

**APPEAL BY CP LOGISTICS UK READING PROPCO
LTD**

APP/W0340/W/25/3360702

**LAND BOUNDED BY HOAD WAY AND M4 AND HIGH
STREET, THEALE, WEST BERKSHIRE**

**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY'S
OPENING SUBMISSIONS**

Introduction

1. This inquiry will consider an appeal by CP Logistics UK Reading Propco Ltd ("the Appellant") against the refusal of planning permission for the following development:

"Full planning application for the construction of 2 employment units for flexible uses within Class E (light industrial), B2 and/or B8 of the Use Classes Order (including ancillary office provision) with associated enabling works, access from Hoad Way, parking and landscaping"

on land bounded by Hoad Way and M4 and High Street, Theale, West Berkshire ("the Appeal Site").

2. In summary, the Council's case on each of the main issues identified by the Inspector is as follows:

(a) The principle of the proposal and employment land supply

The proposal is for a logistics unit outside the settlement boundary of the historic rural village of Theale. Given its scale and ease of access to a wide market area, it is clear that the end user of this development is not one that would meaningfully contribute to sustaining the *rural* economy of Theale. In any case, the parties are agreed, in principle, that the proposal would cause harm to the landscape and to the significance of the Theale High Street/Blossom Lane Conservation Area. As such, the proposal is contrary to the Council's development plan, particularly the spatial strategy set out in Policy SP1 of the newly-adopted Local Plan Review 2023-2041. Although that plan was adopted with a shortfall in the supply of employment sites, and the proposal would contribute to closing that shortfall, this is a material consideration which does not justify departing from the development plan because the Council has a supply (against its local plan requirement) of industrial and warehouse sites of between 11.5 and 13.8 years which is more than enough to bridge the

gap until the five-year review of the development plan. It is for this very reason that the Inspector who examined the Local Plan Review, found it to be sound even with the acknowledged shortfall in supply.

(b) The effect of the proposal on the conservation area

It is common ground that the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the conservation area. The Council's case is that the appeal site, in its open and undeveloped form, is a significant element of the setting of the conservation area. It contributes positively to the setting, being the only area of undeveloped land immediately adjacent to the historic built part of the settlement and by providing an open green gap with long-distance views out of the historic core. It therefore provides appreciation of Theale's historic development as a rural village on the London to Bath coaching route. Developing the appeal site as a logistics unit would result in the loss of that historic context and therefore harm to the significance of the conservation area at the moderate-high end of the scale.

(c) The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area

The appeal site currently forms part of a green edge to the settlement of Theale and the setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. Its open and undeveloped nature plays an important role in maintaining the distinct character of the historic rural village of Theale from surrounding industrial uses and settlements to the east and south. Again, the built form of the proposal – a 13m-tall logistics unit – is completely at odds with the established character of the settlement and would be a dominant and incongruous feature in the visual landscape. The proposal would therefore result in harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

3. Overall the Council submits that the proposed development conflicts with its development plan and there are no material considerations of sufficient weight to justify granting planning permission despite that conflict. Accordingly, planning permission should be refused and this appeal dismissed.

List of appearances

4. The Council will call the following witnesses:

- (a) Dr Rebecca Hawkes-Reynolds, Principal Conservation and Design Officer, West Berkshire Council (on heritage matters);
- (b) John-Paul Friend, Director of LVIA Ltd (on landscape matters);
- (c) Richard Pestell, Partner, Rapleys LLP (on employment land need and supply); and
- (d) Gemma Kirk, Senior Planning Officer, West Berkshire Council.

Matt Lewin
Cornerstone Barristers

17 June 2025