

PLANNING REF : 230747
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Arborfield Village Hall
: Eversley Road, Arborfield
: RG2 9PQ
SUBMITTED BY : Arborfield & Newland Parish Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 22/06/2023

COMMENTS:

Land at Eversley Road Arborfield - Erection of a Petrol Filling Station.

Previous Response - Arborfield parish council response to previous application 211819 for the erection of a petrol station on Eversley Road.

Arborfield and Newlands Parish Council object to this planning application for the construction of Petrol Filling Station (PFS) on the grounds it is an unnecessary commercial development of a green field site within a Green Route Enhancement Area and would result in the erosion of the rural setting of Arborfield Cross and act to coalesce the distinct settlements of the Arborfield Garrison and Arborfield Cross.

Settlement Limits.

This site is outside of the Arborfield Garrison SDL and within the boundary of Arborfield Cross settlement. By virtue of being located within the settlement boundary of Arborfield Cross 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.

This application would fail to maintain the separation between the Garrison SDL and Arborfield Cross in line with the intention of CP18 to keep the settlements separated and distinct.

The application would dominate the area surrounding the Ducks Nest Farm roundabout and change the nature and character of the area irrevocably.

Line of sight and design of exit.

As stated in the pre-application advice for the original application:

"The technical specifications of the roundabout have already been completed and the vehicular entry/exit point has a poor relationship with the intended functionality of the roundabout. It is recommended that an alternate entry/exit point be considered, which will require further consultation with Council's Highways

department"

The redesign of the entry and exit point to the PFS is no better solution for this site than the originally poorly thought-out entry and exit point. The same problems are still left unaddressed for the wider impact of the entry and exit point. At peak times traffic entering and exiting will back up onto Ducks Nest Farm roundabout. Exiting traffic will cause congestion to Langley Common Roundabout.

The redesigned 'entry/exit' point will take traffic out onto Eversley Road, which is a 40mph limit, within feet of an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing, with a poor line of sight for traffic approaching from Observer Way. A right turn would be impractical and unsafe under the circumstances (unless the speed limit were reduced to 30mph), which would therefore require all traffic to make a left turn towards Langley Common Roundabout.

At Langley Common Roundabout, through 'Reading bound' traffic would have an option to turn left and travel through the village (the whole reason for the ACRR [Observer Way] was to reduce traffic passing through the village) or circumnavigate the roundabout and return back past the Service Station to re-join Observer Way at Ducks Nest Farm roundabout. This would significantly increase the volume of traffic both through the village and on Eversley Road between Langley Common Road and Observer Way.

Local planning history.

We draw your attention to: Planning application 202303: Site Address: Land at Baird Road, Arborfield Garrison, Arborfield

"Proposal: Outline application with Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and scale reserved for the proposed erection of a two-storey building providing ten 1 - 2- & 3-bedroom apartments with consideration of means of access to be determined"

As recently as 3rd December 2020, planning application 202303 was refused on the precise grounds listed as objections at point 1, above. To permit this development would be directly contrary to that decision completely undermining the very grounds that WBC correctly refused PA 202303. Permitting this application would also set a dangerous precedent for future residential development both on Baird Road, and the greenfield site to the north of the proposal, alongside Observer Way, including Ducks Nest Farm. The Parish Council feels this application is likely to be indicative of a greater plan that would, if permitted, lead to applications for even more residential development. This intention is apparent in, para 6.4 of the Transport Assessment that states:

"The Ducks Nest Roundabout has been assessed using the ARCADY computer program. Assessments have been undertaken for the AM and PM peak hours for the year 2035. The assessments include the trips predicted to be generated by the David Wilson Homes Ducks Nest residential development."

The Parish Council strongly objects to such pre-empted and engineered actions to use this application to create opportunity for future development creep that is well beyond settlement limits. Such planning strategy threatens even further the character of our countryside, and we request that WBC refuses this application to help protect the erosion and urbanisation of our countryside and protect the quality of our environment in line with the following: 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.

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 kham Neighbourhood Plan. In Page 3 of the pre-application advice dated 7th January 2020, WBC provided incontrovertible evidence of this, when they stated:

"There are few fuel stations in the area, however in this instance, the site is located outside settlement limits within the countryside. As such, policy CP11 of the Core Strategy is relevant to the proposal. This policy does not normally permit development outside of development limits except if it:

1)

Contributes to sustainable rural enterprises within the Borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and

2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and

3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement..." The exceptions listed above to CP11 are "and" exceptions, therefore ALL three must be fulfilled. In realistic terms however, despite the slight change of location the application does not overcome any of these exceptions and the application therefore remains totally contrary to CP11.

Furthermore, on page 4, the pre-application advice further states:

"The proposal would result in the expansion of new development, into the Countryside and away from any existing buildings. Therefore, the principle of development in the countryside is generally considered unacceptable. However, the Council recognises that there is a need for such a use in the local area. The current location however is considered

inappropriate due to its siting as it is likely to draw traffic off the Arborfield Relief Road and through Arborfield Village, which is contrary to the objectives of the relief road. A location closer to or off the ARR is likely to be more acceptable."

Nothing in the current proposal addresses the above issue and the new proposal still directs traffic towards Langley Common roundabout, so does not negate any of the above grounds for refusal

Impact on community facilities

Whilst the issue of its effect on other local shops is not a planning matter, its sustainability is.

The developer has called this a petrol station with a shop, but with a shop floor area of 493 sqm and 23 no. parking spaces it's more like a shop with a petrol station and this proposed PFS would be open 24 hours a day seven days a week.

The village is currently serviced by the village shop (Londis), which is a significant focal point at the heart of the Village Centre and has recently been expanded, and by the Co-Op which will provide a service from 0600-2300 to the community in Arborfield Garrison, and a further new store and other commercial facilities that are to be provided at the newly built Arborfield Green village centre, all of which are within close proximity to the proposed PFS.

This application is to situate a shop within 50m of the Co-op shop already in existence. It offers little of value to local communities for shopping and would aim to service transient trade along the Eversley Road and Observer Way offering nothing to the local communities and impact significantly on already established facilities for the community.

Many of the original residents of the post war development in Arborfield still live in the village and rely on having a store that they can walk to. Both the Co-Op and Londis stores are within easy walking distance of Arborfield Cross and Arborfield Garrison and the new village centre will provide good walking access for residents of both Arborfield Garrison and Arborfield Green. It is highly unlikely that all these stores will survive simultaneously if this application was permitted and, would therefore either result in the approval of an unsustainable business or cause the failure of existing local businesses.

Light and Noise pollution.

Currently the site is a rural field and subsequently light and noise free for the surrounding residents. That the PFS is expected to be open 24hrs a day it would cause much disturbance to its neighbours and the local vicinity with both noise and light. Lit signage on all night would be seen from all directions and the lit forecourt would spill light and be seen from some distance into the surrounding countryside.

Noise pollution would have a very real and on going affect on all the residential properties surrounding the site. At present this is a

quiet and relatively noise free area, the siting of a 24hr PFS would mean noise being created at all times and able to be heard from some distance around the site.

The developer for the PFS has failed in all aspects to mitigate both light and noise pollution with respect to the site and the nature of its 24hr operation.

Anti-social Behaviour

Since the opening of Observer Way, the road has been plagued with vehicles being driven at high speed and in an anti-social manner, effectively using the road as a racetrack. There have already been several Road Traffic Collisions and incidents where vehicles have either left the road having lost control or collided with street furniture situated on the central islands. To further provide a facility where groups could meet up at the commencement of Observer Way, would only encourage this anti-social behaviour, rather than deter it.

Summary

The parish council would re-iterate its strong objection to this development. It is a greenfield site outside of the SDL and within the settlement boundary of Arborfield Cross. It is a coalescence of the 2 settlements and would encourage further development between the 2 settlements. It would have a negative effect on the character of the settlement of Arborfield Cross. The entry and exit point for the petrol filling station will be dangerous for all road users and ultimately draw traffic away from Observer Way and into Arborfield Cross, negating the by-pass function of Observer Way. Noise and light pollution from a PFS would affect residents in close proximity and those further from the site. The developer has done little to mitigate any of these issues with their design plan. Arborfield and Newlands Parish Council would see this application rejected.