

Runnymede Borough Council

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 5 October 2022 at 6.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Willingale (Chairman), P Snow (Vice-Chairman), A Balkan, A Berardi, J Broadhead, V Cunningham, E Gill, C Howorth, J Hulley (Substitute, in place of R Bromley), A King (Substitute, in place of R Davies), C Mann, I Mullens, M Nuti, S Saise-Marshall (Substitute, in place of J Wilson) and S Whyte.

Members of the Committee absent: None.

In attendance: Councillors T Burton, L Gillham and D Whyte.

246 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

247 Apologies for Absence

No apologies received.

248 Declarations of Interest

Councillor J Hulley declared a non-registerable in application RU.22/0512, having an association with the objector to the development. Councillor Hulley sought advice from officers and remained in the room and voted on this item.

Councillor M Nuti declared a non-registerable interest in application RU.22/0374, having a relative who works at the location. Councillor Nuti left the room for this item.

249 Planning Applications

The planning applications listed below were considered by the Committee. All representations received on the applications were reported and copies had been made available for inspection by Members before the meeting. The Addendum had also been published on the Council's website on the day of the meeting. Objectors and applicants and /or their agents addressed the Committee on the applications specified.

RESOLVED that –

the following applications be determined as indicated: -

250 **RU.22/0512 - Longcross North, Chobham Lane, KT16 0EE**

A Reserved Matters Application which followed outline consent for proposed sports provision, public open space and access road to Longcross Railway Station, including pedestrian and cycle routes and station car park.

The Council's Development Manager advised the Committee that when the outline application was approved all matters were reserved. The five matters under consideration and for the Committee to base their decision on related to the access, appearance, layout,

scale and landscaping.

Members welcomed the prospect of a garden village within the borough, however a level of concern was raised relating to the location of the station car park,. There was also concern from some members that the drop-off point was located in the car park rather than outside the station, whilst a Member also considered it insufficient only having three disabled spaces.

There was also concern about the number of trees to be felled to accommodate cycle storage and a turning circle for double decker buses, whilst several Members questions whether the trees that were intended to provide screening between the film studios and station were of the required stature to adequately carry out the task.

Several Members also raised the safety aspect, quoting paragraph 92 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that planning policies and decision should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion. Whilst acknowledging the area would be lit, it was felt that the relative remoteness of the path between the station and car park would make many people fear the threat of crime. Consequently, officers were asked to request information from Surrey Police about safety measures needed along the path from the railway station to the proposed location of the car park.

Members were advised that the original masterplan for the northern site dates back to the original application in 2013, which was prior to the garden village designation and local plan adoption and at that time it was envisioned the western site area would be an office complex. This has meant that the original masterplan has evolved over time and the site occupied as a film studio.

Officers confirmed that South West Trains were consulted as part of the application, and their comments had been fed back through the Highways Authority relating to the turning circle at the location, however officers were not in receipt of a report from South West Trains regarding potential usage at the station.

As Planning Authority the Council was required to determine the scheme in front of it on its own merits. The recommendation in the report indicated that the current car park site was considered acceptable by officers. Officers recognised that some residents would prefer the station to be located in alternative positions or access from different locations, however the suggestions put forward would require the felling of a substantial area of trees that were covered by a TPO, had a high amenity value, had ecological importance as a bat corridor, was within 400m of the Thames Basin Heath SPA and would lose important the boundary screening to dated MoD buildings and as such the alternative site advanced by some residents was not considered likely to be supportable in planning terms. It was considered by officers that having the car park at the proposed location would also strike a balance between convenience and promoting sustainable modes of transport.

A Member asked about the adoption of the access road, and was advised that Surrey County Council would only consider adopting the road once it adjoined a public highway.

A Member questioned the ecological value of the trees and whether they would provide the desired screening levels to the warehouse. It was also noted that the trees were not native to the southeast of England, and more native trees in a different configuration might provide a more effective screening. Members were keen for officers to seek a second opinion on the suitability of the trees. Officers commented that a TPO is not purely about the ecological value of trees but also their amenity.

Part of the application included the provision of two informal football pitches and tennis and table tennis courts. These were provided for the existing shortfall of sports provision

for the benefit of the existing residents of Longcross North and it was not anticipated that residents would drive to access them.

Whilst acknowledging the Council's Climate Change strategy, a Member was concerned that the 42 parking spaces provided would not be sufficient and could result in fly-parking. It was added that an application from 2020 contained a comment from the train operator feeling that the number of spaces was insufficient.

However, the Development Manager advised that there was no evidence that 42 spaces would not be sufficient, whilst the number of disabled spaces fell within the standard 5% of total spaces. Concerns about overspill parking could be mitigated against through parking control measures. Furthermore, in the event of an appeal it would be challenging to explain why the Council were going against the principles of a Garden Village.

Surrey County Council Highways had agreed the 3m wide cycle path that runs along the access road, but officers agreed to follow up on whether it was uni-directional or bi-directional. Discussion also took place about extending the path along the access road to enable people to be able to walk from the station without walking in the road.

The Committee Chair proposed deferring the application to enable Planning Officers to address a number of issues, primarily around access and security associated with the path, the rationale behind the car park location and drop off points, predicted travel patterns, and a second opinion on the ecological value of the trees.

A Member also suggested comparative studies with other train stations that have car parks a similar distance away and evaluate whether they were successful in achieving their behavioural measures.

An earlier request by a Member for a named vote was withdrawn based on the decision to vote on deferral of the application.

Resolved that –

Deferred to enable Planning Officers to provide more certainty and clarification on a number of technical matters.

Ms Loach, an objector, and Mr Knott, agent for the applicant, addressed the Committee on this application.

251 **RU.22/0374 - Thorpe Park, Staines Road, Chertsey, KT16 8PN**

Redevelopment of the "Old Town" area within theme park, to install a rollercoaster along with associated buildings and structures, ground works infrastructure and infilling of part of lake and landscaping following the demolition of existing buildings and structures.

The Assistant Development Manager clarified that the Environment Agency were a statutory consultee to the flood-risk element of the application rather than the determining authority, however they had raised an in-principle objection around the construction of a new roller-coaster in a functional flood-plain.

Officers felt this risk had been mitigated by the theme park's flood compensation storage scheme where existing compensation areas in operation over a prolonged period had demonstrated that there was no increased flood risk, as the Environment Agency themselves acknowledged during the theme park's previous planning application in 2018.

This flood compensation scheme also mitigated the proposed in-filling of the lake.

Officers would continue to engage with the Environment Agency, however resourcing issues meant that their response times to planning applications was currently around 8-12 weeks, and the importance of the theme park moving forward with the application was noted.

A Thorpe ward councillor welcomed the introduction of a new ride within what they considered a slightly derelict part of the park, and cemented the status of the theme park within the borough.

However, surrounding infrastructure remained an issue, and whilst thanking the area's county councillor for the work done with residents to understand and overcome local issues, suggested that new ideas to improve access into the park and ease local congestion would be welcomed.

The Assistant Development Manager confirmed to Members that whether the historic A320 study took into account visitor numbers to the theme park was not relevant to the specific planning application, and whilst an increase in numbers was expected above the existing levels, that increase would not take the theme park over previous levels which took place at the park.

The Assistant Development Manager confirmed to a Member that Monks Walk was outside of the development site, and access to that area would be unaffected.

Resolved that –

The CHDMBC be authorised to grant planning permission subject to referral to the Secretary of State (and/or receiving no adverse comments from the re-consultation with the Environment Agency on additional supporting information), and subject to the planning conditions set out in the agenda.

(The meeting ended at 8.52 pm.)

Chairman