

Minutes of a meeting of Cold Ash Parish Council held on Tuesday 23.6.2026 at 7.15pm in the Committee Room of Acland Memorial Hall

Present: Councillors McArdle (IM/Chair), Adams (PA), Maini (VM), Riley (JR), Murray (PM/Vice-Chair), and Codling (HC)

In Attendance: Rosie Jardine (Clerk & RFO)

Absent: Councillor Hanks (RH), Pemberton (JP) and Silsby (DS)

Public Participation:

The Clerk reported correspondence from a member of the public regarding the condition of routes through Fence Wood. A comment from a WBC Rights of Way Officer was noted; no further action by CAPC will be undertaken.

A MOP of the public spoke against APPEAL 25/00278/FULMAJ Sylvan House, Fishers Lane and highlighted the recent submission by the appellant of additional documents after the refusal by WBC.

26.105 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors Hanks (RH) and Pemberton (JP)

26.106 Declarations of Interest

HC declared that they are a District Councillor, that they will act in the best interests of the Parish and set aside any interest in the District Council during this meeting.

26.107 Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9.6.2026.

26.108 Planning Matters

A Applications - RESOLVED the following consultee responses to planning applications:

- NO OBJECTION to ^{PA} 26/01032/PIP The New Bungalow, Cleardene Farm, Ashmore Green Road - Application for Permission in Principle for Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of new dwelling and outbuilding.
NO OBJECTION at this stage; however, Cold Ash Parish Council considers that the proposal may represent an overdevelopment of the site. The Parish Council would also be grateful for confirmation from West Berkshire Council that the applicant's classification claims have been correctly applied and are supported by the relevant planning policy and guidance.
- NO OBJECTION to ^{RH} 26/01179/HOUSE Oak View, Collaroy Road - Install 3 panel bi fold doors to the rear elevation and replace part of the existing patio area with composite decking.
- NO OBJECTION to ^{JR} 26/01280/HOUSE 1 Sewell Close - Proposed part single storey rear extension and alterations to fenestration on front, side and rear elevations.
- DEFERRED consideration of APPEAL 25/00278/FULMAJ Sylvan House, Fishers Lane - Outline application for Serviced self-build plot at land adjacent to sylvan house, Fishers Lane, Cold Ash matters to be considered Access Landscaping and Layout (CAPC last objected 27.1.2026)

ACTION: Clerk to liaise with WBC Planning to query if it is permissible for the appellant/applicant to submit new and/or amended information to the Planning Inspectorate effectively varying the application refused by WBC or if in fact they should submit a new application.

B Decision Notices – to note decisions

GRANTED 26/00703/HOUSE Oakdene Stoney Lane Ashmore Green

C Other Planning Matters

NOTED letters to WBC Planning and the Environment Agency in relation to CAPC's sustained objection to 25//0278/FULMAJ as per minute 26.92A – see Appendices 1 and 2

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.10pm

Chair Date

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Appendix 1

Dear Ms Nutchey (WBC Planning),

Re: Planning Application 25/00278/FULMAJ – Land West of Heath Lane and North of Bowling Green Road, Thatcham

Following the recent Environment Agency response dated 11 June 2026, Cold Ash Parish Council wishes to submit the following further comments and clarification of its position.

CAPC notes that the Environment Agency has reviewed the latest hydraulic modelling submission and has stated that it has no further comments on the additional information provided.

However, CAPC does not consider that this should be interpreted as confirmation that all flood risk, hydrological and planning concerns associated with the application have been satisfactorily addressed or resolved.

The Environment Agency's response confirms only that it has no further comments to make on the latest submission and refers back to its previous correspondence. In CAPC's view, a number of important matters remain outstanding and continue to warrant careful consideration by the Local Planning Authority before any determination is made.

CAPC remains concerned regarding:

1. Groundwater emergence, subsurface flows, springs and wider site hydrology.
2. The loss of natural water storage and attenuation associated with existing marshland and wetland features.
3. Reliance on the continued operation and effectiveness of the Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme.
4. The evidential basis for claims that the development will provide flood risk “betterment” and increased resilience.
5. Whether all relevant hydrological pathways and flood mechanisms have been adequately represented.

Sequential and Exception Tests

CAPC remains unconvinced that the Sequential and Exception Test requirements have been satisfactorily demonstrated, particularly given the evolving understanding of the site's hydrology, the presence of Flood Zone 3 within the site, and the continued reliance upon assumptions regarding flood storage, groundwater behaviour and the operation of the Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The Parish Council continues to question whether sufficient consideration has been given to alternative sites and alternative approaches, particularly given the acknowledged flood risk constraints affecting parts of the application site and the evolving understanding of the site's hydrology.

Further CAPC is also unaware of any meaningful engagement with local residents, flood wardens or others possessing long-term knowledge of the site's behaviour and water management characteristics, despite the significant local evidence that has emerged throughout the application process.

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Responsibility of the Local Planning Authority

CAPC recognises that the site forms part of the adopted Local Plan. However, allocation within the Local Plan does not remove the Local Planning Authority's responsibility to ensure that all relevant planning policy requirements have been satisfied and that decisions are based upon robust and complete evidence.

The Parish Council remains concerned that if key assumptions regarding hydrology, groundwater behaviour, flood storage or flood defence performance subsequently prove to be incomplete or incorrect, the consequences would be borne not only by future residents of the development but also by existing communities and infrastructure that currently rely upon the Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme for protection.

Conclusion

For the avoidance of doubt, Cold Ash Parish Council maintains its objection to the application.

Whilst the Environment Agency's latest response is noted, CAPC does not consider that it resolves the wider concerns outlined above and remains of the view that significant uncertainty persists regarding the site's hydrology, long-term flood resilience and the robustness of the conclusions being advanced in support of the development.

Accordingly, CAPC respectfully requests that these matters continue to be given full weight and careful consideration before any determination is made.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Pete Murray

Vice Chairman

For and on behalf of Cold Ash Parish Council

Appendix 2

Dear Ms Denham (Environment Agency),

Re: Planning Application 25/00278/FULMAJ – Land West of Heath Lane and North of Bowling Green

Road, Thatcham

Cold Ash Parish Council writes following the recent submission of the applicant's revised Hydraulic Modelling Report and in advance of the Environment Agency's review of that material.

Firstly, we would like to thank the Environment Agency for the careful and thorough approach it has taken to reviewing the flood risk implications of this proposal. Given the scale of the development, the presence of Flood Zone 3 within the site, and the importance of the Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme to both existing and future communities, we consider that detailed scrutiny remains essential.

CAPC has now reviewed the applicant's latest Hydraulic Modelling Report and remains concerned that significant uncertainties continue to exist regarding the robustness of the modelling, the assumptions upon which it relies, and the conclusions drawn from it.

Whilst the report repeatedly concludes that the development will provide flood risk 'betterment' and increased resilience to the wider area, these conclusions appear to be derived entirely from the applicant's own modelling and have not yet been independently verified.

1. Model Calibration

The report states: "No calibration has been carried out to date." (Section 3.22) Given that the model is relied upon to demonstrate both the safety of the proposed development and wider flood risk betterment, CAPC would welcome confirmation that the absence of calibration against observed flood events, known flood extents or recorded site conditions does not materially affect confidence in the model outputs.

2. Groundwater and Subsurface Flows

The report states: "The 1D part of the model representing the ditch network will use baseflows to keep water in the ditch networks. The 2D floodplain will be using Rainfall data." (Section 1.5) The report further states: "The model inflows in the 1D model are three QTBDY boundaries, they are using baseflows to keep the water in the channel." (Section 3.10) CAPC remains concerned that the modelling appears principally focused on rainfall-runoff processes and ditch flows. It remains unclear whether groundwater emergence, seepage, spring-fed flows and subsurface hydrological interactions associated with the Cold Ash escarpment have been adequately assessed and represented within the modelling.

3. Reliance on the Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme

The report states: "The flood mapping now shows the Thatcham Flood Alleviation basins filling up on the southeast area of the site and providing a true representation of the flood behaviour on this site." (Section 4.2)

The report further concludes: "The development is not at risk of flooding and also that betterment to the Thatcham Flood Alleviation scheme is also provided by the development scheme." (Section 7.4) CAPC would

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welcome confirmation that the assumptions regarding the operation, storage capacity, resilience and long-term effectiveness of the Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme have been independently verified.

4. Claims of Betterment

The report states: "This development frees up capacity to the flood alleviation basins meaning that greater resilience will be provided by the flood alleviation scheme." (Section 6.4) It also states: "This betterment increases flood resilience to the Thatcham community." (Section 6.9) CAPC would welcome confirmation that sufficient evidence exists to support these claims and that they have been independently validated.

CAPC is particularly concerned that significant claims of improved flood resilience for existing communities are being advanced whilst the underlying model has not been calibrated against observed flood events and remains subject to independent review by the Environment Agency. We would therefore welcome confirmation that there is a robust evidential basis for concluding that the proposed development improves, rather than simply relies upon, the performance of the Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme.

5. Sequential and Exception Test Considerations

Part of the application site lies within Flood Zone 3 and CAPC remains concerned that the conclusions relied upon to support the Sequential Test and Exception Test are dependent upon modelling and flood risk assumptions that remain under review.

Wider Community Impact

CAPC is particularly concerned that any shortcomings within the modelling would not only affect future residents of the proposed development but could also affect existing communities that currently rely upon the Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme and associated drainage infrastructure for protection.

For these reasons, CAPC respectfully requests that the Environment Agency continues to apply a precautionary approach until it is fully satisfied that the modelling, assumptions and conclusions have been independently verified and that all outstanding uncertainties have been satisfactorily resolved.

Thank you for your continued consideration of this matter and for the diligence with which you are reviewing the application.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Pete Murray

For and on behalf of Cold Ash Parish Council