

Site Selection - Site Assessment

Summary of Site Assessment

Key Issues:

Add:

- Increased traffic a major concern
- High car dependency reduces sustainability of site
- Site not adjacent to settlement boundary

Site Assessment

Parish Council consultation response:	<p>Add the following that was communicated to L Alexander, 7/3/14:</p> <p>Construction of the remaining eight balancing ponds in the Thatcham SWMP is dependent on Defra and EA funding which is not guaranteed and the second pond has received no funding.</p> <p>There is a statutory requirement to provide SuDs in new developments: no national standards exist and implementation is not guaranteed if the development becomes uneconomic after planning consent given.</p> <p>Heavy impact on peak traffic flows on Heath Lane and Cold Ash Hill, and access to A4; access issues to Heath Lane and Bowling Green Road;</p> <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - would cause a dramatic reduction in the visual and physical separation of N Thatcham and Cold Ash village, with the loss of a rural gateway to Cold Ash - eliminate the rural views from Bowling Green Road, Heath Lane and lower Cold Ash Hill, much valued by the residents - highly visually intrusive from many vantage points looking south from Cold Ash village - destruction of a pre-18thC field, and associated hedgerows - abuts ancient woodland, putting habitat at risk - destroys area of tranquillity and agricultural land between N Thatcham and Cold Ash <p>Traffic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - heavy impact on peak traffic flows along Heath Lane and Cold Ash Hill; also impacts A4 access from Tull Way and Floral Way - significant access issues to Heath Lane and Bowling Green Road - remote from very limited public transport and commercial and social facilities, driving heavy car dependency <p>Flooding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - site required to locate 2/3 additional, unfunded, flood retention basins to complete flood protection for significant area of N Thatcham - sewerage system of Northfield Road incapable of taking up extra load from a large development - no legitimate enforcement capability for SuDs system required for such a development - land has flooded previously and contributed to flooding (see Thatcham SWMP); sequential test of flood risk should eliminate this site versus others in district
--	--

A) Automatic exclusion		
Criteria	Yes/No*	Comments
Within settlement boundary	N	Not adjacent to the settlement boundary and north of Bowling Green Road.

* Any 'yes' response

B) Considerations			
Criteria		Yes / No / Unknown	Comments
Highways / Transport	Access issues	Y	Access problems (especially at peak times) to: Cold Ash Hill (44.8k movements a week); Heath Lane (81.8k per week).
	Highway network suitability	Y	See traffic movements above; congestion at access to A4.
	Public Transport network	U	Thatcham station 3.7kms distant. Bus 5 per day at 2 hourly intervals, valid for east of site
Green Infrastructure	Open Space / Playing field / Amenity Space nearby	Y	Existing space too small for size of this development
Ecology / Environmental / Geological	Ancient woodland	A	
	Other (eg. BOA)	Y	Pre 18th C enclosure hedgerows
Relationship to surrounding area	Relationship to settlement	N	Poorly related to Thatcham
Utility Services	Presence of over head cables / underground pipes	Y	HT cables cross site; oil & water pipes cross site
	Wastewater	Y	Northfield Road sewer capacity & historical surcharge events.

Site Selection - Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment

Objective	Criteria	Effect	Justification	Comment
2	Support active lifestyles?	0		Opportunities must be balanced against distance to facilities (up to 3.7kms) and proven car dependency. The overall sustainability is neutral. (See CAPC Annexe A, up to 90% leisure activities).
	Increase opportunities for access to sports facilities?	0	3/4 mile & 1mile respectively.	
3	Will it improve access to education, employment services and facilities?	-	No local employment (car dependency for work 78%), local schools full, convenience store local, all other services Thatcham & Newbury (car dependency 86%)	...but a negative impact on environmental sustainability
4	Increase travel choices?	--	No effective public transport; walking to station not feasible; only 5 buses per day	Negative impact on environmental sustainability
	Reduce accidents?	-	Exit from site difficult at peak times; pedestrian access risky due to traffic volume and pavement location; high car dependency (see CAPC appendix A). 81.8k movements per week on Heath Lane	
5	Will it conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity assets across West Berkshire?	-		...will have a negative impact..mitigation may reduce...
	Conserve character of the landscape?	-	Starts development north of Bowling Green Road and West of Heath Lane and Cold Ash Hill	
6	Will it conserve and enhance the local distinctiveness of the character of the built environment?	-	Impacts notable views (see CAPC annex A); visual impact on local residents on S&E sides of site	
10	Reduce contribution to greenhouse gases?	-	Traffic impact high (see CAPC annex A, up to 90% car dependency)	Heavy car dependency at this location increases negative impact.
	Site at risk from flooding?	-	SWMP identifies site as needed to capture significant flows; SuDs implementation not guaranteed; no funding committed for historic flood prevention	...impact if enforcement is ensured.

Summary

Add: The SA/SEA as amended shows a significant number of negative sustainability impacts. The site is poorly located for access to local services with a high dependency on car usage for almost all activities. Traffic flows, already very high at peak times, would be exacerbated by a development of this size at this location. Development of the site would alter the character of the built environment as development would be taking place on the opposite side of the roads to existing residential development.

The landscape character distinctiveness would be impacted, affecting the southern gateway to Cold Ash Parish and damaging some notable views. The site encompasses land identified by the Thatcham SWMP for significant flood retention measures, and is on the edge of a critical drainage area. Since these are unfunded there has to be concern about potential flooding of the site and consequent negative impact on all elements of sustainability.

Site Selection - Site Commentary

Discussion:

Site Description

...public transport options are poor.

Flood risk

... and actually implemented. No funding for further surface water measures committed.

Highways/Transport

...options past the site are poor. Surveys have shown heavy car dependency of up to 90%. (See Annexe A).

Thames Water

Known sewerage capacity issues in Northfield Road..

Parish Council:

Add the following that was communicated to L Alexander, 7/3/14:

Construction of the remaining eight balancing ponds in the Thatcham SWMP is dependent on Defra and EA funding which is not guaranteed and the second pond has received no funding.

There is a statutory requirement to provide SuDs in new developments: no national standards exist and implementation is not guaranteed if the development becomes uneconomic after planning consent given.

Heavy impact on peak traffic flows on Heath Lane and Cold Ash Hill, and access to A4; access issues to Heath Lane and Bowling Green Road;

Environment

- would cause a dramatic reduction in the visual and physical separation of N Thatcham and Cold Ash village, with the loss of a rural gateway to Cold Ash
- eliminate the rural views from Bowling Green Road, Heath Lane and lower Cold Ash Hill, much valued by the residents
- highly visually intrusive from many vantage points looking south from Cold Ash village
- destruction of a pre-18thC field, and associated hedgerows
- abuts ancient woodland, putting habitat at risk
- destroys area of tranquillity and agricultural land between N Thatcham and Cold Ash

Traffic

- heavy impact on peak traffic flows along Heath Lane and Cold Ash Hill; also impacts A4 access from Tull Way and Floral Way
- significant access issues to Heath Lane and Bowling Green Road
- remote from very limited public transport and commercial and social facilities, driving heavy car dependency

Flooding

- site required to locate 2/3 additional, unfunded, flood retention basins to complete flood protection for significant area of N Thatcham
- sewerage system of Northfield Road incapable of taking up extra load from a large development
- no legitimate enforcement capability for SuDs system required for such a development
- land has flooded previously and contributed to flooding (see Thatcham SWMP); sequential test of flood risk should eliminate this site versus others in district

SA/SEA

The SA/SEA as amended shows a significant number of negative sustainability impacts. The site is poorly located for access to local services with a high dependency on car usage for almost all activities. Traffic flows, already very high at peak times, would be exacerbated by a development of this size at this location. Development of the site would alter the character of the built environment as development would be taking place on the opposite side of the roads to existing residential development.

The landscape character distinctiveness would be impacted, affecting the southern gateway to Cold Ash Parish and damaging some notable views. The site encompasses land identified by the Thatcham SWMP for significant flood retention measures, and is on the edge of a critical drainage area. Since these are unfunded there has to be concern about potential flooding of the site and consequent negative impact on all elements of sustainability.