

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
- Visually intrusive in rural space
- Risk to ancient woodlands and wildlife habitat
- Part of site used for flood alleviation

Site Assessment

Parish Council consultation response:	<p>Add the following that was communicated to L Alexander, 7/3/14:</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 Cold Ash Hill; poor public transport driving heavy car dependency.</p> <p>Overall</p> <p>This site is extremely undesirable for the following reasons:-</p> <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- visually very intrusive when viewed from a number of locations looking south from Cold Ash- creation of an urban sprawl in an explicitly rural scene- would destroy the character and visual amenity of Cold Ash- would effectively surround the Little Copse ancient woodland and damage the wildlife habitat- would create substantial additional noise and disturb the tranquillity of Southend- destruction of one of the few remaining pre 18thC fields in the Parish <p>Traffic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- no realistic access to the site, the alternatives being: another access on to Cold Ash Hill (which carries >35k traffic movements per week); through the Southend estate; on to Laurence's Lane, a single lane farm track- the increased traffic will generate an additional 1,000 movements per week, adding to peak time overload- remote from very limited public transport, and all commercial and social services which will drive car usage <p>Flood Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- increased surface water runoff from the site which is significantly above the new retention pond, increasing the load on this facility which only partially protects N Thatcham- sewerage system in N Thatcham inadequate to accept further load
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A) Automatic exclusion		
Criteria	Yes/No*	Comments
Within settlement boundary	N	Not adjacent to the settlement boundary.

* 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 movements a 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, serving only west edge of site
	Pavements		...eastern side of Cold Ash Hill...
Ecology / Environmental / Geological	Protected species	U	Survey required
	Ancient woodland	A	Little Copse surrounded by site
	Other (eg. BOA)	Y	Intrusive on rural views to south from Cold Ash
Relationship to surrounding area	Relationship to settlement	U	Poorly related to Thatcham. Outside settlement boundary
Utility Services	Presence of over head cables / underground pipes	Y	HT cables cross site; oil and water pipes across site
	Wastewater	Y	Northfield Road sewer at capacity and historical discharge events
Relationship to / in combination effects of other sites	List of neighbouring sites: THA011, THA027		
Other (anything else to be considered)	retention basin now constructed on south west corner of site. Building above this could increase runoff and reduce its effectiveness		

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 2.8km) 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	1.2 mile & 1.5mile respectively.	
	Green Infrastructure	-	Loss of rare pre 18th century field	Intrusive development in rural setting impacting key views from Cold Ash
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). 44.8k movements per week on Cold Ash Hill	
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?	-	Destroys rural views from the north and west. Destroys rare pre 18th century field	
6	Will it conserve and enhance the local distinctiveness of the character of the built environment?		...& Cold Ash	
7	Noise	-		Impact on Southend
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?	-	SuD's implementation not guaranteed; lack of which impact	

			effectiveness of retention basin	
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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 and reduce the gap between Cold Ash and Southend.

The landscape character distinctiveness would be severely impacted by an intrusive urban development in a rural setting damaging some notable views from Cold Ash. The site encompasses land now used for significant flood retention measures which would need to be protected by enforced SuDs to minimise any loss of effectiveness of the retention basin.

Site Selection - Site Commentary

Recommendation:

The site is not recommended for allocation.

Half of the site is now used for a flood retention pond.

Justification:

...in Cold Ash Parish and outside the settlement boundary...public transport options are poor.

Discussion:

Flood risk

Part of the site has been used for a flood retention pond as part.....

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:

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 Cold Ash Hill; poor public transport driving heavy car dependency.

Overall

This site is extremely undesirable for the following reasons:-

Environment

- visually very intrusive when viewed from a number of locations looking south from Cold Ash
- creation of an urban sprawl in an explicitly rural scene
- would destroy the character and visual amenity of Cold Ash

- would effectively surround the Little Copse ancient woodland and damage the wildlife habitat
- would create substantial additional noise and disturb the tranquillity of Southend
- destruction of one of the few remaining pre 18thC fields in the Parish

Traffic

- no realistic access to the site, the alternatives being: another access on to Cold Ash Hill (which carries >35k traffic movements per week); through the Southend estate; on to Laurence's Lane, a single lane farm track
- the increased traffic will generate an additional 1,000 movements per week, adding to peak time overload
- remote from very limited public transport, and all commercial and social services which will drive car usage

Flood Risk

- increased surface water runoff from the site which is significantly above the new retention pond, increasing the load on this facility which only partially protects N Thatcham
- sewerage system in N Thatcham inadequate to accept further load

SA/SEA

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 and reduce the gap between Cold Ash and Southend.

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