

From: Matthew Shepherd <Matthew.Shepherd@westberks.gov.uk>
Sent: 06 Sep 2024 12:06:30
To: dmsimport@westberks.gov.uk
Cc:
Subject: FW: 23/02094/FULMAJ Eagle Quarter, Newbury
Attachments: 23_02094_FULMAJ Eagle Quarter Newbury.doc

From: Chris Sperring <Chris.Sperring@westberks.gov.uk>
Sent: Monday, March 25, 2024 1:14 PM
To: Matthew Shepherd <Matthew.Shepherd@westberks.gov.uk>
Subject: 23/02094/FULMAJ Eagle Quarter, Newbury

Hi Matthew,

Please find attached a response from Transport Policy re the above.

Best regards,

Chris Sperring

Chris Sperring
Principal Transport Policy Officer
Environment Department / West Berkshire Council / Market Street / Newbury RG14 5LD
01635 519284 / extn 2284 / Chris.Sperring@westberks.gov.uk

MEMORANDUM

To:	Matthew Shepherd	Our Ref:	
From:	Chris Sperring Principal Transport Policy Officer	Your Ref:	23/02094/FULMAJ
Extn:	2284	Date:	24 April, 2025

The Kennet Shopping Centre, Newbury - Full planning permission for the redevelopment of the Kennet Centre comprising the partial demolition of the existing building on site and the development of new residential dwellings (Use Class C3) and residents' ancillary facilities; commercial, business and service floorspace including office (Class E (a, b, c, d, e, f, and g)); access, parking, and cycle parking; landscaping and open space; sustainable energy installations; associated works, and alterations to the retained Vue Cinema and multi storey car park.

Thank you for consulting Transport Policy on this application. This application follows on from the previous withdrawn application (21/00379/FULMAJ), to which a response was provided. I used that response along with those from Highways Development Control and Active Travel England in developing this response.

The proposal includes 426 build-to-rent units, an increase of 59 units from the previous application (367). The proposal also includes works to the existing Kennet Centre Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP) and provision of a new undercroft car park.

I am aware that the site is not allocated within the current Housing Site Allocations DPD, nor is it allocated within the Regulation 19 submission for the emerging Local Plan Review (2022-2039), due to be subject to Examination. It is recommended that the views of the Planning Policy Team are sought regarding this matter.

A Framework Travel Plan (dated September 2023) has been submitted as part of this application. I have read through this, and my comments can be found later in this response.

Site Location & Accessibility

The location and accessibility issues remain largely unchanged from the previous application. The site is the current Kennet Centre shopping mall which lies in the middle of Newbury town centre. It is well-connected to a wide of existing services and facilities that are within easy walking distance of the site, including shops, railway station and bus stops.

The site lies within the Newbury Town Centre Core Walking Zone identified in the West Berkshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Several key walking routes are identified in the LCWIP connecting the town centre to the surrounding areas, which will provide walking routes from the site. These include Key Walking Route 1 (Wash Common to Newbury Town Centre) and Key Walking Route 2 (West Fields to Hambridge Road Employment Area), which provide direct connections to the southern part of the site around Bartholomew Street and Market Street.

There are a several cycle routes that radiate from the town centre connecting to areas beyond the town centre, such as London Road Industrial Estate, Hambridge Road, North Newbury/Vodafone campus area. Most of these are identified as Strategic Cycle Corridors in the West Berkshire LCWIP.

The site also benefits from bus stops immediately outside the site on Market Street and from the Wharf Bus Interchange a short walk from the site. These provide connections to employment areas further afield along London Road, Newbury Community Hospital, Thatcham (JB1), Greenham Business Park, Basingstoke, as well as links to Newbury College.

Newbury railway station is around 150m walk from the site, providing frequent rail services to Thatcham, Theale, Reading and London Paddington and connections to the west.

The West Berkshire Car Club is also based in Newbury Town Centre, which includes an electric car based in the current Kennet Centre public car park. The applicant is proposing a further extension to the Car Club of 3 vehicles.

The site is therefore in a highly sustainable location. The accompanying Framework Travel Plan will need to build upon this to encourage sustainable travel and reduce reliance on the private car.

Car Parking

The application proposes 426 build-to-rent units (comprising 223 x 1 bed/studio / 118 x 2 bed / 15 x 3 bed units), an increase of 59 units from the previous application. The Framework Travel Plan indicates that there would be significant improvement work to the existing Kennet Centre MSCP, which would result in the removal of 66 shopping centre spaces (net loss of 23 spaces). The proposals would also include provision of an undercroft car park, with 83 spaces (& 14 additional electric vehicle charging points).

I am aware of concerns raised by Highways Development Control and other local objections regarding the proposed number of car parking spaces for this new proposal. The proposed number of spaces appear to fall short of what would need to be required in accordance with the Council's Residential Parking Standards outlined in Policy P1 of the Council's Housing Site Allocations (HSA) DPD.

The Council's residential standards were prepared using a detailed evidence base and considered by a Planning Inspector in 2016 as part of the current West Berkshire Local Plan HSA DPD process. The standards include a specific zone for the town centre which takes into account the level of accessibility of the town centre area in terms of proximity to services and facilities, opportunities for walking and cycling, and proximity to a range of local bus and rail services. These standards remain current, and it is proposed that they will be incorporated largely unaltered into the emerging Local Plan Review (2022-2039).

I support the concerns raised by Highways Development Control regarding the proposed parking provision and will leave it to them to determine an appropriate quantum of parking spaces according to the revised number of dwellings and the suitability of any proposed dual use or management arrangement.

Car Club

The applicant is proposing an onsite car club as part of measures within the Framework Travel Plan for the site. It is proposed that this would take the form of a phased three-vehicle expansion to the West Berkshire Car Club currently operating in Newbury town centre. The commitment to providing additional Car Club vehicles is welcomed.

Enterprise, the current West Berkshire Car Club operator, have produced a developer offer for introducing new vehicles into existing car clubs. This includes options for electric vehicles. The Council would preferably wish to see any new Car Club vehicle to be an electric vehicle as this would be in accordance with the District's Environment Strategy. Transport Policy would be willing to work with the applicant to develop a suitable proposal with Enterprise for introducing the additional Car Club vehicles onto the site and for memberships for residents.

Pedestrian and Cycle Access

Proposals for the site include providing a new pedestrian link through the centre of the site, connecting with Bartholomew Street, Market Street, Cheap Street and Market Place. This will connect, via a new zebra crossing on Market Street to the new pedestrian route recently built through the Market Street development towards Newbury railway station. I will leave it to Highways DC to determine the suitability of the zebra crossing. The provision of this new route is welcomed as it will enhance connectivity between the town centre and the railway station as well as making the station a more attractive gateway to the town centre.

The creation of the new route through the site will create a more direct and attractive route between the town centre and the railway station. This will require alterations to be made to the existing wayfinding signing scheme in Newbury town centre. I would like to seek a contribution to extending the existing town centre wayfinding scheme to incorporate the new route and to update the existing information signs in the wayfinding scheme.

I have noted from the Transport Assessment that the existing signalised Market Street / Bartholomew Street junction is to be redesigned as part of the development proposals to allow for all movements. As mentioned earlier in my response, the junction forms part of two strategic walking routes identified in the West Berkshire LCWIP. Audits undertaken in preparing the LCWP recommend a need to redesign the junction to enable single-stage crossing movements, with crossings on pedestrian desire lines, and to install on-crossing detectors as part of future junction upgrades. Issues relating to improving pedestrian and cycling through the junction will need to be considered when developing the off-site highways measures with the Council's Highways officers.

On site cycle parking will be provided (totalling 632 spaces), with a range of tiered bike racks, Sheffield stand type configurations and secure lockers for storage. I will leave it to Highways Development Control to assess the quantum and quality of provision, both for resident and visitor parking. Cycle parking will need to be compliant with the Council's "Cycle and Motorcycle Advice and Standards for New Development (November 2014)" guidance note.

Framework Travel Plan

A Framework Travel Plan (FTP) dated September 2023 and prepared by Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd. has been submitted in support of this application. It is intended that the FTP will provide an initial framework for both the residential and flexible-use commercial units. A Full Travel Plan is to be provided specific to the land-use permitted, each of which are to be approved by the Council. I am happy with this approach.

The FTP recognises that the site is in a highly sustainable location, offering a range of sustainable travel options to a wide range of employment, services and facilities. These should assist in meeting the sustainable planning objectives of promoting opportunities for the use of alternative travel modes to the private car and reducing reliance upon owning a car.

It should be noted that West Berkshire Council is currently preparing a new Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) to cover the period 2024-2039. A draft LTP4 Strategy Document was produced for consultation in early 2023, which is likely to be adopted later in 2024.

I would wish to draw attention to emerging LTP4 and the strategy within for the Newbury and Thatcham area. This includes an objective that 50% of trips made within the Newbury and Thatcham area to be made by active travel. The objective will help to support the transition of transport sector to net zero through a combination of infrastructure improvements and behavioural change. The measures provided by the site, including those within the FTP, will need to help contribute toward this.

A Travel Plan Co-ordinator (TPC) has been appointed and contact details supplied, which is welcomed. The TPC would be available for the full length of the monitoring period. Any changes to the TPC will need to be reported to the Council.

All new residents would be supplied with Sustainable Travel Packs (STP's) to assist them with making sustainable travel choices, including local walking and cycling routes and the range of services and facilities available. The TPC will be responsible for preparing the packs (in partnership with the Council) and ensuring that the information contained remains up to date. The TPC should also ensure that on-site sales staff are fully aware of the site Travel Plan and the measures and initiatives available to new residents moving onto the site.

The STP's would also provide new residents with details of the cycle vouchers available to them per household, which would be provided by the TPC on request. This is welcomed as it could help assist people develop long-term active travel habits and will need to be clearly promoted in the STP's and by sales staff. I would like further information on what value this voucher would be and where residents would be able to redeem them.

The FTP also mentions that as an alternative to the cycle voucher residents could instead request a public transport discount voucher. This will need to be negotiated with the relevant transport operators. However it is worth noting that at the time of writing, there is a £2 capped bus fare for bus journeys in England, which the UK Government has announced will run to the end of December 2024. If the capped fares are to be continued in some form, it could well affect the ability to provide transport vouchers. The TPC will need to consider this should any changes occur.

The TPC would continue to promote the Travel Plan through twice yearly newsletters and noticeboards, plus an annual event to encourage walking and cycling.

The FTP indicates that it seeks to achieve a reduction in car journeys to and from the application site through the promotion of alternative modes of transport and implementation of measures to make these attractive to new residents/employees. This is supported by a primary target not to exceed 121 trips during the AM peak hour (derived from trip rates) and a secondary target to seek a 10% reduction of journey to work trips by car. I would consider these to be very much preliminary targets in line with the document's status as a Framework Travel Plan and that these will need to be refined following the results of the baseline travel survey. I am somewhat concerned that there is no specific target to reduce single occupancy vehicle journeys or modal share targets to increase active and public transport usage.

Monitoring is to commence with the baseline travel survey, which would be undertaken following 75% occupation (within three months) of the build to rent units and repeatedly annually thereafter for a period of five years. The TPC would review the targets once the baseline survey has been completed and agree any new amendments with the Council. I am happy with this approach but have concerns regarding the length of time that may have elapsed from the commencement of occupation until the 75% occupation threshold. Could an estimate be provided as to how long this is anticipated to be?

The FTP also mentions that remedial measures may need to be sought should monitoring indicate that the Travel Plan targets are failing to be met and is welcomed. Should any changes to the TP be required, such as extension of monitoring or introducing further measures, these will need to be agreed with WBC.

WBC Travel Plan Monitoring Requirements

The resources required to assess, monitor and support the implementation of a Residential Travel Plan and its revisions vary according to the size of the development the travel plan is related to. As the size of developments increase the nature of the associated Travel Plan and its measures generally become more complex and very often link with wider measures being led by the Council. The time involved in assessing monitoring reports and updated Travel Plans plus the regular meetings needed to properly implement these more complex Travel Plans for specific sites goes beyond the resources available within the Council. A contribution towards this work is therefore required in order to ensure that the Travel Plan for the site is robustly implemented and the benefits of the plan are realised in that development and properly documented and publicised to assist with the overall promotion of its aims.

The Council has developed a scale of charges for this monitoring, which has been staggered to take into account the size of the development and whether there are other uses on the site which will have their own travel plan. In terms of this development, the number of residential units (426) fits into the 250–500 unit category with multiple uses on the site requiring a Travel Plan; in this instance the contribution sought would be £7000.

Conclusions

The site is a highly sustainable location, with many services and facilities within walking and cycling distance, including access to bus and rail services.

An on-site Car Club is to be provided, taking the form of a phased 3-vehicle expansion of the existing West Berkshire Car Club operated by Enterprise. The applicant will need to work with the Council and the Car Club operator to develop an effective proposal to introduce the new Car Club vehicles.

It would be desirable that new Car Club vehicles would be electric vehicles in line with the Council's Environment Strategy.

The development proposes a new walking route through the site that will link to the station via the route through the new Market Street development. A contribution would need to be sought that would allow the new route to be incorporated into the wayfinding scheme for Newbury town centre and amendments to existing wayfinding information and signage.

Improvements to the Market Street / Bartholomew Street junction will need to consider pedestrian and cycle movements through the junction as this forms part of strategic walking routes outlined in the West Berkshire LCWIP.

Car parking should be provided in accordance with the Council's residential parking standards outlined in the Policy P1 of HSA DPD, which are also to be incorporated into the emerging Local Plan Review (2022-2036).

The submitted Framework Travel Plan requires further clarifications and amendments before it can be considered to be acceptable. Further information is sought required relating to the proposed cycle or public transport vouchers for new residents and regarding the proposed targets and monitoring arrangements.

Due to the size of the application, a contribution is sought for the Council's monitoring requirements for the Framework Travel Plan.

Chris Sperring
Principal Transport Policy Officer