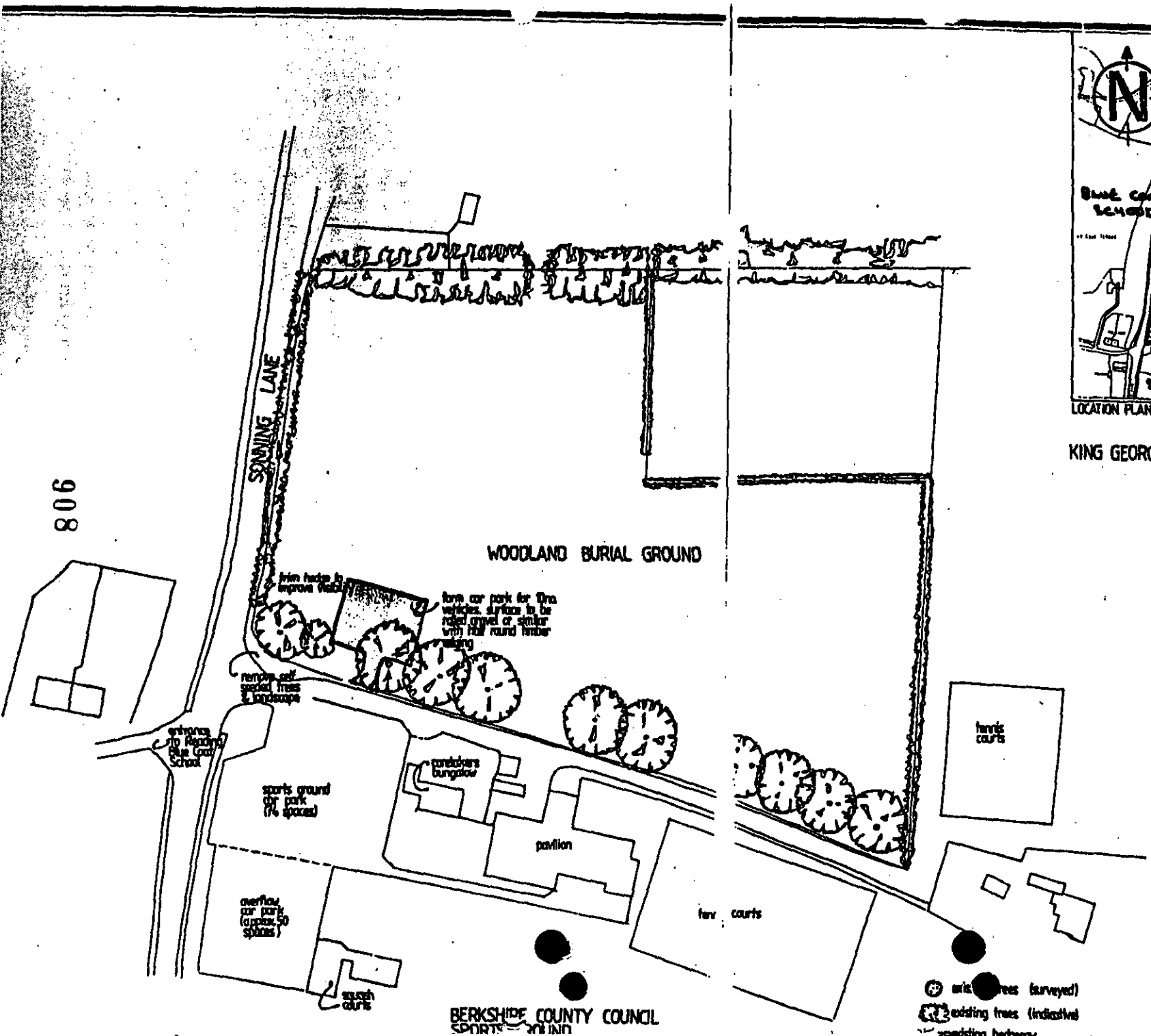
5. **Conclusion** - It is not considered that there are any sustainable highway objections to the proposed use and its scale. Any approval would require appropriate conditions to ensure that National Rivers Authority requirements for a minimum distance between the bottom of graves and the water table, could at all times be met, prior to burials taking place on the site. It is not considered that the proposed parking area or the planting of trees would adversely affect the setting or separation of Sonning from other settlements. No buildings are proposed in the application.

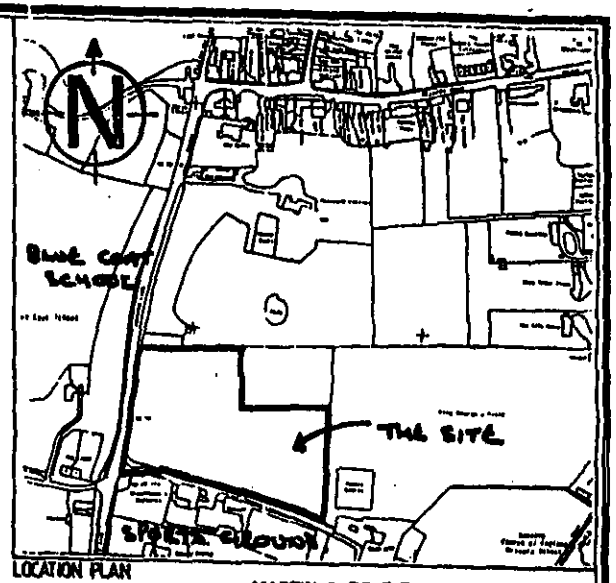
   The ecological quality of the site is high and uncommon in Sonning, whereas the woodland habitats and environment are more common. The loss of the valuable existing ecology of the site is inappropriate and unacceptable.

6. **Recommendation** - REFUSE planning permission for the following reason :

   The development of the site as proposed would alter and adversely affect the ecological and wildlife habitat value of the site and would therefore be contrary to policies LTV2, LBE1, LBE12 and LC10 of Loddon Area Local Plan; and policies C2, EN5 and EN8 of Berkshire Structure Plan

GR/TAM
18.4.96.





KING GEORGE'S FIELD

MARTIN & POLE PLANNING
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15032

Martin&Pole Planning

Oxford House, 30 Broad Street, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 1AU.
Tel (0734) 771979. Fax (0734) 771981.

SITE
Land to north of Berkshire County Council Sports Ground Sonning Lane Sonning

PROJECT
Change of use to woodland burial ground with associated car park

TITLE
Site plan & location detail

SCALE
1:500 1:2500

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATION SHEET

APPLICATION NO: 45032

PLANNING APPLICATION

Parish	SONNING
Proposal	CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
Address	LAND AT SONNING LANE SONNING
Applicant	HOLME PARK SONNING LTD

Sonning Parish Council has the following views.

1. The land concerned has the been the subject, during recent years, of at least two planning applications for housing development. Twice the applications have been turned down on appeal and on each occasion the Inspector has pointed to the importance of this piece of land as a break between settlements and as an important open aspect to the entrance to Sonning village. The Parish Council is of the view that the correct future use of this piece of land is as open managed grassland and woodland for amenity use. In keeping with the conservation area, of which it is a part, it should be maintained as a pleasant rural aspect.

2. The Parish Council opposes the use of the land for burial purposes (even for woodland burial) because for many people this will destroy its value for amenity and pleasure purposes. The Council also considers that it is highly likely that the land is unsuitable for burial because of the water table and drainage on the land. An NRA report may confirm this matter.

3. Sonning is already suffering from the effects of excess traffic and does not wish to see any further development which would bring more people and vehicles from outside the area into the village on a frequent basis more or less in perpetuity. The site is opposite the entrance to the Blue Coat School and beside the entrance to the Berkshire County Sports Ground. The road visiblity on Sonning Lane at this point is poor and it is important not to increase the traffic using the entrances. The Parish Council opposes the proposal for a parking area on the land because this would encourage more vehicles. It has to be recognised that a cemetery of any sort will create additional traffic not only at the time of burials but also to a greater extent when people come to pay respects to the memory of those buried. Any form of memorial will lead to additional people and traffic. The site is not eassily accessed by public transport nor would the Parish Council wish it to be.

909

continued.....

4. Though the plan attached to the application shows the owner to have ownership of part of the lane on the southern boundary of the site, (and thereby to be able to gain access to the proposed car park via the established lane) the Parish Council doubts this to be the case.

5. This land is within the conservation area and therefore there is a special requirement for particular regard to be had to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the special character of such areas. Mr Leedale, of Martin and Pole, in his covering letter to the application makes this very point. He then goes on to state that the land is unkempt and of very poor visual quality. The District Council should be aware that for the last two years the owner of the land appears to have allowed tipping of Controlled Waste on the land. The Parish Council have made representations to the County Waste Regulation Authority for this to be stopped and for the owner to be required to clear the waste. The Authority have taken no effective action and the owner appears to have taken no action to prevent tipping nor to clear the waste already dumped. The Parish Council is of the impression that under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 it is an offence for such waste to be tipped without a licence and it is also an offence for the land owner to allow such tipping without a licence. All this has been pointed out to the CWRA but to no avail. The Parish Council continues to make representations on this matter.
However the reason the piece of land is unkempt is because the owner chooses to manage it that way and to allow the tipping of waste. This is not a satisfactory reason for allowing a change of use. A few years ago when the land was in the same ownership it was maintained in good order but that is no longer the case.

6. The application makes no mention of the proposed method of digging the graves or tree planting. The Parish Council would not wish for excavator equipment to be used regularly and frequently on the land. Where would any equipment be stored? The Parish Council would not wish to see any buildings (permanent or temporary) on the land for these purposes.

7. The application is short of detail in several other respects. These include such matters as ; grave layout and markings; tree species and layout; memorial design and access details to any memorial; details of permitted remembrance tokens; long term management arrangements; management of those areas not subject to graves or trees; details of how second burials would be arranged. These details should form part of the application before it is considered.

8. The Parish Council asks the District Council to refuse the application and to take whatever action is possible to ensure that the owner manages the site to provide a pleasing aspect and complies with the law concerning waste tipping.

L. A. Bates (Clerk to the Council).

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATION SHEET

PLANNING APPLICATION APPLICATION NO. 45032

Parish SONNING

Proposal CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL SITE WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK.

Address LAND ON SONNING LANE SONNING

Applicant HOLME PARK LTD

The Parish Council wishes to make further points of objection to this proposal.

General Features.

The proposal for a cemetery is appropriate and acceptable for a township and for the use of a close urban area but is totally alien to the character and acceptable landscape of Sonning, a traditional English Thames side village with a Church, Churchyard and burial ground. The discription 'Woodland Burial Site' is a total misnomer posing many managerial and environmental problems.

Management.

The site would be, for many years, an unkempt wilderness with a grid of lettered and numbered concrete blocks (the only way of identifying a personal burial plot!). Regimented lines of excavation and burial mounds, some planted with tree whips which could not hope to mature to 7ft centres and if they did survive be in danger of being cut down!!. The site would require a building to house maintenance and records staff to accurately identify and locate burial plots and ensure against exhumation in such a concentrated use.
A further feature of a so called 'Woodland Burial Ground' is the erection of memorial walls which together with admin buildings, access roads, for hearses and funeral processions, leaves little opportunity to call the area environmental woodland and is an unacceptable proposal in a village.
It is understood that the maximum depth of burial is 4' 3" in loose earth which would give a cover of approximately 3' 0". In attracting wildlife to the site this would lead to serious and disturbing problems due to foxes and badgers in the area.

CONTINUED

Soil and Geology

The Ordnance Survey Geological Map identifies the geology of the site in, which the bodies will be interred, to be a strata of Plateau Gravel over laying Reading Beds which in turn over lay Upper Chalk and Flood Plain Gravel Strata. (See attached site plan and geological section). These strata are very porous and further excavation in the upper layers will make them more so.

There is an indication that the ground water flow is down the site towards Pearson Road and a cut off trench has already been excavated to some extent to divert this water to a ditch in Sonning Lane. There is also an existing pond in the vicinity of the level between the Plateau Gravel and Reading Beds which could again be associated with the ground water flowing from the proposed site. To excavate and bury in this porous ground would seriously pollute the ground water flows which permeate down towards Pearson Road. The ground and geological strata are totally unsuitable for burial purposes.

It is understood that Woodley Town Council sought expert advise for a burial site in Bulmershe and were advised that the ground was unsuitable for such use. The geology of the Bulmershe site is identical to the Sonning site i.e. Plateau Gravel under laying Reading Beds.

For these and the reasons already submitted tge Parish Council urge you to refuse this application.

Lesley Bates (Clerk to the Council) 20 November 1995

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2001 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.12 PM

Present: Mr KA Malvern (Chairman), Mrs JA Lissaman (Vice-Chairman), Mrs DC Beatty Mr MJ Bryant, Mr SR Conway, Mr RH Cundy, Mr JL Earnshaw, Mrs MA Long, Mrs M Robertson, Mr ND Rose and Mr AJ Ross.

Also present: Mrs ANMC Drake.

PART I

67. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 August 2001 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

68. APOLOGIES

An Apology for absence was submitted from Mr. TP Dredge.

69. ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED: That the order of business detailed on the agenda be varied.

TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK, LAND TO THE NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND SONNING LANE SONNING, FOR HOLME PARK SONNING LTD

The Committee considered a report about this application set out on Agenda pages 897 to 916.

In considering the proposal, Members expressed concern regarding the potential impact on the local environment of burials at the site and asked a number of questions on this matter. It was

RESOLVED: That Application No: 2001/3562 be deferred to enable further discussion to take place with the Environment Agency in order to establish the safety of the site for the proposed use, in the light of prolific flooding in the area.

77. APPLICATION NO: 2001/3562, PROPOSED VARARION OF CONDITION 1 OF CONSENT 45032 TO ALLOW FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME TO START CHANGE OF USE OF LAND

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (NORTH) SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1ST MAY 1996 FROM 7.30 PM TO 9.10 PM

Present: Mr.S.R.Conway (Chairman), Mr.N.D.Rose (Vice-Chairman), Mrs D.F.Carpenter, Mrs.S.M.Dovey, Mrs A.N.M.C.Drake, Mr.J.R.Hill, Carol.A.Jewell, Mr.K.K.K.Kerr, Mrs.J.A.Lissaman, Mr.G.Parkinson and Fiona Rolls.

Also present under Standing Order 45(4) - Simon Etheridge.

140 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 3rd April 1996 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

141 APPLICATION NO. 45032 PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF VACANT AGRICULTURAL LAND TO BURIAL GROUND, LAND BETWEEN COUNTY SPORTS GROUND AND THATCHED COTTAGE, SONNING LANE FOR HOLME PARK SONNING LTD

The Sub-Committee considered a report about this application, set out on pages 730 to 739 of the Agenda.

Members noted that six further letters of objection and a letter from the applicant's agent, which was circulated at the meeting, had been received. No further formal comments had been received from Berkshire County Council.

Members were of the view that as the only reason submitted to support a refusal was on ecological grounds they were minded to approve the application subject to appropriate conditions being included.

RESOLVED: That Application No. 45032 be approved subject to the following conditions amongst others:

1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission;

2) A management plan to be submitted to and approved by the District Council;

3) A groundwater survey to be carried out before any burials take place;

4) Size and location of any memorial or memorial wall to be approved by the District Council;

5) Material used on the car park to be approved by the District Council;

6) Operating hours to be between 10.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. only;

7) Tree types to be approved by the District Council.

NOTE: Mr.N.D.Rose asked to be recorded as voting against the decision of the Sub-Committee.

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACTS

NOTIFICATION OF CONSENT FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

To: Holme Park Sonning Ltd
C/o Martin & Pole Planning
Salisbury House
Milton Road
Wokingham
Berkshire RG11 1DB

Application No: 45032

Proposal: Change of use to Woodland Burial Ground with ancillary car park.

Parish: Sonning

Location: Land to North of B.C.C. Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning

The Wokingham District Council in pursuance of their powers under the above Acts and Regulations hereby GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION for carrying out the above development in accordance with the application and the accompanying plans submitted to the Council subject to compliance with the following conditions, the reasons for which are specified hereunder.

CONDITION(S)

01 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.(N4)

02 No burials shall take place within 10 metres of a land drain or ditch.

03 No burials shall take place within 250 metres of any well, borehole or spring used for potable water supply, nor within 30 metres of any other spring.

04 A minimum depth of 2 metres shall be maintained at all times between the bottom of any grave and the water table.

05 No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table, and soakaways shall not in any event exceed 3 metres in depth below the ground level of the site as exists at the date of this approval.

06 No burials shall take place on the site until a method statement regarding the carrying out of a ground water survey and preparation of a report by a specialist consultant has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The statement shall consider all aspects necessary to demonstrate compliance with Conditions 02, 03 and 04 at all times of the year.

07 No burials shall take place on the site until the approved ground water survey has been carried out and a report submitted in accordance with the approved method statement.

08 Burials shall not take place until the areas within the site that comply with Conditions 02, 03 and 04 have been identified on a plan which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No burials shall take place on the site outside those areas agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority based on the approved ground water survey.

09 No burials shall take place other than in accordance with an overall design specification to be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the dimensions, depth, spacing and location of all graves. The burials shall be thereafter carried out in accordance with the approved overall design specification.

10 No burials shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, a scheme of landscaping, which shall include details of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land.

11 All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the creation of the car park area on the site. Any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the first burial on the site die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with others of similar size and species.

12 No burials shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, details of the proposed indigenous boundary hedging. All planting comprised in the approved details shall be carried out in the first planting season following the creation of the car park area on the site. Any trees and plants which within a period of 5 years from the first burial on site, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the following planting season with others of a similar size or species.

13 Only indigenous trees shall be used to mark each grave.

14 A landscaping, maintenance and ecological management plan shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any burials taking place on the site, and the site shall thereafter be managed in accordance with the agreed management plan.

15 The proposed car park shall be provided on site prior to any burials taking place and details of surface materials to be used on the car park shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to work commencing on site, and only those approved surfacing materials shall be used.

16 Details of any memorials or memorial walls shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any such provision on site and only those approved memorials or memorial walls shall be provided on site.

17 Burials shall only take place on site between the hours of 10.00am and 2.30pm.

18 The site shall remain available as informal amenity space with unrestricted public access at all times following the commencement of burials on the site.

19 No machinery shall be stored at the site at any time.

REASON(S)

01 REASON This condition is deemed to be attached by virtue of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.(N4R)

02 REASON To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

03 REASON To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

04 REASON To prevent the pollution of the water environment.

05 REASON To prevent pollution of groundwater.

06 REASON In the interest of the proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

07 REASON In the interest of the proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

08 REASON In the interest of the proper planning of the area and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

09 REASON In the interests of the proper planning of the area in terms of decency and amenity.

10 REASON In the interests of visual amenity.(N13R)

11 REASON In the interests of visual amenity.(N13R)

12 REASON In the interests of visual amenity.(N13R)

13 REASON In order to protect the character and amenities of the locality.(N18R)

14 REASON In order to protect the character and amenities of the locality.(N18R)

15 REASON In order to secure the appropriate parking provision on site and to ensure its satisfactory appearance.

16 REASON In order to protect the character and amenities of the locality.(N18R)

17 REASON In the interest of surrounding residential amenity and to avoid peak time traffic movements on the surrounding highway network in the interest of road safety.

18 REASON In accordance with the submitted details and to ensure the appropriate use of the site.

19 REASON In the interest of the amenity of the Conservation Area.

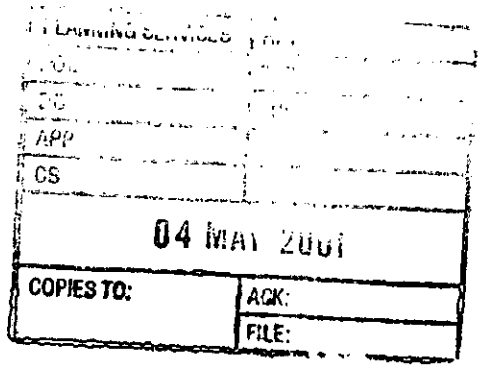
Date 4th July 1996

Head of Development Control

Note : Would you please ensure that the Red Public Notice relating to this planning application which the Council sent to you to put on display is now removed, if this has not already been done. This will avoid any confusion by local residents as to whether further applications have been made, and will assist in keeping the countryside and townscapes tidy.

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassociates.co.uk



Miss. N. Lake,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

3rd May 2001
Our Ref: SL/00/180

0118 974 6484 (3 pages)

Dear Miss. Lake,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

I write in respect of the above application and our telephone conversation today.

For ease of reference I attach the Environment Agency letter confirming that they have no objection subject to imposition of conditions. These were imposed on the extant permission.

I also reiterate the nature of this application. You will be aware of the provisions of Circular 11/95 insofar as they relate to the renewal of planning permissions. At paragraph 60 it states that such applications should only be refused where:

(a) There has been a material change in circumstances such as planning policy since the original permission was granted.
(b) Continued failure to commence development would contribute to uncertainty about the future of development in the locality.
(c) The application is premature because the permission still has a reasonable time to run.

The material change in circumstances are;

(1) removal of a layer of constraint in the emerging local plan; and
(2) an acknowledged shortfall in burial space to which I have referred you.

On this basis I trust permission will be forthcoming.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale
Enc.

Our ref: -SP\2001\003440\001
Your ref: VAR/2001/3562
Date: 1 May 2001

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

District Planning Officer
Wokingham District Council
Council Offices, Shute End,
PO Box 157
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG11 1BN

For the attention of: Nicola Lake

Dear Madam

PROPOSAL: Proposed Variation To Condition 1 Of Consent 45032 To Allow For An Extension Of Time To Start Change Of Use Of Land To Woodland Burial Ground With Ancillary Car-Park.
LOCATION: Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning

Thank you for your letter dated 23 March 2001, which was received on 28 March 2001. You are asked to quote the following reference in any correspondence: **SU77NE/1/16.** I apologise for the delay in replying, and trust that the Environment Agency's comments, as set out below, will still be taken into consideration.

The Environment Agency has no objection, in principle, to the proposed development provided that the following conditions are imposed on any planning permission granted:

Planning Conditions

CONDITION: No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table, and they shall not in any event exceed 3 metres in depth below existing ground level.
REASON: To prevent pollution of groundwater.

CONDITION: A minimum depth of 2 metres shall always be maintained between the bottom of any grave and the water table
REASON: To prevent pollution of groundwater.

Advice To Planning Authority: Land Drainage

We are not aware of any watercourses on the site, but should there be any, we advise that:
(1) they should not be culverted; and
(2) a buffer zone is left on either side of any watercourse, and
(3) culverted watercourses should not be built over, but should ideally be opened up and made a feature of the site.

Cont/d..

Environment Agency
Swift House, Frimley Business Park, Frimley, Camberley, Surrey GU16 7SQ
Telephone : 01276 454300 Fax : 01276 454301

Telephone : 01276 454300 Fax : 01276 454301

In any case, you should note that culverting of a watercourse requires the prior written approval of the local authority under the terms of the Public Health Act 1936, and the prior written consent of the Environment Agency under the terms of the Land Drainage Act 1991/Water Resources Act 1991. The Agency seeks to avoid culverting, and its consent for such works will normally be withheld.

Advice To Applicant: Groundwater Protection

Surface water from the car-park and access road, should discharge via deep seal trapped gullies incorporating a minimum water seal of 85mm or similar.

Decision Notice

Would you please forward a copy of the decision notice to this office quoting our reference. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me on 01276 454323, quoting the reference cited at the beginning of this letter.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Paxman
Development Planning Officer

cc: Gregory Gray Asociates, 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, GU52 7SL

Fax

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

DC	LAP
APP	
CS	

04 MAY 2001

COPIES TO:	ACK:
	FILE:

To Nicola Lake From Sarah Pasman

Company Wokingham D. C. Date 3/5/01

Fax 0118 974 6484 Pages 1 of 3

Nicola - re: Burial Ground in Sonning. The issue of the water table at this site has obviously been around for a while (see attached letter - don't know if you have seen this?). The site appears to be quite high, and having spoken to our groundwater people again, the water table should not be a problem in this area.

Digging trial pits (as suggested in attached letter) would determine depth of water-table, + therefore whether the 2 m allowance condition can be achieved, (& hence whether the burial ground is feasible).

Hope this helps - any further problems please call -

S Pasman.

If this fax is incomplete or illegible, please contact 01276 45 4323

Environment Agency
Frimley Office, Swift House, Frimley Business Park, Camberley, Surrey, GU16 5SQ
Tel: 01276 454300 Fax: 01276 454301

Our ref: *SU77NE/1/16/AMC/sch*
Your ref: *45032*
Reply to: *Anne-Marie Crane on 01734 535789*

Please quote our reference in all correspondence

Date: *9 February 1996*

NRA

National Rivers Authority
Thames Region

District Planning Officer
Wokingham District Council
Council Offices
Shute End
PO Box 157
Wokingham
Berkshire RG11 1BN

For the attention of Gary Raynor

Dear Sir

BURIAL GROUND, SONNING

I write further to your fax dated 23 January 1996 confirming our subsequent telephone conversation. Our comments on the paper presented by the Parish Council are as follows:

Groundwater Protection: contact Andrea Szabados on 01483 577655

The report as presented by the parish does not really provide a conclusive argument. As far as the cross-section goes, I agree that there are Plateau Gravels overlying Reading Beds overlying the Upper Chalk (but would point out that the Chalk is not underlain by flood plain gravel: - although that is present across the river, it lies on top of the Chalk). However, there is no data on depth to water table which is the critical part of our required condition.

The pond on the Reading Beds may be effectively contained within the clay of this stratum and fed only by rainwater, or it may be fed by groundwater seepages from the base of the Plateau Gravels or it may be fed by groundwater coming from a sandy layer within the Reading Beds. From the regional hydrogeology map for the Chalk, the water table within this aquifer is about 35maod in the Sonning area, so it should not be part of this problem.

CHARTER MARK
Awarded for excellence

cont'd ...

NAPM APPROVED RECYCLING

9 February 1996

Certainly there are flooded gravel pits across the river at about 40maod. This deposit is mapped as being separate from the Plateau Gravels, however it is possible that the Plateau Gravels themselves may support a perched water table above the Reading Beds.

The only way to resolve these issues would be to dig trial pits or install shallow boreholes in the proposed area (including one location by the northern and one by the southern boundaries of the site) to a depth extending the said 2 metres beneath the maximum depth of any grave (which itself would be about 2m I believe).

I hope this is useful to you. If I can be of further assistance please contact me again.

Yours faithfully

Chris Bedford pp

for ***Catchment Planning Manager (South East)***

AMC340.let.sch

Nicola Lake

From: info [info@ggassociates.co.uk]
Sent: 18 January 2002 16:48
To: nicola.lake@wokingham.gov.uk
Subject: Sonning

Miss Lake,

THE BURIAL GROUND SONNING

You and I spoke at the planning reception in mid-December. I think it is time to get the planning application back to committee. If the Environment Agency cannot be persuaded to respond then it is only reasonable to my Client to report their previous comments vis. a vis. no objections.

Please would you confirm that it will be on the agenda in February?

Mark Leedale

Need full address VAR / 2001 / 3562

NL 6B8

Nicola Lake

From:	Alastair Driver [alastair.driver@environment-agency.gov.uk]
Sent:	07 January 2002 11:34
To:	Sarah Paxman; nicola.lake@wokingham.gov.uk
Cc:	David Webb; Ian doyle; nigel.rose@ukgateway.net; andy.glencross@wokingham.gov.uk; mike.thorp@wokingham.gov.uk
Subject:	Proposed woodland burial ground at Sonning - URGENT

PLANNING SERVICES | HPT | POL | TLS | DC | ENF | APP | CS
10 JAN 2002
COPIES TO: | ACK: | FILE:

Dear Nicola and Sarah,
Following our recent conversations on the above matter, I am writing to urge that the above planning application is refused. I stress that I am doing this as a local "expert" and manager of the adjacent Ali's Pond LNR, as requested by District Councilor, Nigel Rose, and not in my capacity as Conservation Manager of the EA. Nevertheless the human health and wildlife impacts of the proposal are such that I believe that the EA has no alternative but to object in the strongest possible terms to the application. The key reasons for objection are as follows:
1. The application site, the LNR and the adjoining fields to the north and east, all contain a seasonal perched water table. In dry winters such as this one, there is little evidence of water at the surface and the ditches appear dry, but in wet winters such as last winter, the ditches are brim-full and water issues out of the ground. We discovered this water table when we excavated the LNR pond in March 1997. That was a fairly dry winter, but we still hit water about 3 feet below the surface of the ground in a gravel seam overlaying a thin layer of clay. Fortunately I took photos of this water table and I will e-mail you a couple of these in the next couple of days, once I've had them scanned in.
2. This pond was subsequently lined, but the liner stops a foot below ground level, so the groundwater still enters the pond in wet winters when the perched water table is high. The impact of organically enriched groundwater passing into this pond, which is now a Great Crested Newt breeding site and part of a protected nature reserve, would of course be very damaging.
3. The groundwater in this area drains dowslope in a northerly direction and feeds another Great Crested Newt pond in Dr Baileys garden, just to the north of the LNR (see map which I am faxing through). This pond is not lined and so is in continuous connection with any groundwater.
4. The seasonal groundwater eventually collects in ditches which pass through private gardens on their way down to the River Thames. The health implications of having human pathogens passing through these private properties (as well as into the LNR pond which is used by primary school children for pond-dipping), don't bear thinking about !
That's about it - please keep me informed of any progress and if anyone would like me to show them round the site, please let me know.
Yours sincerely,
Alastair Driver.

****
This message is confidential as it contains information about the person we are sending it to. If you have received this message by mistake, please delete it and do not copy it to anyone else.

This message contains information that you have requested from us please see our standard notice for details of how you may use that information. If the notice is not attached and you require a copy please telephone 0845 9333111 and ask for the customer contact.

For further information about the Environment Agency call the number above or look at our web site at http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk

****

Nicola Lake

From: Alastair Driver [alastair.driver@environment-agency.gov.uk]
Sent: 07 January 2002 15:20
To: *Sarah Paxman; nicola.lake@wokingham.gov.uk*
Cc: David Webb; Ian doyle; nigel.rose@ukgateway.net; andy.glencross@wokingham.gov.uk; mike.thorp@wokingham.gov.uk
Subject: *Proposed woodland burial ground at Sonning - Ali's Pond photos*

Ali's pond 1.jpg Ali's pond 2.jpg Ali's pond 3.jpg

Dear all, please find three photos attached :
1 and 2 are of the pond during construction, showing the seasonal water table, prior to the lining of the pond. NB this perched water table is at slightly different levels below the ground depending on the depth of the gravel and underlying clay in relation to the surface. In the first photo you can see that it is over 4 feet down in the main part of the pond, but probably only 3 feet down over the far (shallower) end. the second photo shows the latter close up.
3 shows childrens pond-dipping in action, to give you a feel for the level of usage the site sometimes gets.
Cheers, Alastair Driver

****
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****







FAX 0118 958 7151

PLANNING SERVICES	HPT 5154-3
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07 JAN 2002	
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To: Sarah Paxman, EA Dev't Planning
*Nicola Lake, Wokingham DC Planning

Dear Sarah / Nicola, Re: Woodland Burial Ground at Sonning

Please find attached:-

1. Copy of Ali's Pond LNR declaration notice.
2. Map showing location of 2 Great Crested Newt ponds adjacent to application site.
3. Article from English Nature's national magazine describing the site.

Cheers,
Alastair Prieve.

See also e-mail (now sent)
Photos to follow by e-mail.

Wildspace!

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) give some people their first experience of nature. For others it is their only option. Through a new grant scheme called Wildspace!, English Nature and the New Opportunities Fund are working together to encourage more LNR declarations and to improve and extend existing LNRs.



Local children meet the residents of Nix Wood

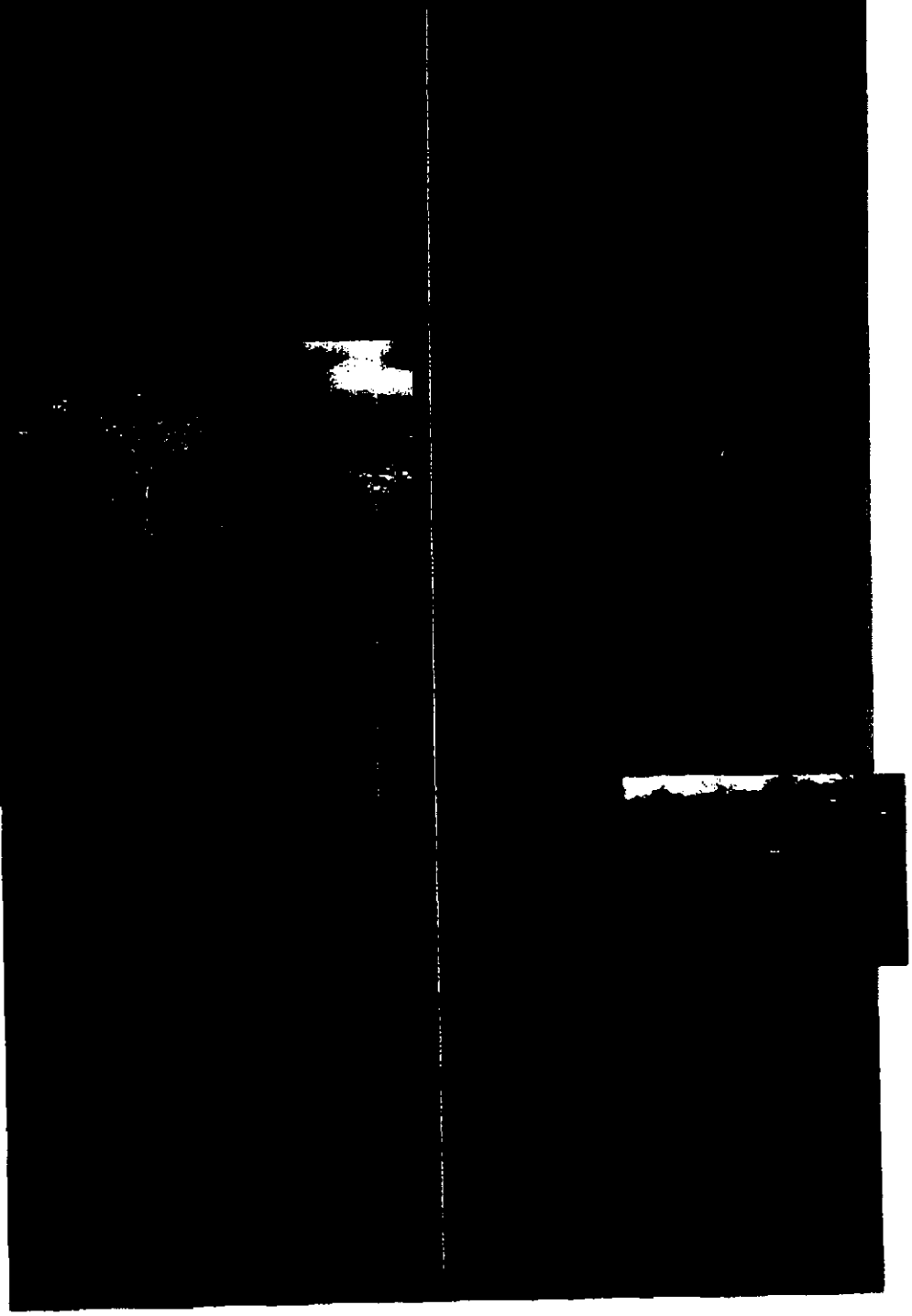
English Nature is keen to promote the many benefits a diverse and healthy natural environment can bring. LNRs are more than recreational parks, they are full of interesting wildlife. They offer a chance to experience green spaces, quiet places away from the noise of traffic or industry, and to see and hear the wealth of colour and sounds that diverse wildlife provides – a chance to relax in a bit of countryside without travelling miles.

Wildspace! is a new grant scheme, made possible by £4.6 million lottery award from the New Opportunities Fund Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities Programme. This, combined with funding from English Nature, means £5.2 million will be spent on LNRs over the next five years, a significant boost for the environmental improvement of community green spaces throughout England.



LNRs are very much about local people getting involved in improving their environment. English Nature wants LNR managers, local authorities, councils and local people, to come forward for a Wildspace! grant – between £5,000 and £25,000 is available for each project.

Recently declared LNRs that could benefit from Wildspace! include:



Nicola Lake

From: Matthew Rose [matthew.rose@environment-agency.gov.uk]
Sent: 20 November 2001 10:17
To: Nicola.Lake@wokingham.gov.uk
Subject: Proposed Woodland Burial Ground - Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning

Dear Nicola

Your Ref: NL/VAR/2001/3562

Further to your letter of the 26th September regarding the above.

The Environment Agency feels that there is little risk associated with the development, (similar advice to that contained in Sarah Paxman's early response in early August) as long as the recommended condition is implemented.

Considering the new development is to be a burial ground, there will not be a substantial increase in impermeable area, therefore the surface water run-off will not be any greater than that at present.

If the residents have any further worries, I can only assume that the Environmental Health Department may be of [redacted]ome use.

Regards

Matthew Rose
Development Planning Officer

****

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For further information about the Environment Agency call the number above or look at our web site at http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk

****

Nicola Lake

From: info [info@ggassociates.co.uk]
Sent: 04 December 2001 10:49
To: nicola.lake@wokingham.gov.uk
Subject: Sonning

Miss Lake,

WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND, SONNING

What with the cold spelland the traditional increase in mortality at this time of year; and the acknowledged shortage of burial space, I wondered when my Cleints application would be retruned to Committee?

Mark Leedale

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassociates.co.uk

PLANNING SERVICES	HPT
POL	TLG
DC	ENF
APP	
CS	55684
23 APR 2002	
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T. Watson Esq.,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham,
Berks, RG40 1WR.

REPLY REQUIRED
7/5

22nd April 2002

Our Ref: SL/00/180
0118 974 6484 (1 page)

Dear Mr Watson,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

I.D
55044

I write further to my letter of 5th April. It is regrettable that you have not had an opportunity to respond to this letter. I would like a response and confirmation that the application will be reported to the next available committee.

I reiterate that my Clients application has been with your Council for over 12 months and I would again ask for notification, in accordance with the Regulations, seeking an extension of time for determination of the application.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassociates.co.uk

T. Watson Esq.,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham,
Berks, RG40 1WR.

22nd April 2002

Our Ref: SL/00/180
0118 974 6484 (1 page)

Dear Mr Watson,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

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Mark Leedale

Gregory Gray Associates

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'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

T Watson Esq.,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

5th April 2002
Our Ref: SL/00/180
0118 973 6484 (1 page)

Dear Mr Watson,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

I write in respect of the above application.

This was submitted in March 2001. Despite a series of telephone calls and many letters the case officer has declined to report it back to the committee. As I understand it the Environment Agency has been asked to comment and have not, for a variety of reasons, done so. Miss Lake will not go back to committee without this response.

On 3rd May 2001 I sent Miss Lake a copy of the NRA (Environment Agency) comments from the time when the application was originally granted. On this basis I suggest that if the Agency will not respond then the application should be reported with those same comments. The same conditions can be attached to the renewal of permission. It is after all a renewal which should be dealt with in accordance with 11/95 (pg. 60 refers).

I must add that I have not received any formal notification, in accordance with the Regulations, seeking an extension of time and I would ask that this be conveyed to me by return.

If the application is not returned to the next available committee then my Client will have no alternative but to consider an appeal with consequential implications in accordance with 8/97.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale

Gregory Gray Associates
CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL
Telephone: 01252 624004 *Fax:* 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

PLANNING SERVICES | HPT
POL | TLP
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CS | 55044
05 APR 2002
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FILE:

REPLY BY
19 APR 2002

T Watson Esq.,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

5th April 2002
Our Ref: SL/00/180
0118 973 6484 (1 page)

Dear Mr Watson,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

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Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

M Thorp Esq,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

PLANNING SERVICES	HPT
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30 JULY	
COPIES TO:	ACK:
	FILE:

27th July 2001
Our Ref: SL/00/180

0118 974 6484 (2 pages & by post)

Dear Mr Thorp,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

I write further to my letter of 29th June to which I have received no response. I attach a copy for ease of reference.

As Principal Planning Officer I would now ask you to intervene in what is a very straightforward application.

I look forward to your response if an appeal against non-determination is to be avoided.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale
Enc.

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

Miss. N. Lake,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

29th June 2001
Our Ref: SL/00/180

0118 974 6484 (1 page & by post)

Dear Miss. Lake,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

I write further to our conversation on 3rd May and my letter of that date.

Please could you let me have a detailed explanation of the delay in determination of what is a straightforward application. If I do not receive a decision or confirmation that the application is to be reported to committee by 16th July I will need to consider an appeal against non-determination. In these proceedings I have regard to guidance set out in circular 8/93 - costs.

In the meantime I attach a further extract from the planning press.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale
Enc.

Tel: (0118) 974 6481 (Direct Line)
E-mail: Nicola.Lake@wokingham.gov.uk
Date: 26 September 2001
My ref: NL/VAR/2001/3562
Your ref:

Environmental Services Department
Planning Services
P.O. Box 157
Shute End, Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WR
Tel: (0118) 974 6000
Fax: (0118) 974 6484
Minicom No: (0118) 974 6991
DX: 33506 – Wokingham

Ms Sarah Paxman
The Environment Agency
Frimley Office
Swift House
Frimley Business Park
Camberley
Surrey
GU16 7SQ

Dear Ms Paxman,

PROPOSED WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND ON LAND NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING. APPLICATION NUMBER VAR/2001/3562.

Thank you for your letter of the 6 August 2001, regarding the above stated development.

The above application was considered at the Development Control Committee on the 12 September 2001. The Members of this Committee have asked me to enquire as to the Environment Agency's position on the fact that during times of heavy rainfall water runs off this currently undeveloped site, onto the lane and into peoples properties. They are concerned that should the development go ahead, decomposing bodies could lead to the pollution of the run-off water from this site, which would then continue to flow on to residential properties and possibly putting these residents at risk.

I look forward to hearing your response as soon as possible. I have enclosed a copy of the committee report for your information.

Yours sincerely,

NICOLA LAKE.
Senior Planning Officer.

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATION SHEET

PLANNING APPLICATION. APPLICATION No. VAR/2001/3562

Officer NICOLA LAKE

Parish SONNING.

Proposal VARIATION TO CONDITION 1 OF CONSENT 45032 TO ALLOW FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME TO START CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO WOODLAND BUTIEL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK

Address LAND NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND SONNING LANE

Applicant HOLME PARK SONNING Ltd C/O GREGORY GREY ASSOCIATES

The Parish Council has the following comments.

1. The original application to permit woodland burials was strongly opposed by the Parish Council and parishioners on the grounds that the site was unsuitable for such use.

2. In spite of this permission was granted. One of the conditions was that a borehole should be sunk in order to confirm that the water table was lower than that required permitting such burials.

3. Since that permission was granted the Parish Council have installed a pond in the area adjacent to the site. When excavation commenced the contractor became aware of water two feet below the surface. The pond covers a large area and the conditions were the same in all parts. This indicates that the whole area is situated above a perch water table where such burials should not be permitted.

4. The ditch, which runs along side the application site and into ditches in Sonning Lane, is presently full of flowing water, only one or two feet below the ground level of the site. This is due to the extreme weather conditions experienced this year but indications are that this will continue. It is essential that Officers view this for themselves as it clearly illustrates that the water level is only two feet, below ground level. This would make it totally impossible to comply with the requirement that a minimum depth of two metres be maintained between the bottom of any graves and the water table.

01189697753
20-AUG-01 15:57 David Bates 01189697753 PAGE: 2

5. It is understood that highways initial objections were withdrawn. It is now five years since the original application was granted and in that time traffic through Sonning has increased considerably. Changes to the road system in Reading have resulted in a noticeable increase in traffic in Sonning Lane. With further development in Thames Valley Park and other areas it is anticipated that traffic in Sonning will rise by 17% in the next few years. A recent approval for a Rowing Lake in Sonning Eye will add a further 5% to that figure.

6. The site has continued to deteriorate under the current ownership and is presently under an enforcement notice. If WDC are of a mind to approve this variation it is essential that additional conditions, to ensure that action is taken to clear and fence the site securely prior to any on site work being commenced, are added to the existing ones.

7. For the above reasons, Sonning Parish Council urges Wokingham District Council to refuse this application

L. A. Bates (Clerk to the Council).

11 April 2001

01189692753

20-AUG-01 15:58 David Bates 01189692753 PAGE: 3

NL

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FAX MESSAGE

FAX TO: NICOLA LAKE

FAX NO: 0118 9746484

NO. OF SHEETS: 3 (INC.)

FROM: LESLEY BATES
SONNING PARISH COUNCIL

FAX NUMBER: 0118 9697753
TEL. No. 0118 9697753

DATE: 20 AUGUST 2001

Please find attached copy of comments on application no. VAR/2001/3562 originally submitted in April this year

LESLEY BATES (CLERK TO THE COUNCIL).

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE
12th September 2001

NOTE OF MEETING

Please refer to Members Update as well as Agenda for conditions etc.

Application No.	Decision	Action
3555 – Coleshill Farm, 9A Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead	**Approved** as per Agenda, but condition 10 revised	Elaine
3847 – Crossfields School, Shinfield Road, Shinfield	**Deferred** for reconsultation on revised drawings	Elaine
4313 – Land adjoining The Oaks, Croft Road, Spencers Wood, Shinfield	**Refused** as per Agenda	Angela
3303 – Bonhomie Court, Broadcommon Road, Hurst	**Deferred** for site visit	Basia
3222 – Land rear of 79-85 Wargrave Road, Twyford	**Deferred** for site visit (add appeal decision to next agenda)	Nicky
4207 – Matthews Green Farm, Matthews Green Road, Wokingham	**Refused** contrary to recommendation	Emy
3944 – Caister, Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead	**Deferred** for site visit	Angela
3562 – Land to the North of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning	**Deferred** for further discussion with Env. Agency	Nicky
4181 – Hartman House, Danehill, Cutbush Lane, Earley	**Approved** as per Agenda subject to S106 Legal Agreement	Nicky
3833 – Star Works, Star Lane, Knowl Hill	**Approved** as per Agenda – check conditions re mud on the road	Karen
3681 – 422B Finchampstead Road, Finchampstead	**Deferred** for negotiation	Elaine
4171 – 14 Firmstone Close, Lower Early	**Deferred** for site visit (need photos at next cttee)	Karen
4496 – Aldrington Primary School, Silverdale Road, Earley	**Approved** as per Agenda	Joss
4571 – Land adjoining Jays Printers, 9 Station Road, Wokingham	**Approved** as per Agenda	Emy

Meeting finished at 10.20

Mike Thorp 12th September 2001

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

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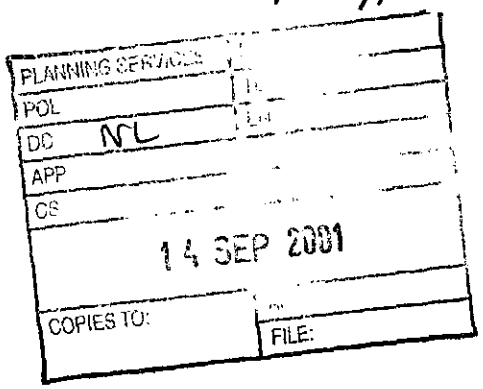


Miss. N. Lake,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

13th September 2001
Our Ref: SL/00/180

0118 974 6484 (3 pages & by post)

Dear Miss. Lake,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

I write in respect of the above application.

I understand that Members deferred consideration pending consultation with the Environment Agency. For ease of reference I attach a letter from the National Rivers Authority in respect of the original application. I find that on occasion the change over from NRA to Environment Agency did cause some correspondence to be mislaid. It may therefore be helpful to pass this to them in order to ensure consistency of approach.

I trust the application will be on the agenda for 3rd October.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale
Enc.

3rd November 1995

NRA

National Rivers Authority
Thames Region

Wokingham District Council
Council Offices
Shute End
PO Box 157
Wokingham
Berkshire RG11 1BN

Your Ref:	45032
Our Ref:	SU77NE/1/16/AMC/da
Reply to:	Anne-Marie Crane
Direct Line:	(01734) 535789
Direct Fax:	(01734) 535778

For the attention of Mr G Rayner

Please Quote Our Reference In All Correspondence

Dear Sir

PROPOSED:	**CHANGE OF USE OF VACANT AGRICULTURAL LAND TO BURIAL GROUND**
LOCATION:	**LAND BETWEEN COUNTY SPORTS GROUND AND THATCH COTTAGE AND SONNING LANE, SONNING**
APPLICANT:	**HOLME PARK SONNING LIMITED**

Thank you for your letter dated 26th September 1995 received in this office on 2nd October 1995. We have circulated details of the above proposals to relevant parts of the Authority, and our comments are as follows:

Planning Condition

This Authority has no objection, in principle, to the proposed development provided the following conditions are imposed on any planning permission granted:

CONDITION:	A minimum depth of 2 metres shall always be maintained between the bottom of any grave and the water table.
REASON:	To prevent pollution of the water environment.
CONDITION:	No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table, and they shall not in any event exceed 3 metres in depth below existing ground level.
REASON:	To prevent pollution of groundwater.

CHARTER MARK
Awarded for excellence

cont'd....

3rd November 1995

Advice to Applicant

Groundwater Protection: contact Brian Penny on (01483) 577655

Surface water from car park and access road should discharge via deep seal trapped gullies incorporating a minimum water seal of 85mm or similar.

Would you please let us have a copy of any decision notice issued.

Yours faithfully

for Catchment Planning Manager (South East)

c.c. Martin and Pole Planning
Salisbury House
Milton Road
Wokingham
Berkshire RG11 1DB

AMC32.pa

HIGHWAYS CONSULTATION SHEET

From: Nicola Lake **Date:** 23 March 2001

Application Number: VAR/2001/3562

Proposal: Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.

Parish: SONNING PARISH

Site Address:
Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Reading.

Applicant:
Holme Park Sonning Ltd C/O Gregory Gray Associates.

Your observations are required in respect of this application within **7 days** of the above date.

✓ below as applicable;

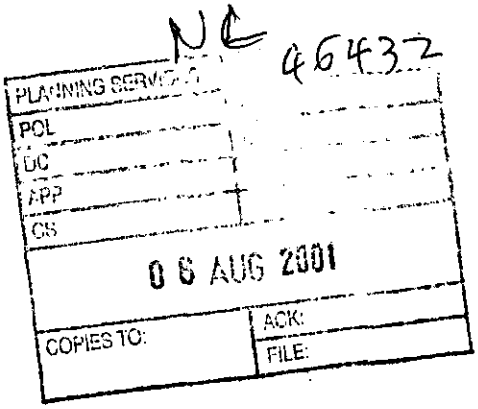
1) ☐ Recommend refusal for the reason(s) **stated below;**
2) ☐ Recommend approval but with condition(s) & reason(s) **stated below;**
3) ☐ Recommend approval with **no** condition(s) or reason(s).

THE HIGHWAY AUTHORITY'S CONCERN REGARDING ACCESS & VEHICLE MANOEUVRES STILL REMAIN, HOWEVER IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN THIS OBJECTION AT APPEAL DUE TO THE LPA'S PREVIOUS GRANTING APPROVAL CONTRARY TO THE H.A'S ADVICE.

Signed: _____ **Print name:** Adam Coggins 12/04/01

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk



Miss. N. Lake,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

3rd August 2001
Our Ref: SL/00/180

0118 974 6484 (1 page & by post)

Dear Miss. Lake,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

I write further to your letter of 31st July which I received this morning.

The matter of the ecological value of the site was discussed at length when this matter was last reported to the planning committee. As a result of this and prior discussions, condition 14 was imposed so that a fully detailed assessment of all ecological matters could be made prior to the commencement of burials. If my Client cannot satisfy the relevant authorities, including the Environment Agency, in respect of these matters then the permission could not be implemented. In either circumstance the habitat would be afforded appropriate protection. However, if you feel the need for an additional condition then I would be pleased to review a draft. There is certainly no need for a specialist study at this stage.

The whole ethos of woodland burial is based on ecology and preservation. It would be helpful for you to study papers submitted with the previous application if, as I suspect, you have not already done so.

On this basis I trust you will report the matter to the next available committee bearing in mind that you have had it for 5 months.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale
Enc.

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

NC

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Miss. N. Lake,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

3rd August 2001
Our Ref: SL/00/180

0118 974 6484 (1 page & by post)

Dear Miss. Lake,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
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RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

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On this basis I trust you will report the matter to the next available committee bearing in mind that you have had it for 5 months.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale
Enc.

Tel: (0118) 974 6481 (Direct Line)
E-mail: Nicola.Lake@wokingham.gov.uk
Date: 31 July 2001
My ref: NL/VAR/2001/3562
Your ref:

Environmental Services Department
Planning Services
P.O. Box 157
Shute End, Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WR
Tel: (0118) 974 6000
Fax: (0118) 974 6484
Minicom No: (0118) 974 6991
DX: 33506 – Wokingham

Mr Mark Leedale
Gregory Gray Associates
Redcliffe, 17 Dinorben Close
Fleet
Hants
GU52 7SL.

Dear Mr Leedale,

PROPOSED VARIATION OF CONDITION 01OF CONSENT 45032 TO ALLOW FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME TO START CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK AT LAND NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING. APPLICATION NUMBER VAR/2001/3562.

I write regarding the above stated planning application.

It has been brought to my attention that since the previous approval of the development the land is now within 30m of a known breeding ground for Great Crested Newts. As such the development of the site would require a license from the DEFRA. It is therefore considered that prior to the grant of planning permission, a newt mitigation scheme should be submitted to both English Nature and the Local Planning Authority. This scheme should contain specific details of how the woodland burial site will be operated and how its effects upon the newts would be limited. If these details are considered acceptable then an additional condition would be attached to the permission requiring the applicants to obtain the relevant license prior to the start of development upon the site.

I hope this information is of assistance to you. Should you require any further assistance in this matter please do not hesitate to contact Andy Glencross at Dinton Pastures on 0118 934 2016.

Yours sincerely,

NICOLA LAKE.
Senior Planning Officer.

Mr R Hicks
Sonning House
Pearson Road
Sonning
Berkshire RG4 6UL

44019

30 May 2001

Ms N Lake
Planning Department
Wokingham District Council
Council Offices
Shute End
Wokingham RG40 1WR

Rep Reg

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Dear Ms Lake

SONNING – GREEN BURIAL GROUND, SONNING LANE
APPLICATION NUMBER: VAR/2001/3562

I refer to our conversation last week concerning the proposed renewal of the Green Burial Ground in Sonning Lane.

My purpose in writing is to enquire whether investigation for the original application determined whether or not the water table would be effected by the proposed used.

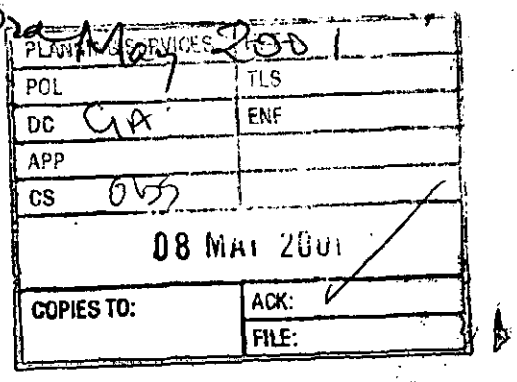
I shall be obliged to receive any information you may have in this regard.

Yours sincerely

ROGER HICKS

LILAC COTTAGE,
PEARSON ROAD,
SONNING,
READING, BERKS., RG4 6UH
0118 969 8441

3rd May 2001



Alan M/S Nicola Lowe
The Planning Dept.
Wokingham District Council

Dear Sirs
Planning Application VAR/2001/3562.

I write to object to the proposed burial ground in the field in Sonning Lane adjacent to the Blue Coat School.

His Known (previous application) that the level of the water table is extremely high and water from a burial ground where bodies are buried in soft disposable materials must be a serious health hazard. At Lilac Cottage I have had in the last few years water coming through my kitchen and utility floor. About three years ago it was a flash flood and subject of an insurance

claim .. Since then I have hopefully managed to see that the water does syphon off into a drain. Nevertheless the health danger remains.

It must be well known to the authority that water does flow down through the village. No doubt old wells sealed up with the advent of mains water has something to do with it.

In addition this land is part of the green belt land and can only attract even more traffic.

I suggest that this ~~land~~ land be property managed for grazing as it previously was, prior to the present dereliction into which it has been allowed to fall by the present freeholder. As a longtime resident from childhood I do know how this land has been managed / mismanaged of late.

Yours faithfully

J.A. CLEMENT DAVIES

PS. The notice was put up to cover the bank holiday & of course away from the village centre

Ian Jordan

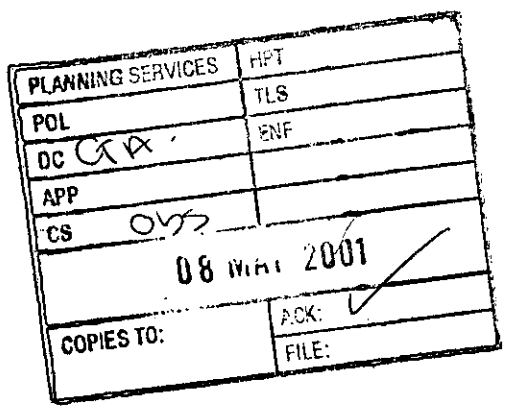
From: WebComments@wokingham.gov.uk
Sent: 03 May 2001 20:23
To: ian.jordan@wokingham.gov.uk
Subject: Comments on Planning Applications

****

NatureofEmail: Object
ApplicationNumber: VAR/2001/3562
Correspondent_FullName: Mrs H Lee
Correspondent_StreetAddress: May Tree Cottage
Correspondent_Address2: Sonning Lane
Correspondent_Town: Sonning
Correspondent_County: Berkshire
Correspondent_PostCode: RG4 6ST
Correspondent_Telephone:
Correspondent_Email:

Comments:

I wish to object as it would be an unsuitable site for a cemetery as it is opposite a school, and next to sports grounds which are often noisy and busy at the weekend.



Tel: Reading (0118)-9693635

Rich's Cottage,
Pearson Road,
Sonning-on-Thames,
Reading,
Berkshire, RG4 6UL.

April 19th 2001.

PLANNING SERVICES	HPT
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20 APR 2001	
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Ms Nicola Lake,
Wokingham District Council,
P.O. Box 157,
Council Offices,
Shute End,
Wokingham, RG40 1WR,

Dear Ms. Lake,

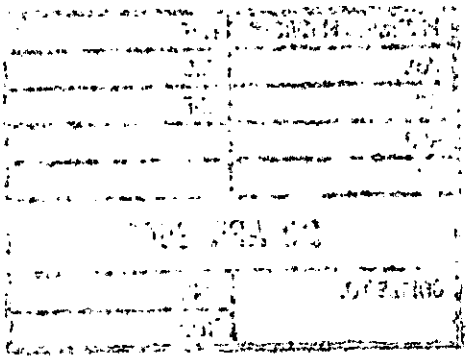
PLANNING APPLICATION VAR/2001/3562

I am writing in order to raise several objections to the abovementioned proposal for "a woodland burial site" in Sonning.

When the original proposal for this site was submitted several years ago, I understand a major factor for its rejection was concern about the high water table on the land and its implications for public health. The site is slightly elevated and is already saturated as a result of heavy autumn and winter rainfall. Drainage problems in the area became significantly worse necessitating the digging out and clearance of waterlogged outflows and ditches in March. These considerations still need to be urgently addressed and surely render this site an inappropiate place for the burial of human remains.

Any development of the site as a cemetery would inevitably increase the volume of traffic joining the already busy B446 road (Sonning Lane). The egress is adjacent to the Sports Club car park and Reading Blue Coat School entrance both of which can already become congested at "peak times" of the day especially in mid and late afternoons. Access to a new cemetery and its administrative buildings will inevitably add to traffic pressures. In addition, the provision of "ancillary buildings" will detract further from the rural character of the area and reduce significantly the extent of the "woodland" site overall.

Finally, I view with concern the way this site has been treated over the years. Originally, it was an open, well maintained field of mown grass which was even let out periodically as a sports field for Reading Blue Coat School. In 1984, prior to an application for housing which was subsequently rejected, the owner abruptly terminated this arrangement, removed the top soil causing the field to become overgrown with weeds and brambles. In subsequent years, some dumping of waste was allowed until complaints were made by Sonning Parish Council of which I was then a member. The condition of the land has deteriorated markedly in the past seventeen years with broken fences and fallen branches neglected and unattended. The presumption seems to be that this site can only be "maintained" if development of one form or another is conceded regardless of its suitability.



The disturbing aspect of all this is that the site is adjacent to the Sonning Village Conservation area.

I very much hope that you will take these concerns into consideration when this application is reviewed.

Yours sincerely,

P.J. van Went

P.J. van Went

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23 APR 2001
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FILE:

Dr G. M. BAILEY
THE THATCHED COTTAGE
SONNING-ON-THAMES
BERKSHIRE RG4 0ST
TELEPHONE: (0118) 969 2372

20.4.01
Your ref VAR/2001/3562

Miss Nicola Lake
Planning Dept. W.D.C.

Dear Miss Lake

Proposed Green Cemetery, Sonning Lane

I understand that there has been a renewal of this Planning Application, which I wish to oppose

The field in question is not suitable for burials. It has a high water table which is drained by field drains which run into an open ditch between the field and my land. In storms this overflows & runs across Sonning Lane – Your Engineers Dept has

been dealing with this problem
There is a real health risk if the
field holds decomposing bodies in
cardboard boxes

I hope that this application will
again be rejected

Yours sincerely

Grenfell Bailey

PLANNING SERVICES	HPT
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24 APR 2001

COPIES TO: Planning ACK: Application

VAR/2001/3562.

Lolandon
Pearson Road
Sonning on Thames
Berks RG4 6UH.

21st April 2001.

I would like to object very strongly to the planning application for the Woodland Burial Venture. I can't imagine the inevitable outcome when considering the present water level!

to Mrs Nicola Lake.
Wokingham District Council
P O Box 157.
Council Offices. Shute End RG40 1WR.

Grove Cottage
Pearson Road

Sonning
Berks
RG4 6UL

20.4.01

PLANNING SERVICES	HPT
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23 APR 2001	
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Wokingham District Council
NL

Dear Ms Lake

Planning Application VAR/2001/3562

I wish to object to the above Planning Application in the strongest possible terms.

The village of Sonning already has adequate space in the churchyard for burials of villagers. We do not need another graveyard away from the church.

This pretty, historic village is supposed to be a conservation area and should be protected for future generations. Applications of this nature would destroy the nature of the village, which those of us who grew up here are desperately trying to preserve.

Yours sincerely
Jack & Jean Cornwall

Elizabeth & Barton **Guthrie**
Nine Pins
Pearson Road
Sonning
RG4 6UH

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Ms. Nicola Lake
Wokingham District Council
P.O.Box 157
Council Offices – Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1WL

20 April 2001

Dear Ms. Lake,

Application VAR/2001/3562

We have been discussing this planning application in some detail with Mr. Peter van Went (Rich's Cottage, Pearson Road, Sonning) and, like him, having given due and fair consideration to the matter, **are totally opposed to it** for a number of reasons, not least the very undesirable nature of its intended use.

In the best interests of brevity, we would:

1) respectfully refer you to Mr. Van Went's recent, comprehensive letter to you in this connection
2) endorse and echo its contents.

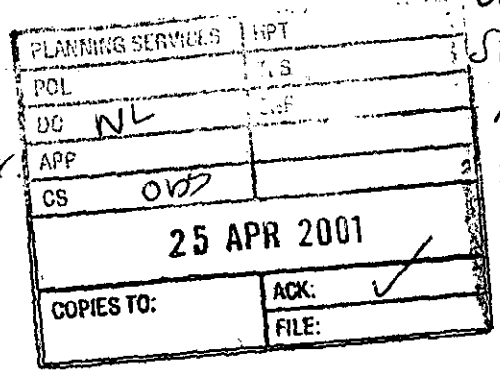
Further, we wish also to refer you to our (Guthrie) correspondence with Mr. Mark Moon, WDC's head of engineering, on the matter of Pearson Road flooding. This further concerns us in the context of the above application in that drainage/water tables vis-à-vis the land in question may well be a major issue and, of equally major concern.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth & Barton Guthrie

Elizabeth & Barton Guthrie

Old Walls, Sonning Lane
Sonning-on-Thames
RG4 6ST
23.04.01.



Ms N. Lake
Wokingham District Council
Shute End
Wokingham.

Dear Ms Lake,

Ref. Planning Application VAR - 201 - 3562
Burial Ground off Sonning Lane.

I believe that a new application has been made for the above. When the last application was made I wrote to oppose it and you will perhaps find my letter and references on file. I am still strongly opposed to the application.

The ground water level has risen quite markedly in the past year and with 'Global Warming' continuing I do not foresee any lowering of the water table. The proposed site is saturated at the moment and is likely to remain so, making it most unsuitable for the proposed purpose. Drain off from the site, if it were used for burial, would be dangerous to health of both humans and animals. Who knows how many of the deceased would harbour the extremely resistant prion protein responsible for 'New Variant C.J.D'. This could be picked up by foxes for example and gain access via them to ruminants. The cost of B.S.E to our country has been enormous, let us not risk all the work done to try and eradicate this condition by burying potentially 'infected' corpses in 'accessible' graves. There are other medical considerations but in my opinion this is the main one.

The traffic in Sonning Lane is also a problem. Even now cars park dangerously on the road in the area, this would be worse if the scheme went ahead.

Yours Sincerely

T. Heyworth

(Dr. T. HEYWORTH)

Nicola Lake

From: Andy Glencross
Sent: 06 April 2001 13:56
To: Nicola Lake
Subject: Planning Application No VAR/2001/3562 - Sonning Lane

Hi Nicola

My comments on the above application are as follows :-

This site is within 30metres of a known great crested newt breeding pond, consequently the develoment of the site will require a license from DETR (whether planning permission has been granted or not). I suggest the following approach for the consideration of this application.

(1) The applicant needs to submit a newt mitigation scheme with their application.

(2) This mitigation scheme needs to be formulated in consultation with EN and if possible agreed by them.

(3) Planning permission can then be given with the condition that a licence will be required to carry out all works.

This approach means that the applicant is likely to get the DETR licence they require as they already have the agreement of EN who are the statutory consultee on these matters for the DETR. It also protects the authority from any liability from giving a planning permission that cannot be implemented.

If you have any further queries regarding this advice then give me a call.

Cheers

Andy Glencross
Countryside Officer (Biodiversity)

Nicola Lake

From: Andy Glencross
Sent: 11 April 2001 11:54
To: Nicola Lake
Subject: Planning Application No VAR/2001/3562 - Sonning Lane

Hi Nicola

Further to my comments on the above application. I was speaking to Alistair Driver Environment Agency about this issue and he said he thought the original application had been turned down on the advice of the EA. The site is lies in area with a perched water table and the EA would be worried about contamination of the water table were this application to proceed. Have they been consulted as part of the renewal application?

Let me know if you need any further advice.

Cheers

Andy Glencross
Countryside Officer (Biodiversity)

26 MAR 2001

To:
Harold Sanders
Urban Design And Conservation Officer

From: Nicola Lake

Date: 23 March 2001

Application Number: VAR/2001/3562

Proposal: Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park..

Site Address:
Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Reading.

Applicant:
Holme Park Sonning Ltd C/O Gregory Gray Associates.

Your observations are required in respect of this application within **7 days** of the above date.

I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH WOULD SUGGEST THIS PROPOSAL SHOULD BE REFUSED.

Harold Sanders
18.04.01

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26 MAR 2001	
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HIGHWAYS CONSULTATION SHEET

From: Nicola Lake **Date:** 23 March 2001

Application Number: VAR/2001/3562

Proposal: Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.

Parish: SONNING PARISH

Site Address:
Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Reading.

Applicant:
Holme Park Sonning Ltd C/O Gregory Gray Associates.

Your observations are required in respect of this application within **7 days** of the above date.

✓ below as applicable;

1) ☐ Recommend refusal for the reason(s) **stated below**;
2) ☐ Recommend approval but with condition(s) & reason(s) **stated below**;
3) ☐ Recommend approval with **no** condition(s) or reason(s).

THE HIGHWAY AUTHORITY'S CONCERNS REGARDING ACCESS & VEHICLE MOVEMENTS STILL REMAIN, HOWEVER IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN THIS OBJECTION AT APPEAL DUE TO THE LPA PREVIOUSLY GRANTING APPROVAL CONTRARY TO THE H.A'S ADVICE.

Signed: _____ **Print name:** Adam Coggins 12/04/01

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

Miss. N. Lake,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

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19 APR 2001	
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17th April 2001

Our Ref: SL/00/180

Dear Miss. Lake,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

I write in respect of the above application and my letter of 10th April.

I attach extracts from planning of 13th April which further emphasises the shortage of burial space.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale

Enc.

How to bury our dead

An acute shortage of burial space is forcing officials to find new ways of burying our dead. By Huw Morris



Cemeteries: acute lack of burial space means solutions need to be found

A close relative or friend of yours dies. At the funeral, such is your grief, you barely notice the splitting gravestones nearby or the ground subsiding in places. After paying your last respects and tossing soil onto the coffin, you feel numb. Your thoughts turn to the wake as you pass by the down-and-out sprawled next to a memorial in an alcoholic stupor.

This is an experience shared by many newly bereaved, although that is not the worst of it. Many would be driven to despair if they knew what happens to their loved ones when buried. Some undertakers are illegally packing coffins into old graves or cramming them in on top of them. Your relative's last resting place may not be their own.

This practice came to light during the Commons environment, transport and regional affairs committee's inquiry into the state of the nation's burial grounds. Giles Dolphin, a planner with the Greater London Authority, told the committee that some private cemeteries built in the 1870s should have been full around 50 years ago, yet up to 700 people a year are still being buried in them.

The stark reality is that many of the country's burial grounds are full to overflowing and we are rapidly running out of room to bury our dead.

Committee chair Andrew Bennett admits that he and his colleagues "were taken aback by the sheer magnitude of the problem".

The crisis affects anywhere with a cemetery but is particularly acute in London where each borough has, on average, just seven years of burial space left. Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Westminster have run out of sites. Enfield has just one year, while Ealing is down to six months. The supply in Hammersmith and Fulham stands at two years. In Brent it is three.

The problem is reaching breaking point – around 630,000 homes are set to be built in the capital over the next 20 years, forcing more pressure on land. Elsewhere the scope for providing new land for cemeteries conveniently sited to the communities they would serve is very limited.

Nationally, despite the popularity of cremations, 28 per cent of people are still buried. Experts argue that it is difficult to see how cremation could be more actively promoted, so the burial trend will continue for some time.

Burial grounds are not only overcrowded but are unsafe, littered, vandalised, unkempt and a shame to society, the committee argues. In some cities, it says, graveyards are "a disgrace – abandoned by all but alcoholics and drug users".

The committee's findings do not surprise Ian Hussein. As director of the City of London's cemeteries, his responsibilities include Manor Park, the country's largest burial ground, which contains 130,000 "monuments" or gravestones. The place is falling apart. "We have to inspect every single one to try to make them safe," he says. "We try to level them yet we have acres and acres of ground that is continuously subsiding, which presents plenty of hazards."

Hussein – who is also president of the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration, his profession's trade body – says his colleagues are frustrated by the overwhelming crisis caused by decades of central and local governmental neglect. "Across the country, we have millions of graves that are literally falling apart and are in a dilapidated state," he explains. "But it's hard enough to get the public interested, never mind any politician who knows there are no votes in it."

The committee agrees. It says Home Office and DETR ministers "cannot be allowed to abdicate responsibility for ensuring that this service is managed in an effective manner and the most basic standards met". Local government and regeneration minister Hilary Armstrong is singled out for particularly heavy treatment.

The report complains that Armstrong did not seem particularly keen to impress upon the MPs that her department is taking the issues surrounding cemeteries seriously as part of the government's vision of an urban renaissance. "The DETR should make clear its recognition that the problems facing cemeteries should be addressed and their contribution appreciated when developing urban policy," it observes.



Burial grounds: under-appreciated

The stark reality is that many of the country's burial grounds are full to overflowing

Hussein argues that these criticisms could be levelled at any government in the past 50 years. "Too many ministers have turned a blind eye to this issue." Local authority-run cemeteries also lose the fight for limited resources with higher profile services such as education and refuse collection.

How can the crisis be tackled? Suggestions include squeezing new plots between more spaciously laid 19th century graves and raising land by up to six metres to place new graves on top of the old. The option favoured by the burial profession is "lift and deepen"; an old grave is opened up and dug deeper with the coffin exhumed and then reburied lower than before. Graves would be reused after 50 or 75 years. Five bodies could be buried this way, an idea that the MPs support. This practice is common in other European countries but is currently outlawed in the UK.

Unexpectedly, run-down cemeteries are becoming a major planning issue. RTPI development plan convenor David John suggests that while planners can pitch in, they need government guidance. The closest to it, PPG17, which covers open spaces, does not even mention cemeteries. Councils will also need to assess demand for burial space, although religious and cultural groups will have to help with this.

The committee's report marks a quantum leap forward in politicians' understanding. The MPs put the environmental, historical and cultural significance of cemeteries at the centre of the regeneration debate, arguing that ignoring them not only risks "the loss of a very important part of our civic infrastructure, but to miss a very substantial opportunity for the proper recognition of a previously under-appreciated urban resource".

Indeed a neglected cemetery not only undermines the morale of the community but also fails to attract potential investors into the area. In short, it sends out a signal that the area is on the way down, not on the up.

● *Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Eighth Report: Cemeteries* is available from The Stationery Office (tel) 0870 600 5522.

How to bury our dead

An acute shortage of burial space is forcing officials to find new ways of burying our dead. By Huw Morris

A close relative or friend of yours dies. At the funeral, such is your grief, you barely notice the splitting gravestones nearby or the ground subsiding in places. After paying your last respects and tossing soil onto the coffin, you feel numb. Your thoughts turn to the rake as you pass by the down-and-out sprawled next to a memorial in an alcoholic stupor.

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The stark reality is that many of the country's burial grounds are full to overflo[illegible] and we are rapidly running out of r[illegible] to bury our dead.

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Nationally, despite the popularity of cremations, 28 per cent of people are still buried. Experts argue that it is difficult to see how cremation could be more actively promoted, so the burial trend will continue for some time.



Cemeteries: acute lack of burial space means solutions need to be found

Burial grounds are not only overcrowded but are unsafe, littered, vandalised, unkempt and a shame to society, the committee argues. In some cities, it says, graveyards are "a disgrace – abandoned by all but alcoholics and drug users".

The committee's findings do not surprise Ian Hussein. As director of the City of London's cemeteries, his responsibilities include Manor Park, the country's largest burial ground, which contains 130,000 "monuments" or gravestones. The place is falling apart. "We have to inspect every single one to try to make them safe," he says. "We try to level them yet we have acres and acres of ground that is continuously subsiding, which presents plenty of hazards."

Hussein – who is also president of the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration, his profession's trade body – says his colleagues are frustrated by the overwhelming crisis caused by decades of central and local governmental neglect. "Across the country, we have millions of graves that are literally falling apart and are in a dilapidated state," he explains. "But it's hard enough to get the public interested, never mind any politician who knows there are no votes in it."

The committee agrees. It says Home Office and DETR ministers "cannot be allowed to abdicate responsibility for ensuring that this service is managed in an effective manner and the most basic standards met". Local government and regeneration minister Hilary Armstrong is singled out for particularly heavy treatment.

The report complains that Armstrong did not seem particularly keen to impress upon the MPs that her department is taking the issues surrounding cemeteries seriously as part of the government's vision of an urban renaissance. "The DETR should make clear its recognition that the problems facing cemeteries should be addressed and their contribution appreciated when developing urban policy," it observes.



Burial grounds: under-appreciated

The stark reality is that many of the country's burial grounds are full to overflowing

Hussein argues that these criticisms could be levelled at any government in the past 50 years. "Too many ministers have turned a blind eye to this issue." Local authority-run cemeteries also lose the fight for limited resources with higher profile services such as education and refuse collection.

How can the crisis be tackled? Suggestions include squeezing new plots between more spaciously laid 19th century graves and raising land by up to six metres to place new graves on top of the old. The option favoured by the burial profession is "lift and deepen"; an old grave is opened up and dug deeper with the coffin exhumed and then reburied lower than before. Graves would be reused after 50 or 75 years. Five bodies could be buried this way, an idea that the MPs support. This practice is common in other European countries but is currently outlawed in the UK.

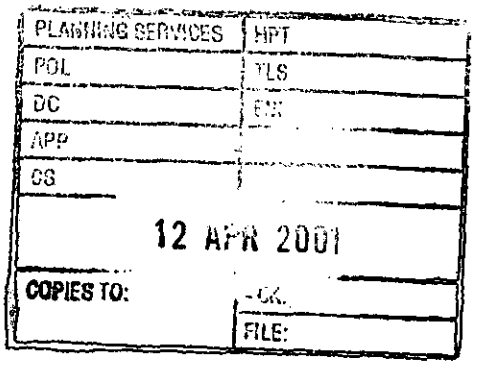
Unexpectedly, run-down cemeteries are becoming a major planning issue. RTPI development plan convenor David John suggests that while planners can pitch in, they need government guidance. The closest to it, PPG17, which covers open spaces, does not even mention cemeteries. Councils will also need to assess demand for burial space, although religious and cultural groups will have to help with this.

The committee's report marks a quantum leap forward in politicians' understanding. The MPs put the environmental, historical and cultural significance of cemeteries at the centre of the regeneration debate, arguing that ignoring them not only risks "the loss of a very important part of our civic infrastructure, but to miss a very substantial opportunity for the proper recognition of a previously under-appreciated urban resource".

Indeed a neglected cemetery not only undermines the morale of the community but also fails to attract potential investors into the area. In short, it sends out a signal that the area is on the way down, not on the up.

● *Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Eighth Report: Cemeteries* is available from The Stationery Office (tel) 0870 600 5522.

FAX MESSAGE



FAX TO: NICOLA LAKE

FAX NO: 0118 9746484

NO. OF SHEETS: 3 (INC.)

FROM: LESLEY BATES
SONNING PARISH COUNCIL

FAX NUMBER: 0118 9697753
TEL. No. 0118 9697753

DATE: 11 APRIL 2001

Please find attached comments on application no. VAR/2001/3562

LESLEY BATES (CLERK TO THE COUNCIL).

01189697753
11-APR-01 23:18 David Bates 01189697753 PAGE: 1

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATION SHEET

PLANNING APPLICATION. APPLICATION No. VAR/2001/3562

Officer NICOLA LAKE

Parish SONNING

Proposal VARIATION TO CONDITION 1 OF CONSENT 45032 TO ALLOW FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME TO START CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK

Address LAND NORTH OF COUNTY SPORTS GROUND SONNING LANE

Applicant HOLME PARK SONNING Ltd C/O GREGORY GREY ASSOCIATES

The Parish Council has the following comments.

1. The original application to permit woodland burials was strongly opposed by the Parish Council and parishioners on the grounds that the site was unsuitable for such use.

2. In spite of this permission was granted. One of the conditions was that a borehole should be sunk in order to confirm that the water table was lower than that required permitting such burials.

3. Since that permission was granted the Parish Council have installed a pond in the area adjacent to the site. When excavation commenced the contractor became aware of water two feet below the surface. The pond covers a large area and the conditions were the same in all parts. This indicates that the whole area is situated above a perch water table where such burials should not be permitted.

4. The ditch, which runs along side the application site and into ditches in Sonning Lane, is presently full of flowing water, only one or two feet below the ground level of the site. This is due to the extreme weather conditions experienced this year but indications are that this will continue. It is essential that Officers view this for themselves as it clearly illustrates that the water level is only two feet, below ground level. This would make it totally impossible to comply with the requirement that a minimum depth of two metres be maintained between the bottom of any graves and the water table.

01189692753

11-APR-01 23:19 David Bates 01189692753 PAGE: 2

5. It is understood that highways initial objections were withdrawn. It is now five years since the original application was granted and in that time traffic through Sonning has increased considerably. Changes to the road system in Reading have resulted in a noticeable increase in traffic in Sonning Lane. With further development in Thames Valley Park and other areas it is anticipated that traffic in Sonning will rise by 17% in the next few years. A recent approval for a Rowing Lake in Sonning Eye will add a further 5% to that figure.

6. The site has continued to deteriorate under the current ownership and is presently under an enforcement notice. If WDC are of a mind to approve this variation it is essential that additional conditions, to ensure that action is taken to clear and fence the site securely prior to any on site work being commenced, are added to the existing ones.

7. For the above reasons, Sonning Parish Council urges Wokingham District Council to refuse this application

L. A. Bates (Clerk to the Council). 11 April 2001

Rec'd PH 10.4.01

Gregory Gray Associates

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
'Redcliffe', 17 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU52 7SL.
Telephone: 01252 624004 Fax: 01252 684160
E-Mail: info@ggassoociates.co.uk

Miss. N. Lake,
Head of Planning & Transportation,
Wokingham District Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham, Berks, RG40 1WR.

10th April 2001

Our Ref: SL/00/180

Dear Miss. Lake,

CHANGE OF USE TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK
LAND TO THE NORTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE, SONNING.
RENEWAL OF 45032
VAR/2001/3562

I write in respect of the above application.

I attach extracts from planning of 6th April. When the application was originally submitted the District Council showed interest in purchasing the land. This was due to a perceived shortage of burial space and I understand that demand still exists.

Notwithstanding the matters set out in the application, the Select Committee report adds weight to the further grant of planning permission.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leedale

Enc.

APP 42215
TLS
DC NL
ENF
APP
11 APR 2001
COPIES TO:
ACK:
FILE:

PLANNING
.or the natural and built environment
6 April 2001

Research urged on cemetery shortage

By David Dewar

Development plans should address the need for burial space to help tackle a serious shortage in the provision of cemeteries, an influential committee of MPs is demanding.

In a new report, the Commons environment, transport and regional affairs committee says that research on the provision of burial space is "urgently" needed. It argues that there is a worsening problem of a lack of burial space which is at "crisis point" in London.

The committee heard evidence that two London boroughs – Hackney and Tower Hamlets – currently have no facilities for burying the dead.

The committee recommends that local authorities ensure the "widest possible access" to the option of burial, and that they should ensure that "local, accessible burial space" is found. It says that this need should be addressed in development plans.

David John, the RTPI's development plan panel convenor, said: "This is definitely a problem local planning authorities can address." But he suggested that guidance is needed from the government, particularly on assessing demand for new cemeteries.

The committee also lambasted the poor state of cemeteries in the UK. In some cities, it says, graveyards are "a disgrace, abandoned by all but alcoholics and drug users".

The MPs claim that local government and regeneration minister Hilary Armstrong "did not impress upon us that her department was taking the issues surrounding cemeteries seriously as part of the government's vision for an urban renaissance".

● *Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Eighth Report: Cemeteries* is available from The Stationery Office (tel) 0870 600 5522 and can be viewed via the *Planning* website at www.planning.haynet.com

Role of vacant homes ignored

By Huw Morris

Eight out of ten planning authorities ignore the role of reusing vacant property to meet housing requirements, according to a new survey. The poll, by the Empty Homes Agency, reveals that more than 80 per cent of councils fail to refer to empty property in their local plans. The agency has described the findings as "dep[illegible]ng".

See **VACANT PROPERTY** p2

Agencies seek pit monitoring

By Jon Reeds

The Environment Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency are arguing for long-term monitoring of the country's foot-and-mouth carcass burial pits. The sites were created under emergency powers with no planning permission or waste management licences.

See **MONITORING** p3

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Interview
Summer School president Helen Williams **p21**

Job of the Week
Planning control and conservation manager at Oxford City **p39**

www.planning.haynet.com

Study commissioned for derelict Sunderland port

The options for regenerating derelict land at the port of Sunderland are to be the subject of a new study.

Sunderland City Council and regional development agency One North East have commissioned the study into unused land at the port and Hendon Sidings. The sites are occupied by infilled docks and the exposed foundations of demolished buildings.

The study, to be carried out by a team of consultants including Halcrow Fox and Roger Tym & Partners, will be accompanied by a development plan, market and economic appraisals and a masterplanning framework. The work, which will take around a year to complete, will also include extensive site investigations and environmental, traffic and engineering studies on the site.

Colin Anderson, leader of Sunderland City Council, said: "The non-operational areas of the port and Hendon Sidings will provide potentially the best regeneration opportunity for inner Sunderland in the first decade of this century."

The move comes after the government's announcement that an urban regeneration company is to be established in the city to focus on an area south of the River Wear from the A19 to the port and on strategic sites on the north bank of the river.



Port of Sunderland: regeneration options set to be studied

Mayor savaged over road fees

London boroughs and Greater London Authority politicians this week demanded an independent public inquiry into mayor Ken Livingstone's congestion charging plans.

Greater London Authority transport committee member Angie Bray savaged the mayor for failing to respond to the assembly's criticisms of his plan to introduce a £5 weekday charge for vehicles to enter central London.

Last autumn, Bray's cross-party committee branded the charging plans "gravely flawed" and called on the mayor to set out measurable improvements to public transport before introducing charging, a demand which it claims has not been answered.

Bray said: "If Livingstone fails to set up an inquiry Londoners will wonder what he has got to hide." The call for an inquiry was backed by the Tory-run councils of Wandsworth, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea.

Prescott calls in airport plan

Environment secretary John Prescott has called in a proposal for a new commercial airport at Finningley in south Yorkshire.

A notification letter issued this week said that the secretary of state particularly wished to be informed on matters including the need for developer Peel Airports' proposal, the effects of additional noise and pollution and the impact on local conservation interests.

Robert Hough, chairman of Peel Airports, said: "We believe that an inquiry is an unnecessary delay and feel disappointment for the 60,000 people who have written in support of the project. The site is allocated for aviation in the local development plan and all aspects of the application have been fully covered."

Wokingham District Council
Planning Application

Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 – Notice under Article 8

AND/OR

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 and Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Application No: VAR/2001/3562

Proposal:
Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.

Location:
Land North Of County Sports Ground Sonning Lane Sonning Reading

This application is being advertised in the Reading Chronicle newspaper on the 12/04/2001 for the following reason(s);

PROPOSAL IS A MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AND IS CONTRARY TO THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The application can be inspected at Wokingham District Council's offices during the following times:

PLANNING DEPARTMENT, SHUTE END, WOKINGHAM TEL (0118) 974 6428
8.30 - 5.00 Monday - Thursday & 8.30 - 4.00 Friday

WOODLEY LIBRARY HEADLEY ROAD WOODLEY (9.30am - 7.00pm Mon, Thurs & Fri. 9.30am - 5.00pm Tues, 9.30am - 1.00pm Saturday. closed all day Wednesday)

Comments should be sent in writing QUOTING THE APPLICATION NUMBER to the Case Officer Nicola Lake P.O. Box 157 Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1WR to arrive before **03/05/2001**. Written comments submitted will become available for public inspection.

In view of the very large number of planning applications and letters of comment received, it will not be possible for an individual reply to observations made. However any comments will be taken into account when the application is determined and you will be notified of the decision.

Date: 12/04/2001

Policy and Plans Consultation

Location: Land North of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning.

Proposal: Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.

Application Number: VAR/2001/3562

Applicant: Holme Park Sonning Ltd c/o Gregory Gray Associates.

There are no policy comments on this application for renewal of 45032, and therefore see previous policy comments on that application.

Andrew Astin
Policy & Plans
27/03/01

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

From: Suzanne McLaughlin
Environmental Health

My Ref: SEM/20005736

To: Nicola Lake
Development Control

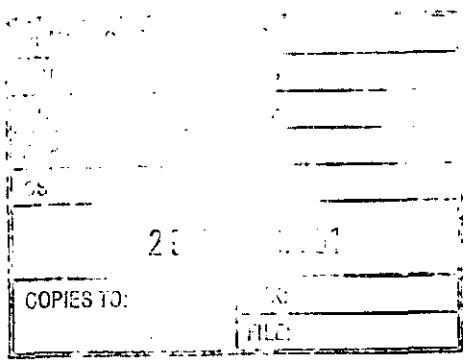
Your Ref: VAR/2001/3562

Date: 28 March 2001

Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.
Land north of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning.

I have reviewed the proposals and I have no environmental health objections to the application.

Suzanne McLaughlin



To:
John Leggett
Re: Mineral Site Consultation Area

From: Nicola Lake

Date: 23 March 2001

Application Number: VAR/2001/3562

Proposal: Proposed variation to condition 1 of consent 45032 to allow for an extension of time to start change of use of land to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park..

Site Address:
Land North Of County Sports Ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Reading.

Applicant:
Holme Park Sonning Ltd C/O Gregory Gray Associates.

Your observations are required in respect of this application within **7 days** of the above date.

According to the Berkshire replacement minerals local plan this application is within an area with the strongest presumption against allow extraction (MLP policy 11) Therefore we have no objection to this proposal.

WOKINGHAM D.C. DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Start date:	14 MAR 2001
Officer: [redacted] NL	Application No. VAR/2001/3562

Map No. 31.. Site ...1.80.....
Easting: ..... Flood Pln .....
Northing: ..... Mineral .....

Level: ☑ Sub Committee ☐ Delegated ☐ Sec. State
☐ Incorrect Fee ☐ Invalid ☐ PD

Description:
(VAR) PROPOSED VARIATION TO CONDITION 1 OF CONSENT 45032 FOR TO ALLOW FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME TO START CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND WITH ANCILLARY CAR PARK.

Location: LAND N OF County SPORTS GROUND, SONNING LANE

Parish: SONNING Ward: SONNING
23.03.01

Applicant: HOLME PARK. SONNING LTD

Fee Received 95-00 Required ..... Additional ..... Refund .....
(4)

Enforcement Section to be notified ☐ tick if required

Additional information required for validation

		Reason	Requested	Received
1	1:2500 OS location plan showing property edged in blue/red			
2	1:500 block plan showing existing & proposed dev. + adj. Properties			
3	Forms unsigned			
4	Correct S 66 certificate			
5	Elevation plans			
6	Floor plans			
7	Metric scale disclaimer			
8	Encroachment letter			
9	Miscellaneous			

APPLN NO. _____

ACTION REQUIRED BY DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Conservation Area ...Sonning.....

Listed Building 1 2 2*

Advertisement Required ...Major devel. of wider local significance (CD xx) 23.03.01
(?) Departure from development plan ✓

Date Site Notice Sent : 23.03.01 Parish Council Informed - YES / NO

INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

Building Control .....
Landscape ✓
Trees .....
Conservation Officer ✓
Environmental Health ✓
Housing .....
Leisure & Cultural services ✓
Public Rights of Way .....
Property re ownership of access drive.
District Secretary (only if called in by SOS) .....
Policy & Plans ✓
EXT Strategic Planning (JSPU) ✓
Minerals (INTERNAL) Min. Site Consultation Area
Archaeological Site (BABTIE) : .....
Education .....
Social Services .....
Highways ✓

— A. Glencross, Dinton Pastures (Newts Consultation)

EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

Adjacent D P A : .....
Adjacent Parish : .....
Southern Electricity Board .....
British Gas .....
PSA Oil Pipeline .....
Transco : .....
Environment Agency ✓ .....

Rail Track .....
Police Arch. Liaison Officer .....

HERITAGE BODIES

The Georgian Group .....
Ancient Monuments Society .....
Council for British Arch. .....
RCHME .....
Telecommunications (NRPB) : .....
Sport England : .....

OTHERS: (Green gap/wedge Rural Area.)
.....
English Nature 20/6
No pre-apps.

NEIGHBOURS:

S/N + see map +

Please include: South Hill, Sonning Lane, Sonning-on-Thames
Reading Blue Coat School, Holme Park, Sonning Lane
Reading Cricket & Hockey Club, Sonning Lane

1769a

WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATION

PART 1

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT DEVELOPMENT - TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACTS

Please answer ALL QUESTIONS in BLOCK LETTERS. If a question is not applicable, answer N/A in space. Please submit SIX copies of this form and plans to:-

THE DISTRICT PLANNING OFFICER
WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLANNING DEPARTMENT
P O Box No. 157
COUNCIL OFFICES
SHUTE END
WOKINGHAM
BERKSHIRE. RG40 1WR

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

14.MAR2001* .3562

1.	APPLICANT'S NAME	Holme Park Sonning Limited
	ADDRESS	c/o the agent
	POST CODE	PHONE
If the applicant has an agent, all correspondence will be sent to the agent	AGENT'S NAME	Gregory Gray Associates
	ADDRESS	Chartered Town Planning Consultants
		17 Dinorben Close, Fleet
	POST CODE	GU52 7SL PHONE 01252 624004
3. On the plans show the SITE outlined in RED Show also OTHER land in the applicant's ownership or control in BLUE.	SITE LOCATION	Land north of sports ground, Sonning Lane, Sonning
4. WHAT IS THE APPLICATION FOR ? Give brief details and state for what purpose this site and any buildings will be used.		Change of use to woodland burial ground with ancillary car park (renewal of 45032)
5. Give the area in hectares or part of a hectare	AREA OF SITE	1.9ha
6. State the applicant's interest in the land e.g. owner, prospective purchaser, lessee	OWNERSHIP	Owner with right of way over access
7. List all the plans and drawings submitted with the application	PLANS/DRAWINGS	SL/00/180/01

8. DOES THE APPLICATION INVOLVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ?
Tick the boxes(x)

CHANGE OF USE	☐		REDEVELOPMENT	☐
ERECTION OF NEW BUILDING	☐		ALTERATION or EXTENSION	☐

9. WHAT TYPE OF APPLICATION IS THIS ?
Tick one box only

OUTLINE PERMISSION	☐	See question 10	
FULL PERMISSION	☐		
APPROVAL OF DETAILS/RESERVED MATTERS	☐	State relevant outline permission number Also complete Question 10	
TEMPORARY PERMISSION	☐	State period required	
RELAXATION OF CONDITIONS	☑	State relevant application number	01
		Conditions to be relaxed	45032

10. IF THIS IS AN OUTLINE APPLICATION OR AN APPROVAL OF RESERVED MATTERS, which details, if any, do you wish to be considered as part of this application ?

		SITING	☐
EXTERNAL APPEARANCE	☐	DESIGN	☐
MEANS OF ACCESS	☐	LANDSCAPING	☐

11. WHAT IS THE EXISTING USE OF THE LAND AND/OR BUILDING(S) e.g. residential, industrial, etc. If the site is vacant say so, and also state its previous use and when that ceased.

Vacant - agricultural

12. DOES A PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY CROSS OR ABUT THE SITE OR THE PROPOSED ACCESS? YES/NO — If yes, show existing route(s) and any proposed alternatives on the plans

13. ARE THERE ANY TREES ON THE SITE? IF YES, ARE ANY TO BE FELLED? YES/NO — If yes, please show their positions, spread and species on the plans and which, if any, are to be felled.

14. STATE EXTERNAL MATERIALS TO BE USED.

car park to be rolled gravel surface or similar with half-round timber edges

15. HOW WILL THE SITE BE ENCLOSED? Say whether walls, fences or hedges, and give height, colour and materials. If the site is divided into plots, say how each is to be enclosed.

Post and rail timber fence and hedges

16. HOW WILL SURFACE WATER BE DISPOSED OF?

To be agreed by condition

17. HOW WILL FOUL SEWAGE BE DISPOSED OF?

To existing system YES/NO

If no, please give details

18. WHAT ARE THE ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS?
AS EXISTING
AS PROPOSED
Give details of pedestrian and vehicular access

Via drive to Sonning Lane

19. HAS PROVISION BEEN MADE FOR THE DISABLED? See notes for applicants

20. IF THIS PROPOSAL INVOLVES RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OR THE LOSS OF RESIDENTIAL UNITS, COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING TABLE

	No. OF DWELLINGS/HABITABLE ROOMS PROPOSED	TO BE RETAINED	TO BE LOST
HOUSE	/ *	/ *	/
BUNGALOW	/ *	/ *	/ *
FLAT/MAISONETTE	/ *	/ *	/ *
OTHER	/ *	/ *	/ *

21. DOES THE PROPOSAL INVOLVE ANY NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING OR USE? YES/NO — * STATE No. OF HABITABLE ROOMS If YES, complete Part 2 of the form

22. DOES THE PROPOSAL INVOLVE THE WINNING, WORKING OR PROCESSING OF MINERALS: THE DISPOSAL OF MINERAL WASTE, OR THE DEPOSIT OR PROCESSING OF REFUSE AND WASTE MATERIALS? YES/NO — If YES, please ask for and complete Part 3 of the form

23. STATE THE FEE ENCLOSED WITH THIS APPLICATION The current scale of fees is enclosed. If you believe a reduced fee or no fee is payable, say why.

£95.00

I hereby apply for permission in respect of the particulars described above and in the attached plans and drawings. If planning permission is granted, the development must be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved plans. Failure to do so could result in enforcement action being taken. Permission under the Town & Country Planning Acts does not obviate the possible need to apply for Building Regulations approval.

SIGNED Graham Cass Associates ON BEHALF OF Holme Park Sonning Limited DATE 9th March 2001

Before submitting the application check that it is complete, that all questions have been answered and that the site boundary and the new work are clearly edged in red on the plans. Every application must be accompanied by the appropriate certificate and fee. See "NOTES TO HELP APPLICANTS".

1769c

PLANNING APPLICATION

PART 2

This part of the form need only be completed if the application involves non-residential development. *Please answer all questions in print or* block letters. If the answer is not applicable, write N/A in the space. You may wish to amplify your answers in a covering letter.

24. STATE THE GROSS FLOOR SPACE (by external measurement) OF ALL BUILDINGS TO WHICH THIS APPLICATION REFERS. Please give all floor areas in SQUARE METRES.

	USE CLASS	Existing floor space		Proposed additional floorspace created by	
		Retained in existing use	Lost by change of use or demolition	New building	Change of use
A1	SHOPS				
A2	FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES				
A3	FOOD AND DRINK				
B1(a)	OFFICE (other than A2)				
B1 (b)	RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT				
(c)	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL				
B2	GENERAL INDUSTRIAL				
B3-7	SPECIAL INDUSTRIAL				
B8	STORAGE OR DISTRIBUTION				
C1	HOTELS AND HOSTELS				
C2	RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS				
D1	NON-RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS				
D2	ASSEMBLY AND LEISURE				
OTHER	Please Specify				
OTHER	Please Specify				
	TOTAL				

25. IF C1 OR C2 USE IS PROPOSED, PLEASE STATE NUMBER OF BED SPACES

26. WHAT PROVISION IS BEING MADE FOR PARKING?

	Cars	Lorries
Existing	Nil	Nil
Proposed	About 10	Nil

27. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITY OR PROCESSES TO BE CARRIED ON
Please provide details of any equipment, plant or machinery *to be installed and any end products.* You may wish to amplify your answers in a covering letter.

Woodland burial ground with ancillary car park.

28. WHO WILL OCCUPY THE PREMISES?
a) Give the name and current operating address of the proposed occupier
b) Will these premises be vacated?

Not known

29. IF KNOWN, HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE LIKELY TO BE EMPLOYED ON SITE AFTER COMPLETION OF THE DEVELOPMENT?

Existing Staff	Transferred Staff	New Staff	Total
Not known			

30. DOES THE PROPOSAL INVOLVE THE USE OR STORAGE OF ANY OF THE HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES LISTED IN THE NOTES?
If so, state this material, the quantity *and method of* storage.

No

Before submitting the application check that it is complete, that all questions have been answered and that the site boundary and the *new work* are clearly edged in red on the plans. Every application must be accompanied by the appropriate certificate and fee. See "NOTES TO HELP APPLICANTS'.

1769d

YOUR PLANNING APPLICATION

WHY DO YOU NEED TO MAKE A PLANNING APPLICATION ?

New buildings, major alterations and enlargement of existing buildings, and many changes in the use of buildings and land need planning permission.
The Town and Country Planning Acts impose a duty on Local Authorities to control these changes, and this means that a balance has to be found between the need and pressure for change, and the desire to protect the character of settlements and the countryside.
The merits of each application are, therefore, carefully examined.

WHAT ELSE MAY YOU HAVE TO DO ?

Listed Building Consent:	for works to a Listed Building; or for demolition works on land within the curtilage of a Listed Building or within a Conservation Area.
Advertisement Consent:	for the display of advertisements or signs
Building Regulation Approval:	for most new building or construction work.

Special forms are available for these types of applications.

You should also check whether there are any other regulations with which you may need to comply.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE APPLICATION ?

It will first be checked to see if it is complete and if it is, it will be registered.

Consultations will be carried out with public and other bodies, such as the Highway Authority, or Local Parish Councils.

Publicity may be given to allow local people the opportunity to comment on your proposals.

The application will be considered in relation to the Council's planning policies and guidelines, the past history of decisions on that site or in the locality, other standards (such as parking, or visibility at road junctions), and any other material considerations.

The site will be visited by a Planning Officer You may be asked tc submit more information, or to amend your application.

The application will then be considered either by a Planning Committee or Sub Committee (made up of Councillors) or by the Chief Officer responsible for planning matters. Objections to an application will be taken into consideration by the Committee or the Chief Officer.

Shortly after the application has been determined, you will receive a Decision Notice.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE ?

An application will generally be determined within eight weeks although a longer period may sometimes be required for a complicated application.

WHAT SORT OF DECISION CAN BE MADE ?

Your application may be approved.

Your application may be approved subject to certain conditions. These could impose restictions on the use of land or buildings, or require further details to be approved at a later stage, (e.g. materials or landscaping).
You may appeal against the conditions, but this opens the entire permission to review by the Secretary of State.

Your application may be refused. The reason will be listed on the Decision Notice.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE APPLICATION IS REFUSED ?

You have the right to appeal against the refusal to the Secretary of State, but you have to do that within six months. Appeals can be dealt with by written representations by both sides, or by a Public Inquiry.
You may ask the Planning Officer whether an amended application would be more likely to receive planning permission.

DATA PROTECTION ACT 1984

'Information contained in this form is likely to be personal data within the terms of the Data Protection Act 1984, and as such will be held by the Council on computer (such as the PLANAPS applications processing system) and may be used by the Council only for purposes registered under the terms of the Data Protection Act.'

Form 2

Town and Country Planning (General Developent Procedure) Order

CERTIFICATE UNDER ARTICLE 7

This Certificate relates to proposed development at (a) Land north of sports fields, Sonnin Lane, Sonning

* COMPLETE BOTH SECTIONS 1 and 2 - delete as applicable.

I certify that:

14 MAR 2001 * 3562

SECTION 1

Certificate A

*1. On the day 21 days before the date of the accompanying application nobody, except the applicant, was the owner (b) of any part of the land to which the application relates.

OR

Certificate B

1. I have/The applicant has given the requisite notice to everyone else who, on the day 21 days before the date of the accompanying application*, was an owner (b) of any part of the land to which the application* relates, as listed below.

Owner's name (b)	Address at which notice was served	Date on which notice was served
The Estates Officer	Wokingham District Council Council Offices Shute End Wokingham RG40 1WR	9th March 2001

AND

SECTION 2

Agricultural Holdings Certificate

*2. None of the land to which the application relates is, or is part of, an agricultural holding.

OR

2. I have/The applicant has given the requisite notice to every person other than my/him/her* self who, on the day 21 days before the date of the application, was a tenant of an agricultural holding on all or part of the land to which the application relates, as follows:

Agricultural tenant's name (c)	Address at which notice was served	Date on which notice was served

Signed Gregory Gray Associates

*On behalf of Holme Park Sonning Limited

Date 9th March 2001

(a) please give the application site address.

(b) "owner" means a person having a freehold interest or a leasehold interest the unexpired term of which is not less than 7 years. Unless you are the **sole freehold owner** of all the land included in the application, you should complete Certificate B and serve notice on all other owners.

If you do not know the name and address of the owners of the land, please consult the local Planning Office for further advice.

(c) If you are the sole agricultural tenant enter "not applicable".

It is an offence to knowingly or recklessly complete a false or misleading Article 7 Certificate.

KING GEORGE V RECREATION FIELD

ADDRESS

PARISH Sonning

ORD. SHEET No. (31

PLOT No.

BUILDER

Plan No.	Applicant	Description of Development	Date of Decision	Decision	
PD/316/73	Sonning Parish Council	Pavilion Tennis Club	17.5.73	App	N/
BR 13056	" " "	extn to pavilion	21.3.80	app	NA
13276	"	CHANGING ROOM, SHOWER & TEA BAR; NEW STORE	5.6.80	N/A	RE
BR15381	"	LOTS & ALTS THE PAVILION	7.8.80	App	N/
13932	"	"	28.8.80	N/A	C/A
29738	"	RE-LOC. CLUB MUSEUM / 3rd TENNIS COURT	24.3.88		CA
32291					
99/70627/F	"	Erect replacement Sports Pavilion	10.1.00		C
F/2000/0281	"	6 m high safety netting fence	17/04/00		C
F/2000/2155	"	Erect replacement Pavilion Amend to cons. 70627	21.11.00		A

DATE OF COMPLETION

MINISTRY DECISION

SPECIAL ORDERS

DRAINAGE

14 MAR 2001 * 3562

LAND BETWEEN COUNTY SPORTS GROUND - THATCHED COTTAGE

ADDRESS SONNING LANE PARISH SONNING

PLOT No. ORD. SHEET No.

BUILDER

Plan No 351/50	Applicant MR. L. RASSELL	Description of Development 3 HOUSES	Date of Decision 16.9.50	Decision C/A
12934	HOLME PARK SONNING LTD.	O/APP. 4 DET. HOUSES	10.4.80	N/A REF.
15548	"	" 6 "	8.5.81	N/A REF.
40424	APPEAL HOLME PARK SONNING LTD	13 DET. HOUSES	11.2.93	REF.
45032	HOLME PARK SONNING LTD	C/O/USE VACANT AGR. LAND TO BURIAL GROUND	4.7.96	C/A
~~[illegible]~~				

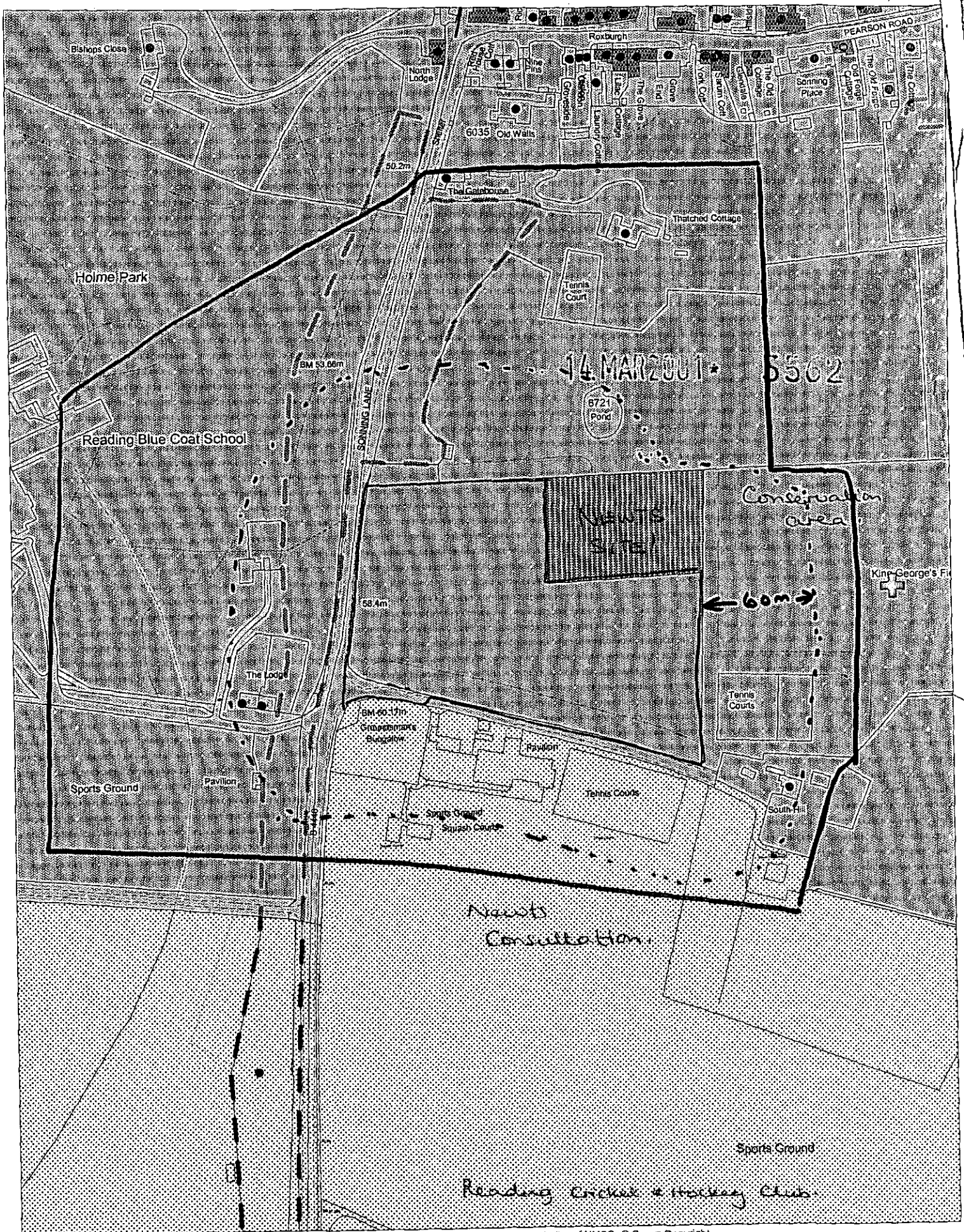
DATE OF COMPLETION

MINISTRY DECISION 12934 - APPEAL DISMISSED - 25.11.80 40424 - APPEAL DISMISSED - 10.8.93

SPECIAL ORDERS

DRAINAGE

091074



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Development Control Section, Environmental Services, Wokingham District Council.
19 March 2001

Scale: 1 : 2500

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