

bulk of the site lies in open countryside some 385m away from the Thame by-pass. Other than the access, the site is a rectangle approximately 100m by 170m. At present the field has a standing crop on it. The eastern and southern boundaries are defined by a field hedge whilst the other two boundaries are open.

- 2.2 From the Thame by-pass the land slopes upwards for some 250m to a slight ridge and then falls away again to the site. The whole area is gently undulating large fields.
- 2.3 To the south is the site of the Thame Show. During most of the year there is no evidence of the show. It has the appearance of a fenced paddock. Adjoining the by-pass is Chinnor Rugby Football club pitches and club house.
- 2.4 A location plan is **attached** to this report.

3.0 THE APPLICATION

- 3.1 The application seeks outline planning permission for the relocation of Thame Cattle Market. The operators of the existing cattle market, located in the centre of Thame are not the applicants, but the application makes clear that the occupiers will be the existing market operators.
- 3.2 Although submitted in outline, the access is not reserved for subsequent approval. The application (as amended) shows a new access some 30m south of the existing access serving the show ground. It would involve the widening of the by pass to include a right turn lane, with central refuges. Amended plans were recently deposited (18 July 2007) which propose alterations to the existing street lighting. These plans are the subject of further consultation and Members will be updated at the meeting.
- 3.3 The carriageway, which would be widened to accommodate the right turn lane, would then have a width some 9.5m, achieved by taking it some 3m to the south east of its present alignment. A length of footpath is proposed adjoining the by-pass to gain access to a proposed new bus stop some 110m to the south east of the new access is shown. Visibility spays of some 160m would be provided and the carriageway alterations would extend to some 180m.
- 3.4 The access way would then be formalised to follow the existing, roughly surfaced track up the side of field hedge for some 380m to then turn northwards onto the site of the new cattle market. Indicative plans and specifications have been submitted indicating a building of some 4600 sq m with some 50 parking spaces and lorry parking and vehicle wash down areas.
- 3.5 Although no details of the building have been submitted, the application suggests that the building will be either brick or fair faced blocks with a profiled steel sheet roof.
- 3.6 Documents submitted in support of the proposal include:
 - An appraisal of the existing Cattle market in Thame
 - A planning statement
 - A flood risk assessment
 - A drainage and waste management statement
 - A transportation assessment

- A landscape appraisal
- A Transportation assessment and
- A report on the future of the Thame Cattle market.

The documents may be inspected on the Councils web site. A location plan and the detailed access plan are **attached** to this report.

3.7 The application does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment. It has been advertised as a departure from Development Plan policies.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 P06/E0896/O – outline planning permission for the relocation of the Thame Cattle Market and development of an agricultural business centre was withdrawn prior to determination on 9 November 2006.

5.0 CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

5.1 Thame Town Council	Approve subject to substantial improved access and egress arrangements for site and the Lea Park Estate. Restriction on hours of Cattle Market traffic.
SODC Landscape Consultant	Concerns about the impact on the landscape.
SODC Countryside Officer	No objection.
Monson (drainage consultants)	Concerns about capacity of foul drains and method of disposal.
Thames Water	Comments awaited. Up date at Committee will be given.
OCC (Highways)	Conditional no objection (copy attached) Comments on revised plan awaited. Up date at Committee will be given.
OCC (County Archaeologist)	No objection.
Thame and Oxfordshire County Agricultural Association	Support.
Royal Veterinary College	Support as a teaching resource.
Letters in support	(66) They are generally from users of the existing cattle market in Thame. They consider that the market is an essential part of the existing farming enterprises in the area. The existing facility is on a cramped site in the town centre and beginning to have capacity and cleaning problems. Other local markets have closed and to sell and buy animals

	would take place at ever increasing distances which would not assist carbon footprints or animal health.
Neighbours	(6) Objection. They express concerns about traffic impact, the capacity of the local drainage systems and the general noise and disturbance.
DEFRA (Animal Health)	Considers the existing site is small and has difficulties given its location. The provision of vehicle washes adjacent to the Show Ground should assist the Thame Show.

6.0 POLICY AND GUIDANCE

6.1 Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

6.2 Oxfordshire Structure Plan: Policies G2, G5 and EN1

6.3 South Oxfordshire Local Plan, 2011 policies:

G1 Restraint of development

G2 Protect district from adverse development

G3 Development well served by facilities and transport

G4 Protection of Countryside

G6 Appropriateness of development to its site & surroundings

C1 Development would have adverse impact on landscape character

C4 Landscape setting of settlements

C5 Loss of greenfield/agricultural land

C6 Maintain & enhance biodiversity

EP1 Adverse affect on people and environment

EP3 Adverse affect by external lighting

EP7 Impact on ground water resources

E3 Employment generating development in the countryside

E5 Business, industrial, warehousing and storage proposals

THA1 Cattlemarket

6.4 South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment.

7.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The main considerations are:

1. Whether the development is acceptable in principle
2. Impact on the landscape
3. Highway safety and convenience
4. Drainage
5. Impact on neighbours
6. Whether there are any other material considerations

1) Whether the development is acceptable in principle

7.2 The main thrust of the planning policies contained in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, 2011, is to protect the countryside from adverse developments (Policies G2 and G4). In this case, officers consider that there is no doubt, that the construction of a large building, areas of hardstanding and parking and a new access and access way is contrary to the policies of restraint in the rural parts of the District. Although Policy G4 contains provisions for the construction of agricultural buildings in rural areas, the proposal is not for an agricultural building. Rather, it is for a building and use *connected* with agriculture. Farm buildings normally have to have a close relationship with the holding it is to serve. In this case, farmers come to the market over a considerable distance and the precise location is not governed by the needs of the land on which it is sited. Officers consider that the development is clearly contrary to policies for the restraint of development in the countryside. Whether there are other, material considerations, is considered below.

2) Impact on the landscape

7.3 In the locality of the application, the by-pass forms a very strong edge to the built up limits of Thame. The site lies in countryside with little of the degradation which sometimes occurs on urban fringes. In views from the nearby footpath and bridleway network the site is distinctly rural. Because of the slight rise and undulations of the area, there is little relationship between the site and the built up area of Thame and officers consider that the establishment of this large, functional commercial use would detract from the rural character of the area. Although a landscape appraisal has been submitted, officers disagree with its findings. The site is not part of a degrading urban fringe but is a functioning agricultural landscape and officers consider that such a large development would represent an alien intrusion into the rural landscape.

7.4 This intrusion would be further emphasised from the by-pass by the requirement for a made up access way and the lighting which would inevitably be necessary.

7.5 The site lies within an area of 'undulating open vale' within the landscape area 3, Clay Vale as set out in the South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment which has the status of Supplementary Planning Guidance. Such areas are considered to have 'high sensitivity to change'. Additionally, it suggests that the landscapes on the fringe of settlements are particularly vulnerable to change and that strong edges are required. The by pass forms a very strong edge to development in the area which would be diluted by the access way and the bell mouth of the new access which would emphasise the large developments beyond the ridge. If a case of overriding need is accepted, then in visual terms, it would be better to have such a development immediately adjacent to the built up limits of the town.

3) Highway safety and convenience

7.6 There is no doubt that the development will involve an increase in traffic movements along the by-pass. Some traffic associated with the existing market would already use this section but, inevitably, if approved, more traffic would use it. From the representations made, and observations made on site, there is already some difficulty caused to existing residents of Lea Park attempting to access the by-pass. The speed limit is 50 mph and the road is narrow. The County Surveyor has, however, raised no objection to the new access, subject to conditions. The existing, town centre site access conditions, would be improved and a balanced overall view needs to be taken. A copy of their comments is **attached**. However, the recently submitted amended plans are, at the time of drafting this report, being considered. Members will be up dated at the meeting.

4) Drainage

7.7 The applicant has submitted a drainage strategy in respect of the site. In addition to the normal foul drainage associated with any development including toilets, there are large areas for washing down the market area and disinfecting lorries and trailers. This will produce large amounts of contaminated water. The drainage strategy appears satisfactory in so far as it relates to treatment on site. However, what is not considered is how the waste water is disposed of. The application has indicated that the treated water would be discharged either to public sewers downstream of Lea Park, or by going direct to the main pumping station. At present, however, officers consider that, given the amount of waste water which would be produced, the likely length of engineering works and complexity of the solution, this issue should be resolved prior to any approval.

5) Impact on neighbours

7.8 The main part of the site, in relation to the nearest residential property, lies over a ridge and, although, as set out above, there will be an awareness of the amount of development, officers consider that there will be no direct impact by virtue of noise, overlooking or the general proximity of the market. The nearest residential property will be some 400m away from the buildings and hardstandings.

7.9 The new access will bring the by pass some 3m closer to the properties opposite the access. However, there is a wide grass verge and when completed, a gap of some 7m would remain to the side boundary of 8 Pennington Place. There would be turning traffic in the area, but it would be possible to control hours of usage through the imposition of appropriate conditions.

7.10 There would be some additional light pollution which would be apparent to occupiers of the nearest properties, but, it would be possible to limit the impact of this through conditions.

7.11 Officers consider that there will be insufficient direct impact on neighbours to justify a refusal of planning permission.

6) Whether there are any other material considerations

7.12 There has been a considerable volume of information submitted with the application seeking to justify approval of the submission. Your officers have carefully examined all the evidence put forward.

- 7.13 Officers accept that the market is an important constituent of the local agricultural community. In its present location, it is a viable market and is not in imminent danger of closing. However, it is clearly in a constrained location surrounded by housing and other town centre uses. It cannot expand and the increasing requirements for bio-security will become more difficult to implement. If it closed, it is recognised that there would be a serious impact on the local farming community.
- 7.14 This situation was examined during the recent Local Plan Inquiry. The Inspector's report (May 2005) made reference to the situation when considering objections to Policy THA1. The relevant section is **attached** to this report. He concluded that any proposal for a relocation of the cattle market would be contrary to existing planning policy and that it would be more appropriate to consider alternative sites through the Local Plan process. An alternative site, adjoining the recently completed garage on Rycote Lane is currently being promoted as an alternative site. There has not been a comprehensive site search of the area.
- 7.15 The applicant advises that he has considered the possible Rycote Lane site but understands it is not available. In any event, the site which is the subject of the current application, has the benefit of allowing dual use of some of the facilities by the operators of the Thame one day show, who are the owners of the site. It appears that the Thame Show has the distinction of being the largest one day agricultural show in the country. However, the operators are finding it more difficult to comply with bio-security arrangements as regulations change. It would also seem that washing and disinfecting on grass is much more difficult than on concrete, which can be easier to keep clean and have treatment facilities built in.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The cattle market is recognised as a valuable local facility and the Council should support the principle of supporting its retention in the Thame area. There would be benefits in relocation from its present site in the Town Centre. However, it is currently viable on its present site and there is no immediate need to relocate. The site, the subject of this application is detached from the built up area. The building and associated developments required to operate a cattle market, would be highly intrusive in the open countryside. There are some benefits in locating on the same site as the showground, but officers consider that these, together with the current case put forward for relocation, do not override the objections to this proposal. The Local Plan Inspector, who dealt with the specific objections seeking relocation of the cattle market, advised that the issue should be resolved through the development plan system and a comparative analysis of potential sites should be undertaken. This would allow full public involvement and scrutiny by all interested parties. In addition, it has not been demonstrated that foul drainage can be dealt with adequately.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 **It is recommended that planning permission should be refused for the following reasons:**

1. **That, having regard to its location, in an attractive area of countryside,**

beyond the existing built development at Thame, the proposed buildings, and hardstandings and access way, would detract from the rural landscape character and visual amenity of the locality, and the setting of Thame, contrary to Policies G2, G4 and C1 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan. Insufficient justification exists to justify overriding the policies.

2. That insufficient information accompanies the application to demonstrate that the foul drainage can be adequately dealt with. In the absence of such information, the development would be contrary to Policy EP7 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

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