



North Weald Bassett
PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting: PLANNING

19th May 2025

Time: 6.45pm

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT

Councillors: (8) B Clegg (Chairman), A Buckley P Etherington, R Spearman, *A Tyler. D Wood, C Kinnear, M Stroud

*** for part of the meeting**

Officers in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca – Clerk to the Council

Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Officer

Members of the Public (1) * for part of the meeting

Members of the Press (0)

P24.138 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF PLANNING COMMITTEE

Cllr Kinnear **PROPOSED** Cllr Clegg as Chairman, the proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr Buckley. There being no other nominations, Cllr Clegg was duly elected by way of unanimous vote as Chairman of North Weald Bassett Parish Council's Planning Committee for the current Municipal Year, following which the Declaration of Acceptance of Office was duly executed.

P24.139 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (6)

Councillor N Bedford, Mrs S Jackman, MBE, Mrs S Hawkins

P24.140 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

T Blanks, N Born

P24.141 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were No Declarations of Interest.

P24.142 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous Planning Committee meeting held on 17th April 2025 were circulated and **AGREED** and signed as a true record.

P24.143 REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were No Representations from the Public, however the Member of the Public present was invited to speak on application EPF/0849/25.

P24.144 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The following comments on Planning Applications were **AGREED: and NOTED**

No	Application Number	Location	Proposal
1	EPF/0849/25 <i>Sukhvinder Dhadwar</i>	Land west of Merlin Way, North Weald Airfield, North Weald Bassett, CM16 6AA	Outline planning application, with all matters reserved except access, for the demolition of the existing gate security and fire station buildings and redevelopment of the Site to

(Major – OPP:
SMR)

deliver a data centre campus, with up to 2 no. data centre buildings and separate offices, delivering up to 77,148m² gross external area (GEA) of floorspace (Use Class B8), including emergency back-up generators, energy storage (fuel tanks and/or battery storage), a new security entrance, electricity substations, internal roads, car parking, hard a soft landscaping including an airfield safety bund, secure perimeter fencing, media and utility infrastructure and other ancillary development.

The Parish Council **OBJECTS** to this application. Whilst it is accepted this is an outline application with all matters other than access reserved, the application nonetheless provides general information which the applicant confirms within the Planning Statement sets out clear development parameters to guide future reserved matters applications. As such, matters other than access have been addressed in this response:

1. **Impact on current and future airfield operations** - The proposed heights of the buildings and the western bund infringe into the safety zone of the Obstacle Limitation Surfaces (OLS), threatening the future aviation operations of the Airfield. Under paragraph 2.10 of the submitted Design and Access statement, it is suggested that the Design Parameters have been set taking into the account recommendations made to the Stronger Place Select Committee in March 2023, which included the possibility of reducing the OLS requirements thus relaxing the height restrictions, however this recommendation was NOT taken forward by EFDC, and the airfield remains a Code 4 unlicensed Aerodrome, with details of the current OLS being included within the North Weald Airfield Strategic Masterplan¹ (page 31). The Masterplan also sets out at numerous points in the document how development proposals must address the potential impacts on OLS. The Obstruction Assessment submitted with the application simply sets out that the building as currently proposed will infringe on the airfield operations, further stating that it may be possible that buildings within these areas can still be built to the proposed heights however this must be coordinated with the aerodrome, and that the CAA and North Weald Airfield must be contacted to confirm their position. Therefore, at this stage it is unclear exactly what impact the proposed buildings would have on airfield operations, and it is at best premature (**at worst potentially catastrophic**) to agree that a maximum height of 24m is acceptable. The Civil Aviation Authorities report on 'Safeguarding Aerodromes'² sets out that the "*purpose of Aerodrome safeguarding is to protect the airspace around an aerodrome to ensure no buildings or structures may cause danger to aircraft either in the air or on the ground. This is achieved through the 'Obstacle Limitation Surfaces' (OLS).*" The Applicant has failed to evidence that buildings and structures which infringe on the OLS will not detrimentally affect the safety of airfield operations, or the future continued use of the airfield for flying. Infringement of OLS is known to affect windshear which increases the risk of accidents and can be extremely dangerous.

Paragraph 1.17 of the adopted North Weald Airfield Strategic Masterplan states that "*to achieve the objective of the Masterplan vision, development proposals should demonstrate that they will not unacceptably impact airfield operations*". Paragraph 2.23 of the masterplan sets out that "*The site layout also needs to consider any implications as a consequence of potential Obstacle Limitation Surface (OLS) and Airfield operational restrictions that are in place. This will impact where particular buildings can be located due to height restrictions*".

The Obstruction Assessment submitted with the documentation also recognises that the cranes necessary during the 36 month construction period are very likely to breach the OLS for North Weald Airfield. It is essential (and should be conditioned) that any Construction Environmental Management Plan should be undertaken jointly, or approved, by North Weald Airfield and the Civil Aviation Authority. Reason – to ensure the safety of airfield operations, and to ensure no restrictions on airfield operations are required.

On 12th March 2024, Epping Forest District Council issued a public statement³ confirming that it had “guaranteed the aviation future of North Weald Airfield, as a place for business, family and community.” The current proposals potentially risk this position.

Summary – This application fails to meet with requirements of the endorsed North Weald Airfield Strategic Masterplan, and as such is contrary to Local Plan Policy P6 (part O). In addition, the proposals do not sufficiently evidence that the proposed building heights will not compromise airfield operation safety, or jeopardise the future of North Weald Airfield.

2. **Landscaping** – The proposed landscaping which surrounds the site is necessary to comply with the requirements of the Airfield Masterplan, however there are a number of concerns that have not been adequately addressed. Specifically with regard to the Western Bund – Whilst this bund may provide a nice daytime viewing platform to airfield operations, it presents both a security risk and a prime spot for night time antisocial behaviour given the area is not overlooked. There are no details as to who will actively manage this area given it is outside the secure perimeter of the proposed data centre, nor how safety and security would be addressed (CCTV for example). Given the extreme close proximity of the bund to the airfield, and its secluded nature, it has not been clearly evidenced that the proposals do not present a security / crime risk. In addition, the documents submitted suggest this is a ‘safety / security bund’, but there is no evidence as to why a bund is required, or if this is to protect the proposed data centre or the airfield. This needs to be clarified.

3. **Access** – It is accepted that once constructed, the main access to the site would be as at present, however the Parish Council is extremely concerned that during the 36 month construction period, use of this access would require all construction vehicles to use the roundabout at Siskin Way which would cause an unacceptable impact on the living conditions of the residents of Flats 59 – 66 Blenheim Square – an identified sensitive receptor. Should Council be minded to grant permission, it should be conditioned that during the 36 months construction phase, all construction vehicles and operations should temporarily use the proposed emergency northern access to the site, to ensure the wellbeing of residents in Blenheim Square. This is suggested in paragraph 7.52 of the Noise and Vibration report as proposed mitigation measure.

4. **Heritage** – The two main heritage elements to be affected by these proposals are the Grade II listed Air Traffic Control Tower, and the airfield itself. The proposals would completely eliminate any views of the airfield from this control tower.

Paragraph 2.24 of the Built Heritage statement submitted with the application suggests that the Airfield Masterplan itself proposes a scheme which would lead to a significant degree of harm to the special interest of the Control Tower, stating that it would be “*disrupting two primary components of its special interest - its visibility across the airfield and its sense of dispersion - (how it separated from areas of other areas of military infrastructure for defensive purposes.)*” However, it is clear from various sections of the Masterplan that the view from the control tower to the airfield is a ‘Key View’, and was expected to be retained as part of the strategic airfield framework. Paragraph 4.25 of the adopted Airfield Masterplan sets out with regard to the control tower that “***The existing views looking west should be retained, together with the protection or enhancement of the towers setting.***” This is supported by the numerous illustrations and plans within the masterplan, each of which clearly indicates that the view to the airfield should be retained.

Paragraph 5.16 of Annex 1 part 5⁴ of the Heritage report submitted with the application suggests that the Airfield Masterplan acknowledges that an unavoidable degree of harm to the setting of the control tower will occur, and the applicant is in effect using this interpretation as justification for the loss of views of the airfield from the tower. This is incorrect. The Airfield Masterplan clearly identifies the importance of the views, and states within numerous sections of the document that the setting of the control tower and its visibility to the airfield must be considered. The applicant does not seem have explored alternative design options which would result in the retention of views of the airfield from the tower, and is simply suggesting the views will be lost but can be mitigated via a ‘heritage trail’.

The applicant accepts that the views to the airfield from the tower contribute to its significance, This can be seen in paragraph 9.67 of the applicants Heritage Statement⁵ which confirms that “*The ATC forms an integral part of the airfield at North Weald, its setting is broadly defined by the airfield to which it relates..*” and paragraph 9.121 which states “*The ATC’s historical connection to the airfield relies on outward views over the runways and the surrounding landscape, which contribute to its significance..*”. In addition, the applicant accepts that as a result of the proposed development there will be long term moderate significant affects to both the control tower and the airfield itself.

Local Plan Policy DM7 Historic Environments sets out the following policy considerations:

- A. Heritage assets (both designated and non designated) and their settings will be preserved or enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance in accordance with national planning policy and guidance. The more important the asset the greater the weight that will be given to its conservation.
- B. Development proposals that affect any heritage asset or its setting should preserve and, wherever possible, enhance the significance of the heritage asset having regard to the special architectural or historic interest of its character, appearance and the contribution made by its setting

The applicant has failed to demonstrate compliance with this policy, as the setting of the control tower is clearly being diminished and weakened as a direct result of the proposals.

It is understood that the applicant was considering the relocation of the Grade II listed control tower, however Historic England has advised they would not support this. There is no evidence to this effect included within the application. In addition, there is no information as to the security of the control tower would be managed, given it is outside the secure boundary of the data centre site.

Summary – This application fails to meet with requirements of the endorsed North Weald Airfield Strategic Masterplan, and as such is contrary to Local Plan Policy P6 (part O). In addition, the proposals fails to protect and enhance the character and setting of the Listed Air Control Tower, and as such are contrary to Local Plan Policy DM7 Historic Environment.

5. **Parking** – Should permission be granted, it is expected that the number of spaces will comply with the new ECC adopted parking standards, providing sufficient designated spaces within the site. In addition, it is expected that the applicant will ensure relevant arrangements are in place to discourage parking by visitors or staff at or along local streets in the vicinity of the site, in order to protect the local amenity.

6. **Traffic** – The applicant has submitted a detailed Traffic Assessment, however there are no S106 details regarding the financial contributions which should be made (should permission be granted) to relevant infrastructure, including National Highway upgrades to Junction 7 of the M11. It is understood National Highways has issued a holding objection on both EPF/2587/23 and EPF/1793/24 as a result of the impact the proposals will have on this Junction. As such, it is expected that this development would proportionately contribute to any required upgrades.

7. **Energy** - It is understood that the energy supply will be sourced from the Waltham Cross and Rye House substations via underground cable connections. The Parish Council is concerned about the local disruption this may cause in terms of roadworks, and as such reserves judgement on this matter until any possible reserved matters application.

However, the Parish Council does have concerns regarding the suggestion that photovoltaic solar panels have been deemed suitable for this development, the quantum of which will be determined during design development. Glint and glare from solar panels are known to have potential negative effects on airfield operations, specifically take off, landing, and impact on control towers. A glint and glare assessment has not been submitted, and as such it has not been clearly established that solar panels would be a safe sustainable energy supply. It would be expected that before it can be established that solar panels are safe and a possible option, a full assessment as to their suitability must be undertaken, and evidence provided that they would

not cause any detrimental affect on airfield safety or operations. It is also unclear how much renewable energy ASHPs would create given the size of the proposed development.

8. Noise Impact – The applicant provided a noise impact report, setting out the impact of identified sensitive receptors which includes Flats 59 – 66 Blenheim Square (R1), Lancaster Road (R2) and Vicarage Lane (R5). R1 is this most severely affected receptor, not only for noise but generally as a result of the development. Normal evening time operations are expected to result in a +7db increase in noise compared to the current position for R1, having a medium/moderate impact. This same receptor is expected to suffer a +18db increase in noise in the event of a power failure, where all generators will operate simultaneously to support the building demand alongside all normal cooling and ventilation plant. This could happen at any time. The Government has issued guidance on when noise is relevant to planning⁶, which sets out that “*noise has no adverse effect so long as the exposure does not cause any change in behaviour, attitude or other physiological responses of those affected by it.*” It further sets out that an increase of 5db or more may be considered adverse, with an increase of 10db or more typically considered significant and may trigger mitigation requirements or refusal of planning permission if not justified. Given that every single receptor (R1-R6) is expected to suffer an increase of between a +5db and +18db during times of night time emergency operations, this is classed as having a major impact, and would undoubtedly cause a change in behaviour or physiological response (sleep interruption, etc). The Parish Council is extremely concerned that local residents (especially R1) and other local amenities do not suffer a detriment as a result of any increase in noise. The applicants noise impact report sets out proposed mitigation measures, and it is expected that all of these would be secured by condition should planning be granted. At this stage, the Parish Council has concerns that the proposed development will not comply with Local Plan policy DM21 Local Environmental Impacts, Pollution and Land Contamination Part B as there may be an unacceptable level of local environmental impacts relating to noise.

9. Lighting – The applicant has assumed as part of their calculations that Merlin Way is already lit with street lights. This is not the case, and further work should be undertaken to reassess the data provided. The Parish Council would have liked the applicant to consider a ‘dark sky policy’ considering the proximity of the site to both the airfield and the rural neighbouring land. The NPPF sets out under paragraph 198 that planning decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development, including limiting the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation. The Parish Council will expect any lighting not to detrimentally affect neighbouring properties (Receptor 1), or the continued effective operation of the airfield.

10. Design Codes – The applicant has submitted proposed design codes as part of this application. Firstly, the Parish Council has concerns that design codes are created by the applicants themselves, thus being created to serve their own purposes and not a holistic view. Secondly, the Parish Council suggests that until such time as the matter of height / impact on OLS has been determined these proposed design codes should NOT be agreed, given that one of the included codes sets out a proposed maximum height of 24m for buildings on the site (page 17). In addition, Page 11 sets out that the proposal to include an airfield safety bund, but as mentioned previously it has not been determined why this is needed, and for whose safety. It is suggested the Design Codes should be the subject of a separate application, and completed in conjunction / jointly with EFDC.

At this stage, no details of any proposed S106 agreement have been included. Should permission be granted, the Parish Council will expect to see a comprehensive S106 agreement which provides a range of benefits directly related to the North Weald, specific in nature setting out how the residents of North Weald will benefit from these proposals.

The Parish Council confirms its intention to attend and speak at any Committee Meeting, should it be progressed to this stage.

2	EPF/0824/25 <i>Mohinder Bagry</i> (Other – HPP)	Brambles Tye, Vicarage Lane, North Weald Bassett, Epping, CM16 6ET	Removal of existing garage, store and workshop. Proposed single storey rear and side extension.
The Parish Council has <i>NO OBJECTION</i> to this application			

P24.145 DECISIONS BY EPPING FOREST DISTRICT

These had been previously circulated on the 6th May.

P24.146 FFDC LICENCES & CONSULTATIONS

None.

P24.147 PLANNING CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk advised of a previous application that was currently under investigation as to whether or not it had been determined too early.

P24.148 ANY OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO PLANNING

Cllr Irvine asked what was happening regarding the opening on to the field in Mill Street Hastingwood. The RFO advised that ECC Highways would be visiting the area to look at the ditch, however it should be noted that ECC have advised that the road is not classified as an primary road and as such it was understood that the owner of the field could undertake the opening into the field.

Meeting Closed 20.11

Signed Date