

Aldermaston Parish Council

Chairman's Report

August 2026

Editors: Sophie Crawford, Ed Tilsley

The Parish Council met on 11 August, with an agenda covering planning applications, the impact of development at AWE Aldermaston, local highways and public transport, and enforcement matters.

Planning applications

Planning continues to be one of the Council's most significant areas of work. We considered an application for a **hand car wash at Hilliers Garden Centre, Station Road (26/01277/FUL)** which would comprise two canopied bays (for washing and then drying of cars), a small cabin office, and would employ 4-8 full-time staff. While the proposal is relatively small in scale creating, Councillors identified a number of concerns.

In particular, the proposed use of jet washes and vacuum cleaners in an open-air setting could have an impact on the three Grade II listed Malthouse Cottages immediately to the north of the site. The Council considers that an appropriate acoustic barrier would be required to protect residential amenity. We also raised questions about the proposed operating hours, staff welfare facilities and emergency arrangements, signage, external lighting and drainage.

The Council therefore agreed to **object to the application** unless these concerns can be satisfactorily addressed. Should West Berkshire Council be minded to approve the proposal, APC will request conditions covering operating hours, acoustic protection, drainage, emergency plans and signage. The Council also considered application **26/01163/FUL** for the **temporary use of Tadley Rugby Club as a Park & Ride facility for AWE contractors** until June 2028. APC agreed to **object to the proposal**. We recognise that AWE needs to

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address an immediate shortage of parking for contractors, but we are concerned about the consequences of locating this facility at a community sports club in a residential area, and the additional traffic that it will generate on the rural road network.

The application would turn a facility that is currently only occasionally used into a full-time commercial car park generating approximately **170 daily two-way vehicle movements**, including three 28-seat shuttle buses, with activity beginning as early as 5:30am and ending at 7pm. The proposal is to bus workers from the Site to AWE's Orian Gate entrance next to the Calleva roundabout via the Reading Road. Red Lane already experiences morning congestion as traffic queues to enter AWE through the Boiler House entrance, and we fear that the bus would avoid this queue by returning to the Site via Paices Hill and weight-restricted Church Road, adding more large vehicle traffic through Aldermaston's Conservation Area.

We have suggested that, if the rugby club is to be used for parking, the approximately 150 workers using the facility should walk from the rugby club to the Boiler House entrance. From there, they could be transported around the

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AWE site using its internal road network. This would avoid putting shuttle buses onto already congested local roads.

There is an important community dimension to the proposal as well. The rugby club facilities can currently be hired, which not be possible when the carpark is being used for Park& Ride, and the application does not explain how adult and youth rugby training on midweek evenings from 6:00pm or 6:30pm will be accommodated.

Finally, under planning, we discussed the Padworth Sawmills application (25/01915/FULMAJ) to which APC remains strongly opposed. WBC has advised that the planning officer intends to recommend approval and that the application is expected to go before the Eastern Area Planning Committee on 2 September.

This recommendation is in stark contrast to the Legal Opinion sought by APC. Councillors agreed that in the we should press WBC for early sight of the Case Officer's Committee Report so that we can understand the basis for her recommendation. We will also request another site visit for Committee members because it is important for that they see for themselves the rural setting and the limitations of the single-carriageway road access (a site visit took place over 6 months ago and was attended by just 3 committee members)

APC intends to prepare a presentation for the September meeting, focusing on the potential impact of the development on our community should it be allowed.

Planning enforcement

We continue to monitor unauthorised developments across the parish and discussed several cases at our meeting.

Since our July meeting we have been made aware that there is ongoing development at a Site on **Mill Lane** recently converted to travellers' pitches, and of a resident's request that WBC uses its enforcement powers to halt this development whilst a planning application (yet to be validated) is decided. The WBC Enforcement Officer has acknowledged this but said that she does not consider us of WBC's use discretionary enforcement powers appropriate at this time but that the situation remains under review.

APC has also contacted by a second resident concerned about unauthorised development at Pinewood on Soke Road. A large commercial building has been erected within the house's grounds, and follows concerns raised earlier in the year

that the residential site was being incorporated into the adjoining commercial compound. APC agreed that this should be formally reported to WBC as a planning breach.

Highways and public transport

WBC has been in touch with APC to inform that it is proposing to remove the **7:45am bus service from Aldermaston Wharf from September.**

Although the Community Connect on-demand service will remain, we understand that residents find it more difficult to book and considerably less reliable than a scheduled service.

APC is particularly concerned about the impact on vulnerable, elderly and isolated residents. Over recent years the parish has already lost the scheduled 44 bus service and the mobile library, and APC is worried about the withdrawal of more rural services. We will therefore respond to WBC with these comments.

Residents have also reported damage to several bridges on the Aldermaston cycleway. APC has agreed to raise the issue with WBC and press for repairs before the start of the September school term, as the route is used by families walking to Aldermaston Primary School.

Paices Hill car supermarket

Councillors also discussed the growing quantity of tyres being stored on the forecourt of the car supermarket on Paices Hill. Tadley Town Council has formally raised this as a complaint with WBC on the grounds of it being an unauthorised change of use from car sales to used tyre storage.

APC's own concern is that as well as being unsightly, the increasingly large mound of tyres may present a health & safety risk especially given its proximity to residential dwellings. We will report the matter to WBC and ask whether permits, permissions or regulations apply to the storage and sale of used tyres.

Scoping Consultation for new West Berkshire Local Plan

WBC has launched a Scoping Consultation for a new West Berkshire Local Plan. During the six-week consultation period running to 4 September individuals and organisations are invited to submit representations on matters relevant to the preparation of the local plan, including what the plan should contain.

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APC agreed to respond that it welcomes the opportunity that this new plan offers for WBC to assess the planning framework pertaining to the Aldermaston DEPZ. Since the current Local Plan was submitted for examination in 2023, large scale development has changed the 750-acre AWE Aldermaston site significantly and a continuation of this trend is inevitable as a result of AWE's 10-year site development programme due to start in 2027. The negative impact on surrounding communities is already being felt.

The Hub building remains under construction and has created unanticipated congestion on roads around the site which has resulted in AWE having to find temporary Park & Ride sites for its construction works at short notice. The Future Materials Campus development is expected to begin in 2027 and to take 10-years to complete. AWE Aldermaston now has 7,000 employees and 5,000 construction workers; it is reasonable to expect this to increase as the site development programme accelerates. There is a notable impact on our roads and the amenity of our residents already.

WBC needs to acknowledge this changed situation and amend its DEPZ policy (SP4) accordingly. Currently SP4 prevents any new residential development but allows unlimited new industrial development. This is compounding the damage already being inflicted on our parish by the scale of activity at AWE. APC believes that cumulative impact needs to be recognised and that industrial development should be curtailed in the same way as residential is now. This will not only prevent a worsening situation for residents but also ensure the safe long-term operation of AWE itself.

In addition, APC believes that the AWE should be required to mitigate the impact of its development programme on the local resident community as a Condition of any planning approvals. This might reasonably involve being required to: reduce Single Occupancy car travel to its Site (actually reduce, not just make a commitment to try to reduce); make significant investment in cycle and pedestrian access routes in the vicinity of the Site to encourage Active Travel and to benefit residents for whom the roads are now too dangerous; take measures to reduce speeding on local roads (traffic monitoring and speed cameras); and fund the enhancement of community facilities through the payment of CIL.

We will also point out that being in the DEPZ means that Aldermaston does not benefit from the affordable rural housing scheme that was the main initiative of

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the Viable & Vibrant Villages Programme launched by WBC at its District Parish Conference in April. There is a strong argument for a revision of SP4 in order to preserve the rural character, roads, services and community facilities that make Aldermaston Parish a good place to live.

Responding to AWE's planning application

Finally, APC is arranging a meeting with neighbouring parish councils to discuss the potential impacts of AWE's site development and whether councils should respond collectively to the anticipated outline planning application. Six councils have so far expressed an interest in attending.

Our next meeting is on 8th September.

For details visit <https://aldermaston-pc.gov.uk/>

Sophie Crawford

