

PLANNING REF : 243190
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Arborfield Village Hall
: Eversley Road, Arborfield
: RG2 9PQ
SUBMITTED BY : Arborfield & Newland Parish Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 22/01/2025

COMMENTS:
Arborfield & Newland Parish Council

Variation/Removal of Condition Consultation

Arborfield & Newland Parish Council (A&NPC) strongly objects to this variation/removal of condition consultation. For the same reasons and rationale applied in the Council's original objection to the original planning application 223083, the scale and location of these industrial units will irrevocably change a rural setting on a site next to an ancient woodland (recorded by the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association) and designated Local Wildlife Site (recorded by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre). A&NPC does not believe any mitigations put forward by the applicant can offset the harms that would be caused to these irreplaceable environments. The core of the original objection to 223083 is replicated below as the objections still apply to the variation/removal of conditions consultation.

A&NPC brings to Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC) attention that this proposal is in contravention of policies IRS1, IRS2, IRS3, TC3, AD3 and GA1 from the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan and policies CP1, CP3, CP6, CP7, CP9, CP10, CP11 and CP15 of WBC's core planning strategies. This reinforces A&NPC's strong objection to this variation and believes that WBC has no alternative but to reject this application for the reasons set out in this submission.

It is also noteworthy that from the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) table 4 exclusion categories 'Site within ancient woodland' that the NPPF advises that planning permission should not be granted normally for development which results in loss or deterioration of ancient woodland. It is clear that the siting of industrial units on the boundary of an ancient woodland would result in the deterioration of Pound Copse from light, noise and particulate pollution and have a detrimental effect to the wildlife that lives in and around the ancient woodland. The plans for the variations are not particularly clear and the Parish Council would like some assurances that the buffer zone of a minimum of 15m from the boundary of Pound Copse will be adhered to. This is a condition that UK government expects to be applied and concurs that if additional changes are likely to impact the ancient woodland, such as an increase in traffic/light/noise/pollution, then the buffer zone should be extended. The Council would be grateful if WBC officers could look into this and ensure that the variations/removal of conditions consultation factor in this requirement.

A&NPC would bring to the attention of WBC planning committee the nature of the updated landscape and visual impact assessment and how it has some strange aspects with which it looks over the development, from choosing roads that are screened across multiple

fields and hedge rows to direct line of sight but no indication of what the actual development is going to look like in the way of scale and type of building present. The area proposed for development is currently classified as 'countryside' and no amount of additional planting around the site (which appears to be the conclusion of the assessment) will hide its very obvious industrial aspect from any visual aspects. The notion of additional landscape screening is there to hide development from view which tacitly admits the development is out of place in the location. The units would be in direct line of sight from the observer way by-pass and change a rural countryside aspect to that of an industrial estate no matter what steps are taken to colour the units. The site is currently a greenfield site and sits within the boundary of Arborfield village which is designated as 'limited development'.

There is no demonstrable benefit from these variations to the local area. There are already a number of small and medium sized industrial estates in the local proximity and a number are advertising for businesses to use their industrial units demonstrating that the area doesn't need more industrial units as there is low take up of those already present with plenty of units vacant. A&NPC also notes that Bound Oak Industrial estate, which received planning permission for the redevelopment and expansion of an existing small industrial estate (which was supported by A&NPC) is now for sale with planning permission, but without the development having been undertaken. A&NPC has also raised no objections to the extensions proposed to Hogwood Industrial Estate as part of the Arborfield Garrison SDL development. With both of these developments within three miles of this proposed development, A&NPC believes there will be an over-supply of industrial units in the area if this proposal is given the go-ahead.

With regard to Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan, this proposed development for an industrial estate on Observer Way contravenes the policies stated in the neighbourhood plan on a number of important points.

Policy IRS1 - PRESERVATION OF SEPARATION OF SETTLEMENTS-
section a - Preserve the character and appearance of the countryside - this development aims to build an industrial estate on designated countryside and from the Landscape and visual impact assessment confirming that significant landscaping and tree planting would be required to hide the buildings from all directions of visual aspect would indicate that this development will not preserve the character or appearance of the countryside but irrevocably alter the countryside along Observer Way.

Policy IRS2: RECOGNISE, RESPECT AND PRESERVE IDENTITY AND RURAL SETTING OF SETTLEMENTS, Development proposals must recognise, respect and preserve the identity and rural setting of settlements, with regard to: a) Scale and form of the development - this development is out of scale with all the building and residences in its locality, with its multiple large business units it is incongruous with the present farm buildings and residential properties in close proximity to the development site. As stated previously the need to plant significant numbers of trees to screen

the development is tacit acknowledgement of its over scale design for the area and foreseen visual impact by virtue of its out of place scale.

Following on from this, with reference to section 4.13 to 4.16 the development would restrict views of Pound Copse ancient woodland from the West and additional tree planting as suggested by the visual impact assessment would further hide the scale of the business units and any direct views across the fields of Pound Copse.

POLICY IRS3: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN SPACES - 1.

Development proposals should conserve and enhance the natural environment and green spaces of the area, this development will have an overall negative affect on the biodiversity locally; it will affect Pound Copse Ancient woodland with light, noise and particulate pollution from the large industrial vehicle movements. It will negatively impact the use of the ancient woodland for a number of species locally by adding a barrier to their entry into the ancient woodland and a creating barren tarmac area adjacent to the ancient woodland.

The building of a sizeable industrial development next to Pound Copse will change the nature of the ancient woodland forever and cause a loss of amenity for the public who use these public open spaces by virtue of the scale and massing of the business units directly next to the ancient woodland, including noise and particulate pollution into Pound Copse.

POLICY TC3: CONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND AGRICULTURE 1. New or existing businesses in the countryside are encouraged to re-use lawful buildings that are vacant – it should be noted that with reference to the policy of TC3 there are already a number of industrial units available in the locality such as Hogswood industrial estate and Nine Mile Ride industrial units that have numerous vacancies for small and medium sized businesses and A&NPC would encourage the full use of those facilities before further units are built anywhere locally.

POLICY AD3: HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT WITH GENEROUS OPEN SPACE, PROPERLY LANDSCAPED – in stark contrast to this Neighbourhood Plan Policy this development is built of metal clad industrial units with no reference to local form or character of buildings. In ition, as stated numerous times in this objection the use of increased tree planting to screen the site is again acknowledgement of the impact on visual aspect of the site in both scale, massing and design of the units.

POLICY GA1: MINIMISE ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC ON UNSUITABLE ROADS – the development would bring ever more heavy industrial vehicles to the roads across Arborfield Parish and show marked increases in traffic volumes locally for both persons working at the development and the frequent deliveries required to sustain an industrial estate and the businesses within.

With regards to WBC Core Planning Strategies for development this development can be seen to contravene the following policies:

CP1 - Sustainable development section - section 2 - minimise emissions of pollutants - in this case this development would be bring industrial traffic into the centre of Arborfield and additional vehicle use of local roads by cars, vans and large lorries.

CP1 sustainable development - section 11 - demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel particularly in private cars - this development offers no alternatives to accessing the site but by car or industrial vehicle. This is an island site well away from any alternative travel arrangements.

CP1 sustainable development - section 12 - There is little to no evidence of the inclusion of on-site renewables or any further environmental considerations for the site such as grey water recycling.

CP3 -

General principles for development - are of an appropriate scale and mass without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces and their quality of life. This development is for large industrial units to be placed in direct line of sight from Pound Copse and Greensward Lane and would be an have an overbearing impact on the amenity of Pound Copse ancient woodland which abuts this development. The massing and scale of this development is such that the developer's own impact assessment concludes that additional screening is required and tacitly admits that the mass and scale is beyond what would reasonably be allowed to be developed at this location without much additional screening (hiding) of the development.

CP6 - Managing Travel Demand - section e - this development offers no mitigation for the adverse effect of the vehicular traffic to and from site on local and strategic roads. This industrial site would facilitate large heavy goods vehicles and routes to and from the site would require use of traffic controlled local roads and very busy strategic roads and only add to the already congested nature of the local roads.

CP7 - Biodiversity sections A B and C - the location of this development abutting an ancient woodland at Pound Copse and designated borough greenspace and would be detrimental to the biodiversity of Pound Copse through light, noise and particulate pollution from the industrial nature of the development. The variations offer no appropriate compensation measures to offset the harm it will inflict upon the local environment and especially the ancient woodland. This development does nothing to enhance local biodiversity and would on the balance of probability irrevocably harm the biodiversity locally.

CP9 - Scale and location of development proposals - this development is located in Arborfield which is stated as an area of limited development in WBC core planning policies.

CP10 - Improvements to Strategic Transport Network - in combination with the developments lack of approach to sustainable travel locally this development has made no attempt to offer improvements in local strategic travel network, a network that by its intended

use will rely heavily upon for the movements of the heavy industrial vehicles that will be using the site.

CP11 - Proposals outside

development limits (including countryside) section 1 and 2 - this development would not contribute to local rural enterprises or to encourage rural enterprises, there are already many local industrial estates with vacant plots not being used. The development by its location is an expansion of the original farm building and away from the original farm building that have been on site for some time. This development would act as a slow in-fill of the area along Observer Way and act to alter countryside aspect of the area to one of industrial development.

CP15 - Employment Development - this development is in direct contravention to CP15 as it sits outside any of WBC Core employment areas.

A&NPC previously submitted comments:

COMMENTS: " The Parish Council objects to this proposal for the construction of a commercial development on the basis that is an unnecessary commercial development of a green field site that is situated within a Green Route Enhancement Area that would result in the erosion of the rural setting of the area for the following reasons:

1. Settlement

Limits. By virtue of being located beyond settlement limits and failing to take into consideration the character of the countryside and landscape, the proposal would lead to an erosion and urbanisation of the countryside, failing to protect the quality of the environment.

The proposal is therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, CP11 of the Core Strategy, CC01, CC02 and CC03 of the MDD Local Plan and IRS1 of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan.

2. Detrimental to the character of the area. The proposal would result in an incongruous and alien addition to the street scene and an erosion of the Borough's green infrastructure, to the detriment of the character of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, CP1, CP3, CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, IRS2 of the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan. The council will continue to object to any proposed development along the boundaries of Observer Way."