

Donna Williams

Subject: FW: Vastern Road, Reading (200188)
Attachments: 210209 SB MEMO - Vastern Road revised energy strategy review (10.12.2020) 00.pdf
Importance: High

From: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>
Sent: 12 February 2021 12:32
To: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>
Cc: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; Kim Cohen <Kim.Cohen@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; Williams, Julie (Planning) <Julie.Williams@reading.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Vastern Road, Reading (200188)

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Dear Ms McHardy,

Further to my email below (for which I have received no response), I can update you in terms of the on-going energy review by Element Energy.

Element Energy has produced an initial note (attached in full) and requested, as per their instruction (which you were agreeable to at the time), a meeting with yourself and your representatives Hodkinson to discuss this further, with view to this then facilitating Element Energy producing their full report to the local planning authority. I would be grateful for your clarification as to whether this is a meeting you wish to undertake? On the one hand such a meeting is accounted for in the instruction, but I am also conscious that you subsequently detailed your request to “draw matters to a close” and “you determine the application in its current form”. Accordingly, I would be grateful if you could please clarify if you wish to undertake such a meeting (solely relating to this matter) to enable Element Energy to then produce a fuller response? If you do not wish to undertake a meeting, please let me know. In this scenario I will simply advise Element Energy of this and ask for them to complete their assessment on the basis of the information already submitted.

In terms of timescales for such a future meeting, I can suggest the morning of Monday 22nd, 23rd or 24th February. If appropriate, please indicate your availability.

I trust that this is of assistance and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Markwell
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Section | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading,
RG1 2LU

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From: Markwell, Jonathan
Sent: 21 January 2021 17:07
To: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>
Cc: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; Kim Cohen <Kim.Cohen@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; Williams, Julie (Planning) <Julie.Williams@reading.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Vastern Road, Reading (200188)

Sent without prejudice

Dear Ms McHardy,

Thank you for your email. Sorry for the short delay in responding, I have been in separate meetings for much of yesterday and today.

Your request to “draw matters to a close” and “determine the application in its current form” is accepted. Accordingly, no further information will be accepted or taken into account from you on this application. This is a somewhat surprising and disappointing turn of events, given that only three working days earlier you had submitted further information for consideration (including a further updated overall viability position) and confirmed your position regarding other matters. In addition, just last week you agreed to fund an independent review on behalf of officers of the revised energy strategy recently submitted, with the timescales for that review being received being the middle of February (which you were aware of prior to my instruction).

In the circumstances I can advise that the application will be determined in its current form following receipt of the already underway energy review by Element Energy. Moreover in the intervening time period, in responding to a request from an elected member seeking an update on the application, the application has subsequently been called into committee for determination regardless of the officer level recommendation. Accordingly, the application will be progressed to the next available committee meeting after the energy review has been considered and officers have weighed the merits against any shortcomings of the application, to arrive at a critical planning balance as to whether to support the application at officer level or not (which will be able to be made once the energy review has been received and all other matters are taken into account - as discussed in conversation on Monday). At this

point in time, this is likely to be the 31st March committee given the timeframes for the energy review to be received and committee scheduling/deadlines. Ultimately, elected members of the planning applications committee will determine the application, regardless of the future officer level recommendation. To clarify, your request for the application determined and issued by tomorrow is not possible, or appropriate given the independent energy review is already underway and the critical planning balance cannot be applied at this juncture.

I hope that this update is of assistance to you. I will update you in due course of the outcome of the energy review, the officer level recommendation and details of which committee the application will be presented at. To reaffirm, given your email below, no further information will be accepted or taken into account from you or your representatives in the determination of the application.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Markwell
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Section | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading,
RG1 2LU

07971 015 688

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From: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Sent: 19 January 2021 13:01

To: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>

Cc: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; Kim Cohen <Kim.Cohen@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; Williams, Julie (Planning) <Julie.Williams@reading.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: Vastern Road, Reading (200188)

Dear Jonathan,

Thank you for your time yesterday on our call.

As discussed, the letter we sent last week did not present any new information but was intended to help officers by setting out the latest position on the scheme.

The only new information confirmed was our position on the North/South Link which you had asked for us to confirm before progressing the application further. As set out in the letter and discussed yesterday, after much consideration, given the other elements which Berkeley have conceded on, including the Energy Strategy; Affordable housing; and full payment of the Vastern Road Crossing, we were unable to make any further changes to the central section of the North/South Link without impacting further the viability of the scheme and our ability to deliver the key planning benefits for the Council.

We asked officers to consider the application in its current form and were hoping that given the wider benefits, officers would be able to support the scheme and we could agree a detailed strategy and timeline to ensure we hit the next possible committee date with your full support. Following our discussion yesterday I understand that you are not in a position to do this and will not be for some time. I hope that you can appreciate that we are now approaching 12 months since submission of the application which was validated 16th March. Our application was originally due to be determined by the 15th of July. Without a firm commitment from officers to getting to even a 31st March committee with officer support is not sufficient for us to continue.

Therefore, it is with much disappointment that I must suggest that we draw matters to a close and I ask that you determine the application in its current form. In the spirit of our relationship I am willing to agree an EOT until the end of this week (22nd) to allow officers to finalise your report.

Kind regards

Caroline McHardy
Land and Development Director



Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Ltd
Berkeley House, Farnham Lane, Farnham Royal, SL2 3RQ

Telephone| 01753 784400 |Direct Dial 01753 784436| Mobile 07917520742
www.berkeleygroup.co.uk

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Registered in England and Wales Number 2843844



From: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>
Sent: 18 January 2021 10:38

To: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>; Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>
Subject: RE: Vastern Road, Reading (200188)

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Dear Ms McHardy / Mr Pettit,

Thank you for your email and various attachments. Obviously this will require detailed consideration from a variety of colleagues. In the meantime, conscious that the Element Energy review is scheduled to be received during w/b 15th February, can we please agree a further extension of time for the determination of the application until 7th April 2021 (a week after the next practicably available committee on 31st March)? Bearing in mind our current extension of time expires today, I would ask for your response/agreement today too please?

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Markwell
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Section | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading,
RG1 2LU

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From: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Sent: 14 January 2021 09:29

To: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>; Williams, Julie (Planning) <Julie.Williams@reading.gov.uk>

Cc: Kim Cohen <Kim.Cohen@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; David Taylor (Oxford) <Dave.Taylor@berkeleygroup.co.uk>;
Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>
Subject: Vastern Road

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Dear Jonathan,

Please find attached correspondence for both yours and Julie’s attention following our meeting in December discussing the North South Link and River Thames mitigation.

I have also attached an updated to our Viability Appraisal (submitted Feb 20) taking into account the additional costs to the scheme following your feedback to date such as our increased contribution of £200k for RBC to deliver a new crossing at Vastern Road, and an additional £1.6m due to the change in our Energy strategy submitted on the 10th December. Thank you for instructing Elements Energy to review our submission and we will await to hear back from you once they have completed their assessment.

I hope the letter is clear but do not hesitate to contact me should there be anything further you wish to discuss.

Kind regards

Caroline McHardy
Land and Development Director



Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Ltd
Berkeley House, Farnham Lane, Farnham Royal, SL2 3RQ

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MEMO: Vastern Road revised energy strategy review

Introduction

The following memo provides a review of Hodkinson's revised energy strategy (dated 10/12/2020) for the Vastern Road development in Reading.

This revised strategy was produced in response to Element Energy's previous review (September 2020). Since this last review, the Applicant has adopted the requirement from Reading Borough Council (RBC) for a decentralised heat supply solution, employing heat pumps as the primary source of space heating and hot water.

The key outstanding issue for the development in relation to RBC energy and carbon policy is the selection of air source heat pump (ASHP) heat supply, and the omission of more efficient ground source heat pump (GSHP) and water source heat pump (WSHP) technologies.

Selected heat supply strategy

The proposed heat supply strategy for the Vastern Road development is defined as:

- 2no. ASHPs with total capacity of 365kWth for primary heat supply
- 1MWth natural gas boilers for top-up and back-up heat supply
- ASHPs = 67% of annual heat supply, gas boilers make up the remaining heat consumption (33%)

Hodkinson state that the employment of ASHPs necessitates the reliance on gas boilers for top-up heat, due to ASHP technology inefficiencies during winter months.

Whilst gas boiler heating to supplement heat pumps on new developments is not explicitly discouraged in RBC planning policy, the fact that there are alternative technological solutions yet to be fully discounted through further technical assessment (see next sections on GSHP and WSHP) means gas boilers for top-up heat should not be considered compliant at this design stage. Gas boilers for back-up heat (i.e. in case of heat pump failure) may be considered acceptable to ensure uninterrupted heat supply.

It is noted by Hodkinson that an ASHP + gas boiler approach provides residents with the least-cost method of heat supply. However, relative to pure ASHP supply the difference is marginal (~£900/yr for ASHP + gas boiler vs ~£940/yr for ASHP-only), or £3/month more on average per residential unit. This does not feel significant enough to discount a pure ASHP approach. The reliance on gas boilers therefore does not appear justified on a carbon or cost basis.

Should the alternative heat supply solutions not be technically viable for the development (see below), a full ASHP approach should be taken for the development (i.e. no gas boiler top-up). Gas boilers for back-up supply is an acceptable approach.

Alternative heat supply solutions

Closed-loop GSHP

Hodkinson state that 1,939m² of area has been identified as suitable for closed-loop boreholes on the development. This is stated as insufficient to serve the full heat demand. It is assumed that Hodkinson has estimated the closed-loop GSHP borehole requirements such that they would provide the full heat demand (i.e. no top-up gas boilers as per the ASHP approach).

A simple analysis by Element Energy suggests that this assessment of closed-loop GSHP is accurate, given the spatial constraints of the development. Assuming 3-5kWth of capacity per borehole (spaced 5m x 5m apart), this suggests the average borehole = 0.16 kWth/m². With 1,939m² available, total available heat capacity = 388kWth, which is not sufficient to cover the full peak heat demand (assumed as 1MWth, i.e. the capacity of the back-up boilers in the ASHP solution).

The exclusion of closed-loop GSHP from the development as a heat supply solution is therefore valid.

Open-loop GSHP

Whilst there are no known boreholes deeper than 30m in the immediate vicinity of the proposed Vastern Road development, this does not necessarily signify that deeper open-loop boreholes are not possible in the area. There are a number of boreholes in and around Reading town centre (e.g. Forbury Retail Park) that are ~100m deep, therefore there is scope for deeper boreholes to access aquifer water.

Hodkinson state that as brownfield site, the land on which the Vastern Road development sits may be contaminated due to its previous use, but no evidence is provided to support this. Without further evidence, open-loop GSHP cannot be discounted at this design stage.

It is recommended that open-loop GSHP not be discounted until further technical assessments have been undertaken at detailed design stage:

- Commission desktop study by hydrogeological consultants to establish depth of aquifer water on development.
- Commission ground investigations to understand the potential barrier to deployment due to contaminated land.

WSHP

Hodkinson state:

“For the proposed development, the River Thames is the most likely heat source. This, like the open loop GSHP would require complying with several regulatory requirements laid down by the Environment Agency, which could ultimately prevent heat provision to the development.”

The potential non-compliance with Environment Agency regulation should not discount WSHP at this stage of design, but engagement with the Environment Agency should be undertaken as soon as possible to confirm whether a river source heat pump approach is not viable for the development.

Further:

“Further to this, the plant required to collect the water from the Thames would be required to be as close as possible to the water source. This would place the plant outside the redline of this development.”

Hodkinson must liaise with RBC to understand the barrier to infrastructure deployment due to land ownership and easement issues. WSHP cannot be discounted on this basis as this has not yet been confirmed as a barrier.