

18/08068/FUL

Consultations and Notification Responses

Ward Councillor Preliminary Comments

Councillor Richard Newman

Given the nature of this application, and the many concerns raised by local residents, if minded to approve, the application should be referred to the Planning Committee for a decision.

Councillor Mrs Catherine Oliver

Parish/Town Council Comments/Internal and External Consultees

Hazlemere Parish Council

Comments: Concern – inadequate parking the site access is off a bend. Stationary traffic at peak periods will delay access/exit for funerals.

County Highway Authority

Comments: 1st response

You will be aware that the applicant received comments from the Highway Authority during the pre-application process advising that an access to the site from Penn Road was unacceptable, and that taking access via Queensway would be satisfactory. However, upon reviewing the proposals, it is evident that the creation of a new access from Penn Road still forms part of the scheme for which consent is sought.

The new access proposed would be located opposite the Wynn Grove junction at the point that the horizontal alignment of Penn Road deflects in each direction, and the provision of a new access in this location would therefore essentially form a 4-arm crossroads. However, current Manual for Streets guidance states that junctions on the opposite side of the road should be spaced at least 30m apart. Given that an offset is not achievable, this consequently means that this spacing cannot occur and therefore does not meet the standards.

Penn Road is an inter-rural/urban distributor that carries around 10,000 vehicle movements per day. This is a significant daily flow rate for a B-class road and personal experience notes that peak hour queues on Penn Road often terminate or pass the proposed site access point from their origin at the B474 junction with the A404 to the west.

I am concerned that effectively creating a crossroad junction at this point will create conflicting vehicle movements from vehicles waiting to turn right into the cemetery site and by those vehicles travelling east on Penn Road wanting to turn right into Wynn Grove. I am also aware that this will cause additional decelerating manoeuvres in proximity to the proposed access in both directions on Penn Road. Whilst the submitted Transport Statement (TS) is confident that there will only be a minimal amount of vehicle movements using the Penn Road access point, its mere introduction in an area where an access did not historically exist will introduce vehicle movements to the network and therefore represents a threat to highway safety based on the high daily flow rates experienced on Penn Road.

The proposals include a point at which vehicles can egress the cemetery site onto Queensway. Although I acknowledge that Queensway's sole point of connectivity to the rest of the adopted highway network is via an A-class road, it is an existing junction with preferable geometry and junction spacing when compared with the proposed Penn Road access point. In the Highway Authority's professional opinion this should be the sole access/egress point to the proposed cemetery site.

Mindful of these comments, I recommend that the application is refused on highway grounds.

Comments: 2nd response

The Highway Authority provided an initial response dated 12th March 2019 whereby concerns were raised pertaining to the location of the site access. Specifically, it was positioned so that it effectively created a new crossroads with Penn Road and Wynn Grove. Given the anticipated conflicting turning and conflicting movements created by this configuration, this Authority lodged an objection.

However, since that time discussions have taken place with the applicant as to the basis behind that objection and ways in which it could be overcome by achieving a safe and suitable access without compromising highway safety, consequently facilitating the provision of a much needed local facility.

The site plan and land ownership were reviewed and it appeared that the access, whilst remaining on Penn Road, could be relocated further east from its originally proposed location. By doing so, it could achieve the minimum requisite junction spacing dimension whilst still maintaining the ability to achieve the visibility splays for the speed limit in force on Penn Road at this location.

An amended site plan has now been submitted showing the access relocated to a point further east than originally proposed. Consequently it is now 20m away (centreline to centreline) from the Wynn Grove/Penn Road junction, and the splays allow unobstructed 'Y' distances of 43m in each direction.

Alterations have also taken place to the internal layout in response to comments that potential on-site manoeuvres close to the site access could create instances of vehicles stationary on or overhanging the highway by vehicles entering the site.

One minor issue that I would raise is that the featured parking spaces are smaller (2.4m x 4.8m) than the current standards (2.8m x 5m) as contained within the County Council's Buckinghamshire Countywide Parking Guidance policy document. However, I am confident that a condition can be attached to any permission granted to address this discrepancy prior to commencement without resulting in a material (if any) loss of parking or impacting upon the demonstrated parking/manoeuvring layout or other on-site features.

Mindful of these comments, I do not have any objections to this application with regard to highway issues subject to conditions.

County Highway Authority

Comments: 3rd response

You will recall from my previous letter (dated 16th May 2019) that the Highway Authority's objection (contained within the initial consultation response dated 12th March 2019) regarding the proposed access point had been addressed by its relocation in order to achieve the visibility splays commensurate with the speed limit in force on Penn Road.

I note that the internal access and parking have since been amended, as demonstrated within the most recent submissions. However, in consideration of the acceptable access configuration and width, setback distance of the gates and car park layout, I maintain that I do not have any objections to this application with regard to highway issues.

In the avoidance of doubt, I request number of conditions (recommended within my previous response) are attached to any permission granted:

Buckinghamshire County Council (Major SuDS)

Comments: No objection subject to conditions.

Flood risk

The site lies in an area of very low surface water flood risk meaning that there is between a 1 % and 0.1 % chance of surface water flooding occurring in a given year. Therefore, the applicant will be required to mitigate surface water runoff from the proposed impermeable areas only. From reviewing the groundwater flood risk data that the LLFA has access to, it is understood that the site lies in an

area where groundwater levels are anticipated to be greater than 5m below the ground surface. Therefore, the LLFA does not consider the site to be at risk from groundwater flooding.

Surface water drainage strategy

The drainage plan is set out on drawing CDS_WYC_OMB_05 Rev. 3 (Cemetery Development Services, dated 18.10.2018). The drawing indicates that hardstanding areas will drain to a series of carrier drains which discharge into a detention basin, prior to discharging into a deep bore soakaway. The reflective pools adjacent to the reception building will be served by a rainwater harvesting unit and the surfacing around this area will be made of permeable materials.

Testing has been conducted in the location of the proposed deep bore soakaway to ascertain a rate of infiltration. The testing achieved a rate of 4.171/s. The design discharge rate for the soakaway is set at 4.01/s. It is understood that the deep bore soakaway is already in situ and has been constructed to a depth of 21m below ground. The justification for this depth was due to low permeability within the superficial deposits on site, and a risk of dissolution should the soakaway be constructed within this layer. The FRA suggests a residual risk remains and so the deep bore soakaway has been constructed 50m away from existing development.

As mentioned, the impermeable area created as part of the proposed development drains to a detention basin prior to discharging to the soakaway. The required attenuation is estimated to be 448.59m³. In addition to the treatment provided by the basin, the proposal is to include an oil separator upstream.

Environment Agency (south-east)

Comments: No objection to the proposal.

Strongly recommend that should the number of burials proposed increase above the projected 60 and 70 per year then a Tier 3 Risk Assessment should be carried out for this site.

Only a limited investigation has been carried out to determine the depth of the underlying Clay-with-Flints stratum, along the north and north eastern boundary of this site. There is the potential for the Clay-with-Flints stratum to thin out on this part of the site and for there to be a higher permeability band within this stratum. It is recommended that grave diggers are instructed to abandon graves on this part of the site if chalk is encountered at the base of the excavation and/or if an obvious higher permeability sand and/or gravel geological layer is encountered.

The Chilterns AONB Planning Officer

Comments: CCB Objection (based on Local Plan due process and design of current proposal)
2nd January 2019

CCB would make the point here that the Local Plan process needs to run its course. We have outstanding representations regarding this site (HW 21 in the submission Local Plan) and the Inspector's conclusions following the examination in public and consideration of evidence should be concluded before any application can progress. Notwithstanding this point the detailed approach promoted here presents an unacceptably urban design ethos that does not conserve and enhance the AONB.

We set out below our earlier Local Plan submissions. These submissions include amendments to proposed allocation HW21. The application is within the AONB, to which existing policies L1 of the consolidated Local Plan and CS 17 of the Core Strategy apply. The proposed allocation HW21 requires policy amendment to both include reference to the AONB status within its protection and to include the key discharge of necessary duties of conservation and enhancement should a planning application come forward. To determine the current application ahead of the Local Plan would diminish AONB status and Local Plan process. Such status requires that 'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues' (NPPF 172).

Policy matters

The application site falls within the AONB and the principal legal and policy duties will apply as:

The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019

L5 'Developments which detract from the Chilterns' special character should be resisted' D12

'Developments should be sought that represent the highest environmental and design standards whilst complementing the character of the AONB'

Section 85 (i) of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 -'In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'

Paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (as revised July 2018) 'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas... The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

Wycombe Local Plan policy L1 on the Chilterns AONB that '(1) in considering proposals for any development within the Chilterns AONB, special attention will be paid to the conservation of its scenic beauty and to any wildlife interest. Development will not be permitted if it is likely to damage the special character, appearance or natural beauty of the landscape or the future public enjoyment of the area'

Wycombe Core Strategy CS 17 Environmental Assets that 'The Council will conserve and improve the environmental assets of the District by requiring: (1) The conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting'.

The new Local Plan to 2033 deals with the protection of the AONB at Policy DM 30 (1) requiring development within the Chilterns AONB to '(a) conserve, and where possible enhance, the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB and c) deliver the highest quality design which respects the natural beauty and built heritage of the Chilterns and enhances the sense of place and local character' and at (2). 'Planning permission for proposals which constitute major development within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances'

Application details

The application fails to deliver the necessary landscape led design approach that would conserve and enhance the nationally protected landscape. In respect of these important tests the design details lay out a traditional and not woodland landscape / design framework. This results in buildings, car parks, lighting and memorials which will present a more civic and traditional cemetery layout. The internal road is urban in design and the reception building takes no design cues from the Chilterns Building Design Guide. The Management Plan, whilst detailed and including a new 132 metres of new native hedge planting, misses the opportunity presented here to conserve and enhance the landscape.

The relationship between the urban area and the AONB is key. Penn Road provides a natural boundary between the two. Any cemetery design must avoid an erosion of the AONB by virtue of an apparent extension of the urban area. This point is reinforced by the Bucks Landscape Character Assessment in which this land is denoted as Landscape Character Type 18.2 Penn Rolling Farmland and in which the character assessment includes 'Large blocks of woodland, are dispersed throughout, interlinked with farmland. The wide variety of woodland types create a rich texture and colour. A significant amount of ancient woodland, such a Penn Wood, The Larches and Common Wood in the north west'. We promote this appraisal as a material planning consideration because it engenders a natural woodland context for the cemetery and one that should link to ecological enhancement.

The proposed car park is urban in appearance and the cemetery layout follows a traditional pattern of plot layout. The applicant's propose a comprehensive landscape masterplan and maintenance regime; however, this is intended to soften the traditional layout and not to foster a woodland undeveloped landscape approach. The more landscape led approach denoted in the woodland mix to the north of the site should be a template for the wider wholesale design of the entire site. When attributing great weight to the AONB policy tests, the necessary conservation of the AONB is missed and no enhancements are demonstrated. A number of deciduous woodland priority habitats exist to the east and north-east.

The CCB proposes that the cemetery must conserve and enhance the AONB by promoting design concepts derived from natural burial grounds within the UK, for example with the design of woodland or wildflower meadows, and without headstones, tarmac drives and formal features. There are a growing number of natural burial grounds in the UK, but only a couple so far in Bucks and Herts. For example there is a woodland burial ground in the Chilterns AONB at Chesham Bois developed in 2007 as an extension to a traditional cemetery <https://www.cheshamboispc.org.uk/services/burial-grounds/> It has native tree planting and no headstones or grave markings, so maintains and actually enhances the natural environment. Other information is also available at http://woodlandburialtrust.com/content/woodland_burial_places.php

In conclusion CCB cannot support the design approach advanced by this proposal. The allocation of this site must follow due process and await the outcome of the Local Plan examination. As submitted the proposal is far too urban and lacks a longer term ethos that engenders a woodland context and ecological fostering of deciduous woodland habitat within the Chilterns AONB. The supporting planning statement and landscape and visual impact assessment avoid any meaningful discussion of the AONB and how this site can be an intrinsic part of an improvement within such a highly valued landscape. The Bucks Landscape Character Assessment concludes on the strength of character/intactness of the landscape here that 'The strength of character and intactness of the Penn Rolling Farmland is strong. Key characteristics are prominent within the landscape and the lack of intrusive features makes this a physically and visually intact landscape'.

The current application lacks the necessary landscape-led approach that is required to reinforce and not diminish from this character.

Previous CCB Representations to the WDC Regulation 19 Submission Local Plan (December 2017 and

Examination-in-Public September 2018).

HW21 Land at Queensway, Hazlemere

This site is in the Chilterns AONB. A cemetery use would only be appropriate if it conserve and enhances the AONB (NPPF para 115, now 172). A new cemetery is likely to involve buildings, car parking, formalised tree planting, paths, benches, headstones and plaques. A natural burial ground with a less formal character is likely to be more appropriate, and use of planting which links to wider ecological corridors including the woodland west of the A404 and the via the golf course to the important expanse of Chilterns ancient woodland at Penn and Common Woods.

Arboriculture Spatial Planning

Comments:

No objection as to the proposal as they retaining the tree within the site and the landscape scheme has meaningful additional tree planting within the site

Landscape and Urban Design

Comments: First comments. The landscape appraisal and scheme design gives minimal regard to the site's location in the Chilterns AONB. The following design elements should be revised to better respond to this. The proposed planting schedule includes only a limited range and number of native plant species and does not reflect the particular character of the Chilterns AONB. A revised planting scheme should seek to incorporate a greater proportion of native and naturalised plant species that are characteristic of the Chilterns landscape. For example, native box woodlands are a distinctive feature of the Chilterns, while box is also characteristic of local churchyards and stately homes.

Incorporating box as a key feature of the proposed planting design would be welcomed. Other opportunities should be sought within the selection of trees, shrubs and perennials/bulbs. The proposed reception building is a largely utilitarian structure. The form and detailing do not reflect Chilterns AONB character, and would not welcome visitors or provide a feature/focus appropriate to the site's function as a cemetery. While some details are acceptable, such as the use of timber cladding, others are not, such as the external roller-shutters. A contemporary building with a stronger presence and more appropriate character should be considered.

2nd Comments:

The changes to the proposed landscaping schedules, in response to earlier landscape comments, is satisfactory. There have been no alternative designs submitted for the proposed building, for which our concerns must be made more clearly. The proposed building fails to adopt a character appropriate to the Chilterns AONB and permanence of the site's use as a cemetery, with no apparent regard to the Chiltern Buildings Design Guide. It has the appearance of a temporary building, little more than a timber-clad portacabin or marketing suite. A cemetery in the Chilterns AONB merits considerably more attention to the character and quality of building design, to create a true sense of place, unique identity and permanence. The current proposal will have an inappropriate and adverse impact on the character and visual amenity of the new cemetery landscape and its AONB setting. Placemaking and high quality design are key elements of existing and emerging local Plan policy. Until the proposed landscaping matures, the site will lack a strong sense of place and character, when the proposed cemetery building will be of particular significance in addressing this. The proposed building would not satisfy the following policies in part or whole: CS1, CS3, CS19, G3 and CF7 of the current Core Strategy and Local Plan; and policies DM30, DM35 and DM37 in the emerging Local Plan.

3rd Comments

Documents considered- received 9th August 2019 Proposed layout- This is broadly satisfactory.- Avoid routing services under landscaped areas, including the roundabout where the proposed sculptural feature is proposed.- Lighting bollards should be located at the edge of pavements and not in planted areas, where planting may obscure the lighting. Proposed Building- Provide details of roofing materials. Proposed Landscaping- This is satisfactory. Proposed boundaries/fencing- No details are given of proposed boundaries other than a one-line statement in the DAS, to the effect that existing boundaries will be retained and enhanced.- Details are needed of typical boundary details to all sides, identifying existing/enhanced details. Also, how will the maintenance compound be secured?

Control of Pollution Environmental Health

Comments:

Identified Environmental Services issues relevant to Planning:

Air Quality from additional vehicle movements effecting the health of local residents in the nearby Air Quality Management Area.

Conclusion

With regards to air quality Wycombe District Council declared a new Air Quality Management Area on 22.12.17 that covers the main arterial roads into High Wycombe town centre, Marlow Town Centre and the M40. The majority of vehicle movements from the development are likely to pass through the High Wycombe Air Quality Management Area as the A404 Amersham Hill provides access to High Wycombe. It has been identified that the proposed development intends to introduce 32 additional parking spaces. As such the potential introduction of additional vehicles into the AQMA will negatively impact local air quality and its harmful health impacts upon local residents. Wycombe District Council has a duty to ensure that nitrogen dioxide levels from road traffic within the AQMA are reduced to safer levels in line with the national air quality objectives. It is currently estimated that 144 excess deaths each year within Wycombe District area are caused by poor air quality, with the expectation that the majority of those deaths will be caused along the main arterial roads into High Wycombe and Marlow town centres. With this in mind Wycombe District Council now applies the following principle to all commercial developments that are within the AQMA or that a large proportion

of vehicle movements from the development will be by road through the AQMA- the active provision of electric vehicle charging units for at least 10% of parking spaces. All other spaces should have appropriate cable provision to prepare for increased demand in future years. Electric vehicle charging points should. In this case, be provided for at least four parking spaces.

Recommendation:

Objection, unless conditions imposed;

Planning Policy

Comments:

Comments were sought in relation to the level of objection to the cemetery policy in the submitted Local Plan, the weight that should be attributed to the policy, whether there would be main modifications to the policy, and the consistency of the policy with the NPPF. The policy has received a very low level of objections at publication stage. The issue discussed at examination was in relation to a missing criteria on conserving and where possible enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. A criteria is being added through Main Modifications. The Green Belt criteria is also amended through Main Modifications to refer to minimising harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The Main Mods consultation will happen later this year. Considering the very low level of objections at Examination, the policy carries some weight. It can be used to support the application but cannot be used to refuse it. The planning application needs to be assessed against para 145 of the current NPPF (2018).

Ecological Officer

Comments:

DRAWINGS REFERENCED: A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Reptile Survey and Outline Mitigation Strategy was submitted with the pre-application discussions, but these have not been submitted with the application.

COMMENTS: The documents mentioned above need to be submitted as part of this application so that the public can see what the basis is for the council's decision making process and so that any conditions applied to the application (if it were to be permitted) are seen to be reasonable; (this has now been done.) The PEA made recommendations in three key areas: 1. Lighting and bats, 2. Reptiles 3. Nesting birds. The Reptile survey which was conducted in May 2017 takes the second of these recommendations forward to an 'Outline Mitigation Strategy' for reptiles. The proposals in this are appropriate but they cannot be conditioned for two reasons: they are not part of the application and they use the word 'should' (which makes its recommendations optional) and therefore could not be enforced.

RECOMMENDATION(S) The applicant needs to be asked for the ecology reports to be made part of this application. A condition needs to be applied which requires an Ecological Mitigation Strategy to be submitted and approved prior to commencement.

Representations

Comments have been received objecting to the proposal:

- Hazlemere Golf Club shares boundaries with the development and in particular in the north east boundary should be secure to prevent trespassers.
- The maintenance area is adjacent to the 18th tee and the noise from machinery should not adversely impact users of the golf course.
- The parking provision should be sufficient to ensure that Golf Club parking is not utilised
- The site is too far from High Wycombe to provide a useful facility
- There are no facilities for visitors
- Lack of sufficient parking will result in local roads being used as overspill car parks
- There should not be an exit gate onto Queensway and no vehicular traffic should be allowed to come via Queensway. All traffic should use the Penn Road entrance.
- Concerns that the allotments are to be included within the site – the plans are inaccurate
- Security provision – without adequate provision likely to lead to increased anti-social behaviour

- Lead to increased traffic
- Site should not be developed if it is within the Green Belt, encroaches upon a public footpath, loss of a recreational facility, creation of a cross roads at the access point
- Conflict of interest between site freeholder and the planning authority
- Site is within AONB and should have no buildings or roads constructed within it
- Should not be determined before the Local Plan Inspector has commented on the Local Plan
- There is sufficient space within the existing cemeteries
- Cemetery should be as natural as possible
- Site is too close to residential properties.
- Lack of parking will lead to road side parking which will cause road safety issues
- Potential surface water issues
- Loss of visual amenity
- No need for an additional cemetery; sufficient capacity at Hampden Road cemetery – has sufficient evidence been presented to demonstrate the need
- Unnecessary features such as reflective pools – design will be expensive
- Ecology information inadequate failed to identify a number of bird species that frequent the site
- There should be no segregation of faiths within the cemetery
- Could there be an area for a fenced perimeter walk way
- Could the access to the cemetery be on Amersham Road rather than Penn Road through the creation of a new access point
- The car parking area could then be relocated away from the boundary close to 78 Penn Road
- Measures to prevent or limit pollution must be considered – can lead to groundwater contamination
- Consider alternative sites for a cemetery
- Mistakes in the D and A statement which make reference to a road not within the area
- A decision should be taken by the new unitary authority
- Should be subject to proper consultation