
Planning Committee MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Thursday, 30 January 2025 from 7.30 - 9.16 pm

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

Also in Attendance:

Councillors Vicky Edwards and Ciarán Reed

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

External in Attendance:

Parish Councillor Jon Tankard, Abbots Langley Parish Council

PC103/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harry Davies, Andrea Fraser and Chris Mitchell.

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

PC104/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

PC105/25 NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

PC106/25 INFORMATION ONLY: MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2024

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 21 November 2024 were included on the agenda for information only, as a reminder of the Committee's previous discussions in relation to the application.

PC107/25 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 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 application was before the Committee as it had been called in by three members of the Planning Committee due to effect on the Green Belt and traffic issues. In addition the proposal represented a departure from the Development Plan.

The Planning Officer provided updates as follows:

- One neighbour objection had been received since the Committee's previous consideration of the application. The resident had objected to the provision of more sound stages in the area; loss of Green Belt; and that there was no consideration to biodiversity, wildlife and the environment. The objector considered that increased traffic and emissions would endanger children's safety. They had no objection to the redevelopment of the Mansion and outbuildings or knocking down the old school, nor an objection to the development of the buildings if they were sympathetically designed to enhance the area. The comments raised were similar to others which had been addressed in the original committee report.
- An addendum report had been provided which included conditions and Heads of Terms which Members, without prejudice, had requested at the 21 November Committee Meeting. The addendum covered the changes in the 2024 NPPF which were relevant to the application. It was considered that the weight attached to the benefits of the scheme as set out in the November committee report still did not amount to benefits which outweighed the harm to the Green Belt (and other harm resulting from the proposed development, including heritage harm). As such, very special circumstances were not considered by officers to exist. Officers also considered that regardless of the position on Green Belt policy, the less than substantial harm to heritage assets was not sufficiently outweighed by public benefits. The officers' reasons for refusal as set out in Section 9 of

the Committee Report (Appendix A) were therefore considered to still be relevant and unchanged by the revisions to the National Policies set out in the 2024 NPPF.

- Appendix B of the addendum report set out a comprehensive list of planning conditions. These were separated into conditions covering the detailed part of the application (starting with the letter D), outline part of the application (starting with letter O), and site wide requirements (starting with S-W).
- Following publication of the reports, further revisions to the triggers of a number of the conditions had been requested by the applicant. The revisions proposed removal of the relocation of the Children's Farm and the creation of the School and Farm Parking Area from the pre-commencement requirement. This would allow the Children's Farm and creation of the school and farm parking area to be delivered without waiting for the formal discharge of a number of conditions. This change was agreed where the details secured by these conditions did not relate to the Children's Farm or School Parking area. The change was relevant to the following conditions:

Detailed conditions:

- 4 – External Materials
- 6 – Conservation Management Plan
- 7 – Landscaping

Site Wide conditions:

- 5 - Travel Plan
- 7 - Minerals Extraction
- 14 - Sustainability
- 21 - cycle Parking
- 23 - Offsite Highways Improvements
- 24 - rights of way improvements
- 25 - Traffic Monitoring

- A number of conditions had also been revised to include phasing, which would allow the information to be submitted per phase of development. The following conditions would be amended:

Outline Conditions:

- 1 – Reserved matters

Site Wide Conditions:

- 3 – Landscape Management
- 29 - Lighting Management Plan
- 30 – Construction Environmental Management Plan
- 31 – Landscape and Ecological Management Plan
- 32 – Badger Walk Over
- 49 – Surface Water Drainage
- 50 – Foul Water Drainage

- Outline Condition O6 (Levels) should also be revised to read no higher (rather than no lower) than the levels as shown on the plans.
- If members were minded to approve the application, it was recommended that this would be subject to the conditions attached at Appendix B to the report, with the amendments outlined above, and with authority to be delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services to

make any minor alterations which may be needed (e.g. adjustment of drawing reference numbers).

- The addendum also provided a summary of the Heads of Terms. These had been drafted with, and agreed by, the applicant and included clear triggers in relation to the delivery of a number of the planning benefits associated with the proposed development. These included the delivery of the following prior to the first occupation or first use of the site for filming in connection with this planning permission:
 - Demolition and removal of all materials from site of the existing buildings associated with the use of the existing Children's Farm;
 - Demolition and removal of all materials from the site of the existing School Buildings and temporary structures;
 - Construction and completion of the Café (building reference 08-01);
 - Laundry Building conversion works to be completed, fitted out and ready for first use;
 - L-shaped Barn conversion works to be completed, fitted out and ready for first use;
 - Construction and completion of Children's Farm, fitted out and provision of access and associated Children's Farm Fields;
 - Implementation of the School and Farm Car Parking Area and associated access (sited on land to the north of the Children's Farm, hereby permitted) and ready for first use.
 - Carrying out the work subject to the pending listed building consents – excluding the occupation of the Children's Farm and Farm Parking Area.

The Heads of Terms also sought to secure the delivery of the Propellor Stages within three years from the first occupation or first use of the site for filming in connection with the permission.

- The following monetary contributions had been agreed between the parties and would also be secured within a S106:

Monitoring – £20,000 contribution. This contribution would be required to facilitate the long-term future monitoring of the Training and Management Plan and any required action plans, monitoring of the Conservation Management Plan and Parking Management Plan.

BNG Monitoring - £20,000 contribution. This sum is based on the habitat enhancements proposed and 50 year monitoring duration.

Wayfinding - £10,000

To provide and promote active travel opportunities locally the additional of new wayfinding signage to the site and public open space as well as the updating of existing signage across the area. This will be in the region of 10 signs across the area.

Shared Bike scheme - £45,000 (indicative sum)

To provide a shared bike scheme at the site with connected bays at the train station and other key strategic sites in the area and the provision of bikes to serve these bays.

These sums were considered to be reasonable and directly associated with the development and as such would be S122 CIL compliant.

The Planning Officer concluded by summarising that if members were minded to grant planning permission, the Committee would need to be satisfied, in coming to that decision, that:

- special regard had been given to the desirability of preserving the listed building, its setting, and any features of special architectural interest which it possessed;

- the public benefits of the scheme, which could include heritage benefits set out in paragraph 8.5.20 of the Committee report (for example, the demolition of the existing school buildings; upgrade works to the listed buildings and setting and establishment of a long term use of the Listed Buildings with the potential for the Mansion House to be removed from Historic England At Risk Register) and all the other benefits identified above and in the body of the main report outweighed the identified low to mid less than substantial harm that the development would have on the setting of the heritage assets; and
- the planning benefits of the scheme, if secured by planning conditions and by a Section 106 agreement for those planning obligations summarised in the Heads of Terms document, would clearly outweigh:
 - the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness;
 - the harm to openness of the Green Belt in both spatial and visual terms;
 - the development's conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt;
 - other harms resulting from the low to mid less than substantial harm to the heritage assets;
 - adverse impacts on the character and landscape of the area;
 - the loss of an allocated housing site; and
 - any harm potentially arising from the relatively unsustainable location.

The Committee would also need to be clear that the overall benefits of the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the harms caused by the scheme such that very special circumstances exist, and that planning permission should be granted subject to the conditions set out at Appendix B (subject to any minor revisions as agreed by the Head of Regulatory Services) and the prior completion of a Section 106 agreement securing the Heads of Terms.

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

Committee members asked questions about the details of the application, proposed planning conditions and Heads of Terms, which were responded to by officers. The Committee's discussions included the following:

- There was the potential for the Education and Skills Plan monitoring to be periodically reported to Members if considered expedient.
- In debate, differing views were expressed in relation to the balance between the harm to the heritage asset and to the Green Belt and the benefits which the proposal offered. Some Members considered that the proposal would have a positive impact on the heritage asset and setting through its regeneration and the protection which would be provided for the 'at risk' listed Langleybury House, as well as the loss of the existing school building. Additionally, that it would offer significant benefits in terms of the importance of the film industry to the area, the education benefits for children and young people, employment opportunities, significant biodiversity net gain, benefits to the school and children's farm and improved car parking facilities. Some Members expressed the view that these would outweigh the harm to the heritage asset and/or represented justification for very special circumstances for development in the Green Belt and that the proposed conditions and Heads of Terms provided sufficient assurance that the benefits would be secured.
- Alternative views were also expressed that it would cause an unacceptable level of harm through development on the Green Belt, urbanisation of the countryside, environmental and community impact, large scale development in a rural area which would change its character, impact of the view across the valley, and detrimental impact of increased noise

and light pollution on wildlife and biodiversity. Some Members expressed the view that these cumulative harms may not outweigh the scheme's benefits.

- Members sought further information about the weightings which officers had attributed to the harms and benefits of the scheme. Some Members considered that the car park and highways safety benefits had been under-weighted and that these represented significant benefits for the community.
- A 28% biodiversity net gain would be delivered which would require habitat reporting over a 50 year period. This was significantly in excess of the 30 years which was required by legislation.
- The plans were indicative for the outline application but would be constrained by parameter plans as part of the reserved matters application if planning consent were granted. Landscaping details and car park layout would also form part of the reserved matters application.
- Several Committee Members expressed concerns about traffic implications, and in particular an increase in traffic in the narrow lanes in Sarratt. It was noted that the Construction Management Plan would govern the routes used by construction vehicles and journey timings during the construction phase. The routing of operational vehicles would be more difficult to control; however, a condition could be added to secure an operational management plan and requiring signage which requested that HGV operational vehicles turn right on exiting the site.
- On balance, and following detailed debate, a majority of Committee Members considered that the application would provide public benefits which outweighed the heritage harm and which together formed very special circumstances which outweighed the harm to the Green Belt and to the heritage assets, the character of the area, and the harm identified within the original report relating to the site being in a relatively unsustainable location and the loss of the site for housing.

The applicant spoke in favour of the application.

Councillor Whately-Smith moved, and Councillor Morris seconded, that the Committee resolve to delegate authority to the Head of Regulatory Services, following (i) receipt of notification by the Secretary of State to not call-in the application and (ii) the completion of a S106 agreement securing the Heads of Terms set out in Appendix C of the report, to make any minor amendments necessary to the planning conditions and grant planning permission subject to the conditions set out in Appendix B of the report and an additional condition requiring an operational management plan.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried, the voting being 8 in favour, 1 against and 2 abstentions.

RESOLVED: that authority is delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services, following (i) receipt of notification by the Secretary of State to not call-in the application and (ii) the completion of a S106 agreement securing the Heads of Terms set out in Appendix C of the report, to make any minor amendments necessary to the planning conditions and grant planning permission subject to the conditions set out in Appendix B of the report and an additional condition requiring an operational management plan.

CHAIR