
Planning Committee MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Thursday, 21 November 2024 from 7.30 - 9.36 pm

Present: Councillors Chris Whately-Smith, Elinor Gazzard, Harry Davies, Chris Lloyd, Philip Hearn, Abbas Merali, Debbie Morris, Lisa Hudson, Sarah Nelmes and Narinder Sian

Also in Attendance:

Councillors Sara Bedford, Vicky Edwards, Ciarán Reed and Jon Tankard

Officers in Attendance:

Matthew Barnes, Planning Solicitor
Emma Lund, Senior Committee Officer
Suzanne O'Brien, Principal Planning Officer
Adam Ralton, Development Management Team Leader
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services

PC79/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Steve Drury, Andrea Fraser, Chris Mitchell and Stephen King.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes substituted for Councillor Steve Drury, Councillor Lisa Hudson substituted for Councillor Andrea Fraser and Councillor Narinder Sian substituted for Councillor Chris Mitchell.

PC80/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

PC81/23 NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

PC82/23 22/1945/FUL: HYBRID APPLICATION FOR THE CREATION OF A FILM HUB TO INCLUDE DETAILED APPROVAL FOR DEMOLITION OF A NUMBER OF EXISTING BUILDINGS INCLUDING CHILDREN'S FARM BUILDINGS AND CHANGE OF USE OF LANGLEYBURY HOUSE AND AISLED BARN FOR FILMING AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CAFE WITHIN THE WALLED GARDEN, NEW CAR PARKING AREA TO NORTH OF SITE, ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING ACCESS POINTS ALONG LANGLEYBURY LANE, CHANGE OF USE OF THE L SHAPED BARN (TO MULTI PURPOSE USE INCLUDING CYCLE HUB, SHOWERS AND VEHICLE STORAGE) AND CHANGE OF USE OF GROUND FLOOR OF THE EXISTING LAUNDRY TO RECEPTION FACILITY, TOGETHER WITH OUTLINE PLANNING APPROVAL (MATTERS RESERVED: SCALE, LAYOUT, APPEARANCE AND LANDSCAPING) FOR CHANGE OF USE OF SITE

TO A FILM HUB TO INCLUDE CRAFT WORKSHOP BUILDINGS, SOUND STAGES, SUPPORT WORKSHOPS, PRODUCTION OFFICES, BACKLOTS, FILM AND TELEVISION TRAINING FACILITY BUILDING, OFFICES, ANCILLARY BUILDINGS, PARKING AREAS AND RELOCATION OF LANGLEYBURY CHILDREN'S FARM INCLUDING NEW FARM BUILDINGS.

The Planning Officer introduced the item and stated that the application was a hybrid application for the creation of a Film Hub to include detailed approval for demolition of a number of existing buildings including children's farm buildings and change of use of Langleybury House and Aisled Barn for filming and the construction of a cafe within the Walled Garden, new car parking area to north of site, alterations to existing access points along Langleybury Lane, change of use of the L Shaped Barn (to multi purpose use including cycle hub, showers and vehicle storage) and change of use of ground floor of the existing Laundry to reception facility, together with outline planning approval (matters reserved: Scale, Layout, Appearance and Landscaping) for change of use of site to a Film Hub to include Craft Workshop buildings, Sound Stages, Support Workshops, Production Offices, Backlots, Film and Television Training Facility Building, Offices, Ancillary Buildings, parking areas and relocation of Langleybury Children's Farm including new farm buildings. Alterations to existing cycle path and pedestrian network within the site, to include provision of a new pedestrian/cycle access within the site to the A41 at Land to the east of Langleybury lane, including Langleybury House Estate, Langleybury Lane.

The Planning Officer provided a correction to paragraph 3.14 of the report: the new commercial office sited to the east of the L shaped barn was part of the detailed scheme and not the outline application.

The Planning Officer also provided clarification in relation to paragraph 3.17, which stated that the support buildings would stand 8m above ground level. It was clarified that these buildings, whilst standing 8m above ground level, would sit on ground levels which would be reduced to be 1.5m lower than existing.

Parish Councillor Jon Tankard, of Abbots Langley Parish Council, spoke against the application.

Chris Andrews, of Ralph Trustees Ltd, spoke in favour of the application.

The Committee's discussions included the following:

- The officer assessment of the harms which would result from the development as balanced against the benefits was not a linear exercise but involved an assessment of the overall harms and benefits arising from the development as a whole.
- If the Committee were minded to grant approval, conditions could be included to address issues at the back lot such as noise, use of sets at night, lighting and operation of ancillary equipment (e.g. cranes). These conditions would need to be reasonable.
- The proposal involved a balance between economic development and preservation of the Green Belt. Its benefits would include the creation of a substantial number of jobs, boosting the local economy, support for the film industry (which was an industry of great importance to the local area) and educational benefits provided by the children's farm and new education facility. The issue for the Committee was whether this would sufficiently outweigh the harms caused to heritage assets and the openness of the Green Belt to justify very special circumstances for development in the Green Belt.
- A number of consultees, both statutory and non-statutory, had not objected to the application. Following revisions to the scheme, Historic England had withdrawn its previous objection, although it had still identified that there was a moderate to high level of less than substantial harm arising from the proposal.

- The designs for the listed buildings and their grounds, which included tree planting and contouring, wetlands and ponds (which would incorporate sustainable drainage), were arguably less harmful and more sensitive to their vicinity and the visual amenity than the existing school building. The proposal would also offer enhancements by way of biodiversity net gain. The heritage impacts of the proposal related to both the listed buildings and the historic parkland landscape, which required separate consideration under listed building applications.
- Transport links in the area were currently poor, and it was likely that vehicular traffic at the site would increase were the proposal to be granted. A financial contribution would need to be secured to improve bus services and cycleways. The applicant proposed to provide an electric shuttlebus service for their own staff, and it was confirmed that this could serve Kings Langley station. In the event of planning approval, a travel plan would be conditioned.
- There were concerns about parking at the site, and whether a lack of spaces would displace parking onto the busy road. The Planning Officer advised that hardstanding for parking was considered to be sufficient, and the Highways Authority had not raised any concerns. As the application was outline only at this stage, the parking arrangements were indicative. It was discussed that parking baseline surveys could be secured by condition to be undertaken before and after any scheme is implemented, and the outcome could guide whether the implementation of on-street parking restrictions was necessary.
- Discussions would need to be held with the applicant regarding enclosures and gates for the new pedestrian access, to ensure that it was not used by bikes and motorbikes to access the site.
- The Planning Officer reported that the scheme proposed a biodiversity net gain of up to 28%. A Committee Member recommended that it should be investigated with the applicant whether this could be provided for longer than 30 years, and that officers should look into the possibility of whether covenants could be included to restrict further expansion into the Green Belt in the future and prevent the site from becoming 'grey belt'.
- Langleybury House was currently on Historic England's Heritage At Risk register. The scheme proposed restoration of the building and would secure its long-term use, meaning that it would no longer be deemed 'at risk'. A long-term management and maintenance plan for all of the listed buildings at the site would be conditioned in the event of planning approval. However, there would be harm to the historic parkland landscape arising from changes to the landscape contouring resulting in less visibility of the buildings from various aspects, and the addition of new buildings which do not currently exist.
- Were approval to be granted, acceptable arrangements for the management of sewage would need to be agreed and conditioned. Conditions would also need to be included relating to materials used and their colour palette. A committee member recommended that opening of the mansion house to the public on a periodic basis should also be conditioned.

A number of committee members expressed the view that reasons existed to justify very special circumstances for development in the Green Belt. However, in discussion it was agreed that the committee would need to have sight of the proposed conditions to be attached to any approval, and the heads of terms for a legal agreement, in order for it to be in possession of all of the information which would enable it to properly make its decision.

Councillor Lloyd proposed, and Councillor Merali seconded, deferral of the application to allow for proposed conditions and heads of terms for a legal agreement to be considered at a future meeting. It was recommended that when the application came back to the committee it should, insofar as possible, be the only item for the meeting and that the committee should

comprise the same membership (including substitutes). Should other members need to attend, they should be recommended to review the webcast of the meeting beforehand, to reduce the need to revisit matters which had already been discussed.

On being put to the vote this proposal was agreed, the voting being 5 For, 2 Against, 3 Abstention.

RESOLVED: that the application be deferred.

CHAIR