

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Planning Committee held at Holyport Memorial Hall on Friday 20th January 2023 at 7:00pm

Present:

Cllr S Cross, Cllr K Elvin, Cllr L Kneen (Chair), Cllr N Pellew, Cllr M Pierce, Cllr D Wilson, Mr B Inglis (Deputy Clerk), Mr O Ralton (Greystoke Land), Mr J Bagley (Press) and 146 members of the public.

PC093/2022 Health and Safety Introduction

The Chair requested that all mobiles are switched to silent for the duration of the meeting and gave information to all in attendance of the fire safety regulations for the venue.

PC094/2022 Apologies for absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillors Glover, Graham, Marsh, Phillips and Tavinor. There were no Declaration of Interest made.

PC095/2022 Consideration of the following Application:

Appn. No.: 22/03374

Type: Outline

Proposal: Outline application for access only to be considered at this stage with all other matters to be reserved for the demolition of the existing agricultural buildings to create a new Film and TV Studio including sound stages, ancillary offices, virtual reality studio, storage and warehouses, workshops, specialist studio facilities and outdoor film backlot; the creation of a new Nature Park incorporating hard and soft landscaping, green infrastructure, sustainable drainage systems, and new cycle and pedestrian facilities; the provision of a new cricket pitch and associated pavilion with new cycle and pedestrian access route; together with supporting infrastructure to include long-stay car parking, cycle parking, boundary treatments, waste storage, sub-stations, and new access roundabout and vehicle route.

Location: Land North and South Gays Lane Maidenhead

Cllr Pellew gave a presentation on The Application, following which Cllr Kneen gave a presentation on The Impact.

Cllr Kneen invited Mr Ralton to speak in support of The Application and he did so within the allocated time. Following this he took and responded to questions from members of the public.

Cllr Kneen invited the 5 members of the public who had previously arranged to speak at the meeting to do so, and this they did within the allocated time.

Cllr Kneen invited members of The Planning Committee to give their views on The Application, with Cllr Wilson, Cllr Elvin, Cllr Pellew and Cllr Cross doing so.

Cllr Kneen read the following statement.

BPC Recommends Refusal for the following reasons:-

1. Not in the RBWMs Borough Local Plan for Development

2. According to Government Agricultural Classification (ALC), Stroud Farm is considered high quality agricultural land. The Government sets out to protect the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land from significant, inappropriate or unsustainable development proposals. As Identified in NPPF Conserving and enhancing the natural environment – paragraphs 174 to 188.
3. Green belt, no very special circumstances have been provided to justify the destruction of the openness of the Green Belt by the height of 21m+ and mass of at least 60,000sqft of buildings. Citing not able to find elsewhere is not applicable, for application no. 18/03725/FULL on the same land as the proposed main development, the Shooting Club cited the reason of not being able to find anywhere else for VSP - this application was Dismissed at Appeal. The Inspector decided the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. The proposal would, therefore, be contrary to the aim of the Framework to protect Green Belt land and would conflict with Policies GB1 and GB2 of the Local Plan, where they are consistent with the Framework. This development is much larger than this one.
4. Green Belt; Parkland area: Application no. 19/00362 to change from Agricultural to Education, part of the area outlined to be a Park was Dismissed at Appeal due to the proposal being contrary to the then Policies GB1, GB2, DG1, T5 and N6 of the LP, Policies SP5, SP3, IF2 and NR2 of the emerging plan as well as the Framework.
The creation of a Parkland would urbanise the area, currently open farmland fields, and a change of use would open the door to future development.
There is a mention of a cricket pitch on this land; as there is one behind Holyport Memorial Hall and one at Braywood, another one is not required.
5. Green Belt: closing the gap between villages of Holyport and Fifield as boundary for Stroud Farm by Green Lane is the edge of Holyport. Bray Parish Residents wish to keep gaps between the villages and for the villages not to merge – RBWM supports this in the BLP.
6. Impact on Holyport's Conservation Area and Historic Listed buildings. RBWM are committed in the BLP to protect Historic Buildings and Conservation areas, this development is near to Grade II listed building, John Gays House, and the Conservation Area boundary. The openness and trees setting in Langworthy lane with its surrounding area and lack of heavy traffic is identified positive in that part of the Conservation Area.
7. Proposed development area is known to Flood; in their objections residents have provided photos of recent flooding on the fields identified for development. As the climate is getting warmer, one of the downsides is that Winters will be wetter, so flooding is now a regular occurrence for the future.
8. Moneyrow Green the past few years has had issues with flooding; Thames Water has done extensive work to clear pipes etc. but it is common knowledge that the current Thames Water network cannot take anymore development in the area. Understand there is no money available to facilitate a multimillion-pound upgrade. Both Thames Water and Environmental are aware of this application and should be RBWM consultees for this development, if they have not been contacted already, due to its large size and impact on the area.
9. Wildlife: Been already identified that there are Great Crested Newts, which are protected, in the area. The creation of the development would have a negative impact on them and to local wildlife in general, this includes Hedgehogs which are also endangered. There are also regular sightings of

Barn Owls, Red Kites, Buzzards, Foxes, Deer etc – the whole area is a natural wildlife park as the land is agricultural and should be protected as such.

10. Light Pollution: it should be noted there is currently none at the moment as its open farmland fields. If you drive by Bray Studios at night you will see it dramatically lit up with, at times, 50m high cranes to carrying high lighting rigs. The proposed site will need to have security lighting and as it's a 24hr operation we envisage it will require high lighting rigs too – as this is currently farm land and an undeveloped area, this increase in lighting will be seen for miles around and impact many residents and any wildlife left.
11. Reduction and impact of local pathways/bridleways – for the record Gays Lane and Green Lane are NOT lanes for general vehicular traffic they are officially Bridleways, as is Primrose Lane. This whole area is a very popular area for Horse Riders as the area is peppered with Polo and Livery Yards, with the charity for Children Windsor Horse Rangers, which is near the proposed roundabout next to Green Lane Bridleway. Many Dog Walkers and Cyclists use the footpaths etc too enjoying the open countryside as it is considered an important asset to the residents who use them and to their wellbeing – noted in many of the residents' objections. Off road use wherever possible should be encouraged as surrounding roads have no footpaths, therefore we should be preserving these important footpaths not removing them with any development.
12. Developers are waiting to see how this application progresses. The reality is, if approved, they are likely to put forward surrounding land for development; allowing this application sets a precedent for using Green Belt thereby opening the door for others to follow in both Holyport and Fifield for starters.
13. Sustainability: the applicant has not provided a business model to justify this development. Concern as there currently are around 11 x Film/TV studios within a close proximity of the development which are either built, being built, extended or at application stage. Not forgetting of course Bray Studios extension, which should be noted has its access off an A road:

Bray (extension agreed in progress of being built) – 2.5 miles
Pinewood - 11.6 miles
Shepperton – 14.2 miles
Arborfield – 13.4 miles
Winnersh – 12.5 miles
Langley – 10.7 miles
Shinfield (being built) – 16 miles
Fleetwood – 15.7 miles
Longcross – 11.1 miles
Wycombe (being built) – 12.5 miles
Marlow (Proposed) – 9.4 miles

You have to question if this level of building for this industry can continue to be profitable; or is it a cynical ploy to develop the land in general as, if approved and not sustainable, the next step would be to apply for housing.

14. Jobs: it is well known that in the Film/TV industry they use specialist contactors for each set, so local jobs creation will be limited unless the contractors live in the area. In this area there tends to be a lack of people for roles, not lack of jobs – ask any employer in the area.

15. Traffic: Forest Green Road is a B road with blind bends, hills etc. in fact, where the proposed roundabout is sited is at the brow of a hill next to Green Lane bridleway and next to a S bend = dangerous. If you ask residents in the area, they will advise of many accidents in the past from farm traffic exiting the current access.

Access to this area will be by:

a. M4 J8/9; down Ascot Road (with narrow throat unsuitable for large vehicles/HGVs by *Holyport Green) past Holyport College and then left into Forest Green Road. Forest Green Road is a road with no footpaths and verges only and near the Jolly Gardener there is a one way only bridge not suitable for large amount of HGVs visiting this site – this road already has had subsidence maintenance on the sides of the road and is narrow and winding.

*It should be noted that Holyport Green is under Private Ownership of BPC.

b. If large HGVs cannot get through on Holyport Green via Ascot Road, coming off the M4 they will go down Windsor Road. Then turn right into Holyport Road towards Holyport green, turning left towards Moneyrow Green by a children's playground, Holyport Cricket Club, Holyport Memorial Hall and then left by Jolly Gardener.

c. M4 J6 Windsor turning; then down towards A308 Maidenhead Road and then onto *Windsor Road. Turning left into Oakley Green Road down past Braywood CE First School, Braywood Cricket Club and onto Forest Green Road, past busy road junction with Fifield Lane.

*At this part of Windsor Road there are several large housing developments proposed on Windsor Road, notably AL21 which is forecasted to have 450 houses, a school etc.

NONE of the above routes are suitable for this amount of additional traffic – in the applicants documents they are forecasting to have parking for 80 x Lorries and 1,000 Cars, of which 420 are to be in a multi storey car park.

Within the BLP there is intensive building already planned in the area which will dramatically impact the traffic on the above routes and surrounding areas.

The Triangle Site AL14 on Ascot Road is set to be developed and the Syngenta Jealotts Hill science park toward Bracknell is currently under consultation for 2,000 houses - if approved, this development could dramatically increase the traffic using the Ascot Road onto the M4 etc.

Proposer – Cllr Kneen
Secunder – Cllr Pellew
Vote – Unanimous

There being no further business, the meeting finished at 8:38pm