

Comments for Planning Application 26/00001/REM

Application Summary

Application Number: 26/00001/REM

Address: Land At West Cheltenham Southern Parcel Fiddlers Green Lane Cheltenham Gloucestershire

Proposal: Application for the approval of Reserved Matters (layout, scale, appearance, landscaping and access) for Phase 1 of development pursuant to Outline Planning Permission 23/01875/OUT for an Innovation Centre with ancillary cafe and event spaces (Class E), a Mobility Hub (Sui Generis) with flexible retail (Class E) and community uses (Class F) on the ground and first floor, and all associated infrastructure and open spaces.

Case Officer: Ms Michelle Payne

Customer Details

Name: Not Available

Address: 2 Pinewood Drive Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL51 0GH

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I object to the approval of reserved matters application 26/00001/REM on biodiversity and environmental justice grounds.

Others have already set out concerns about the scale of on-site habitat loss (a 28.93% deficit across the Southern Parcel), the mitigation hierarchy, and the reliance on off-site compensation at Hill Farm in Leckhampton, roughly 5km from the development. I won't repeat those arguments but want to raise two points I don't think have been properly addressed. A map illustrating these points has also submitted by email.

1. The deprivation gap between the community losing habitat and the community gaining it

The BNG strategy takes ecological and amenity value away from one of the most income-deprived child populations in the borough and delivers the compensating benefit to one of the least deprived. Department for Education data makes this very clear.

Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility is the standard DfE proxy for the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), correlating at 0.89 at LSOA level. The schools serving the area around the wider development site are:

- Hesters Way Primary School: 56.6% FSM eligibility (DfE classification "high")

- St Thomas More Catholic Primary School: 40.2% ("high")
- All Saints' Academy (secondary): 37.3% ("high")
- Springbank Primary Academy: 28.5% ("medium")

The national average is about 24.6%. Every school in the immediate catchment exceeds it. Hesters Way Primary more than doubles it. Local child deprivation rates within a 2km radius of these schools range from 18.4% to 25.7%.

Hill Farm sits in the catchment of Leckhampton CE Primary School, where FSM eligibility is 2.10% ("low") and the local child deprivation rate within 2km is 4.9%. The High School Leckhampton, the nearest secondary, records 9.9%. The primary school next to Hill Farm has roughly one twenty-seventh of the FSM rate of the primary school next to the development site.

Under this proposal the compensating habitat gets created 5km away in a much less deprived part of the borough. I would ask the Council to consider whether this BNG strategy sits comfortably with its NPPF obligations around environmental inequality and with the public sector duty to advance equality of opportunity.

2. Climate adaptation benefits are local and can't be moved across the borough

The NPPF treats climate adaptation as a core part of sustainable development (paragraph 8(c)) and expects planning decisions to build coherent ecological networks that can cope with current and future pressures (paragraph 187(d)).

The benefits green infrastructure provides, things like urban cooling, surface water management and cleaner air, only work where they are. A meadow at Hill Farm does nothing to cool a street in Hesters Way or slow runoff in Springbank. The development will remove a large area of open grassland at Fiddlers Green Lane and reduce what this area can do ecologically. If the compensating BNG were delivered locally it would help repair some of that. Delivering it 5km away does nothing for the people living here.

I ask that the application be refused or deferred until the applicant can show a revised BNG strategy that delivers the required net gain on-site or within West Cheltenham, not at Hill Farm. If officers are minded to recommend approval, I would urge that it go to Planning Committee so that elected Members can look at the environmental justice implications for Hesters Way and Springbank residents.



All Saints' Academy
37.3% FSM

Springbank Primary Academy
28.5% FSM

Hesters Way Primary School
56.6% FSM

Development Site

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
40.2% FSM

The High School Leckhampton
9.9% FSM

Leckhampton CE Primary School
2.1% FSM

Hill Farm, Leckhampton (off-site BNG)

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