

Anthony Chadley

9th September 2014

Planning Policy Team
West Berkshire Council,
Planning and Countryside,
Council Offices,
Market Street,
Newbury RG14 5LD

By E-mail: planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk
and by hand

Dear Sirs,

Re: **Site Ref: EUA007 – Eastern Urban Area – Tilehurst**
Address: Turnhams Farm, Pincents Lane, Tilehurst

On behalf of the Combined Save Calcot Action Group/Save Pincents Hill Group, I would make the following comments regarding site EUA007 and its inclusion in the The Housing Site Allocations DPD

The proposal to include the site at Pincents Lane EUA007 is fundamentally flawed and conflicts with West Berkshire policy. I would therefore add my reasons for this not to be included to the many hundreds already submitted.

For the Housing Site Allocations DPD to be sound it should be:-

- Positively prepared
- Justified
- Effective

I will demonstrate below that the West Berkshire proposal for EUA007 fails to meet this criterion.

West Berkshire Core Strategy document CS19 sets out the procedure and guidance for providing the DPD, in particular it states;

CS19, 2.8

“The principal role of the Core Strategy is to deliver the spatial planning strategy for the District of West Berkshire, based on the local characteristics of the area.”

and

“It is considered that the West Berkshire Core Strategy has been developed with the residents of West Berkshire, based on a robust and local evidence base.”

Any development at this site fails to meet the local characteristics of the area, and

any development at this site fails to take into account the concerns of the residents of West Berkshire - see below

CS19, 2.29

“This work is particularly related to the need to deliver sustainable transport solutions to reduce and manage the growth of congestion around the A4 and the M4 and surrounding transport corridors.”

Any development at this site increases congestion at these areas - see below

CS19, 2.36

Listed as strengths: *“Attractive towns and villages, with their own identities”*

Any development at this site will reduce the identity of Calcot, Theale and Tilehurst - see below

CS19, 3.4

“People in the towns and villages will have a high quality of life with good access to education, jobs, services, shops and public transport, mostly within walking and cycling distance. The transport infrastructure will have been improved and there will be reduced congestion and better access to public transport throughout the District, with improved pedestrian routes and cycleways. People will lead healthy and active lifestyles benefiting from improved access to sporting facilities, high quality open spaces and the open countryside, while being supported by a good network of local health centres.”

And

CS19, 4.4

“The existing urban areas are regarded as the most suitable locations for future development by virtue of their existing access to services and facilities, thereby providing the opportunity to reduce out-commuting and the need to travel”.

Any development at this site increases congestion, increases the pressure on services and education, but reduces the quality of open spaces. It is in an area which will increase the reliance on cars, and increases the population in an already under-resourced area with insufficient leisure, health and education facilities - see below

CS19, 4.6

“Green infrastructure such as open space, biodiversity, geodiversity and other semi-natural features will be protected and enhanced, including networks of green wildlife corridors and spaces.”

Any development at this site destroys the natural features of Pincents Hill, builds on open space, eliminates the wildlife corridor and decreases the green infrastructure - see below

CS19, 4.8; Spatial Strategy

“Most development will be within or adjacent to the settlements included in the settlement hierarchy set out below, and related to the transport accessibility of the settlements (especially by public transport, cycling and walking)”

The proposed development is not within or adjacent to existing settlements. Public transport from the proposed site does not connect with the rest of Tilehurst and Calcot, and accessibility by foot and bike is difficult due to traffic and topography - see below

CS19, 4.30

“The individual identities of Purley on Thames, Tilehurst and Calcot will be maintained and enhanced”

The proposed development fails to maintain or enhance the identities, it in effect does the opposite - see below

CS19, 4.31

“Transport infrastructure will be enhanced to tackle issues of car dependency and congestion. Capacity on the road network will be increased through traffic management measures and upgrades to key routes. Public transport services will be improved through working with Reading Borough Council to increase accessibility to employment and services in Reading. Walking and cycling routes will be improved and more people will use these modes of travel.”

The transport infrastructure cannot keep up with existing use, the proposed development totally fails to meet this criterion - see below

CS19, 4.33

“The high quality landscape and environmental assets in this part of West Berkshire, which includes the Thames National Path and the adjoining North Wessex Downs AONB will be protected and enhanced”

Pincents Hill is a landmark feature, easily accessed by residents in Tilehurst and Calcot who border on its extremities. It is the last green space in the area, wildlife, including bats, deer, badgers, birds, butterflies and other creatures are at risk from encroachment upon it - see below.

CS19, 4; Area delivery plan, policy 4

“The retail park at Pincents Lane will be retained and enhanced as an important retail centre for the residents of Calcot, Tilehurst and Theale.”

Whilst I have no objections to the existing retail park, it is undergoing significant change, with Ikea due to open. If Pincents Lane is to remain as a retail area then including 285+ houses at its furthest point, without additional exit points is foolhardy - see below

Policy CS18; Green infrastructure

“Developments resulting in the loss of green infrastructure or harm to its use or enjoyment by the public will not be permitted. Where exceptionally it is agreed that an area of green infrastructure can be lost a new one of equal or greater size and standard will be required to be provided in an accessible location close by.”

The proposed development will cause harm and loss of green infrastructure. During the previous planning application the developers proposed to open up access in adjacent AONB, however this was demonstrated to be not available; therefore any developer will be unable to offer new green areas nearby.

Policy CS19; Historic Environment and landscape character

“b) Ensuring that new development is appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and character.”

The proposed site is not appropriate in terms of location, scale and design - see below

Policy CS19, 5.137

“It is essential that new development should help sustain and/or create landscapes with a strong sense of place and local identity and this is another key element of the policy.”

The proposed development of this site reduces/eliminates the local identities of Theale, Tilehurst and Calcot - see below

General notes to be read in conjunction with above;

Pincents Hill separates the villages of Theale, Calcot and Tilehurst to the west of Reading, it is the last remaining area of unspoiled countryside that is easily accessible that supports many species of wildlife and flora. Building on this site will permanently destroy a unique habitat and the area will be deprived of a wonderful open space. It will also significantly harm the adjacent AONB, by altering the viewpoints from both within the AONB looking out, and from outside of the AONB looking in.

Tilehurst, Theale and Calcot have separate identities. This site would merge those identities, and ruin the characteristics of Pincents Hill. The proposed area of development is isolated from any other housing and adjoins an industrial estate. It will therefore encourage further development to link it to one of the existing housing areas, most practically Tilehurst. The end result would be the loss of the Pincents Hill facility to all residents.

The requirement for the development to be within or adjacent to existing developments has not been met. The nearest development is Tilehurst, but this cannot be accessed by walking or cycling (with the exception to Bradley Wiggins and a few other elite athletes). The nearest facilities are at Sainsbury's, and although in itself diverse, this does not seem sustainable for the community. A development at Pincents Hill will lack a community and sense of belonging. Its identity will be

confused, and in turn it will confuse and diminish the identities of Tilehurst, Theale and Calcot.

Whilst Tilehurst and Calcot could be described as urban area, with good access to facilities, this proposed site itself is rural and on the fringes of the existing urbanisation. Therefore what little facilities exist in the EUA cannot be easily accessed by new residents.

Access has been indicated that it will be via the South of Pincents Lane. This route is already very busy as it requires going through a Retail Park that contains Sainsbury's, Next, Boots and Sports Direct, as well as being a major connection point for many coach and bus services. It is frequently found access to the retail park is restricted due to the volume of traffic. In addition to this the Fire Service HQ are in the process of relocating to the Pincents Industrial area, and have converted what was previously storage units into office area and have in excess of 200 employees based there. Another important factor is that IKEA will be opening a store in this area, although the application is being resubmitted for smaller site, the impact on congestion will be huge, and in my opinion has been under-estimated. The sustainability of a housing site where residents are required to struggle through hours of peak-time traffic must be questioned. The logic for having housing on this site is therefore severely flawed.

There is a fear that to mitigate this a requirement for a "North exit" will be made. This will have a devastating effect on Tilehurst, Purley-on-Thames and beyond. Any through-route from Tilehurst to Pincents Lane will encourage traffic to access the shops and M4 via this route. It will place an unacceptable burden on the roads, and endanger lives, especially near schools on the route, in particular, Little Heath School. It would be a travesty if access was made via a separate point.

The Eastern Urban Area is already underfunded. Schools are oversubscribed with 40% pupils being from Reading, Doctors surgeries appointments are struggling to meet requirements and leisure facilities are laughable. West Berkshire provides minimal facilities to the EUA, and adding 600-1000 residents to the population will increase the burden on the facilities. West Berks have historically failed to improve facilities, and therefore any plan to cater for the increase in population lacks credibility.

West Berks have failed to identify a credible plan to improve the infrastructure in the EUA, in particular their policies centre around Newbury and Thatcham.

The residents of the surrounding areas have resoundingly rejected any development on this site. A survey by Alok Sharma, our MP had over 700 responses rejecting any development. The letters objecting to this site will be in the many hundreds, and during the recent and costly planning application (albeit for a larger development) residents responded with a significant voice rejecting the plans. Any new application will meet with the same local objection and cost many thousands of pounds.

I believe that the proposed site has restrictive covenants regarding the amount of development and number of houses permitted on the land. I have attached a copy of the relevant Title Deeds, with some of the relevant covenants highlighted. I respectfully request that West Berkshire Planning thoroughly investigate this area of concern prior to wasting further resources in considering it for development.

In conclusion, the Preferred Options document lists site EUA007 with the following reservations;

“The site is located on the edge of the AONB in Tilehurst, linking Tilehurst to the retail park at Calcot.....The site was subject to a refused planning application, which was upheld at appeal.....The areas proposed for development are not adjacent to existing residential development, although the southern development area is adjacent to Turnhams Green Industrial Estate and the Calcot retail park.....There are access concerns affecting the development of the site which will need to be addressed before any allocation can be confirmed. The site will be accessed via Pincents Lane to the south. It is considered that vehicular access to Pincents Lane north is likely to be resisted.....Any housing proposal would need to account of the expected traffic generation to and from Ikea during the PM peak periods and weekends. If mitigation is possible to accommodate traffic from any residential development, it is likely that it will be extensive.”

Considering the comments made in its own proposals during the process so far, I find it inexplicable how West Berks included this site as a preferred option. I have expanded on these observations, along with my own research, and would confirm my findings that this part of the DPD is not sound and this site should be removed from the process.

Yours faithfully

Anthony Chadley

Joint Chair

Combined Save Calcot Action Group/Save Pincents Hill Group