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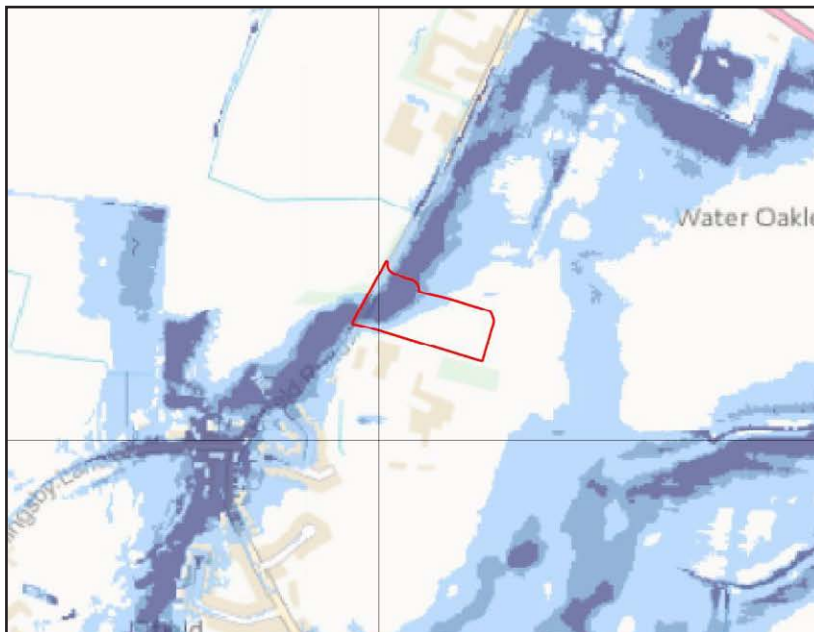
07 February 2016

Dear Ms Gibson,

Application 15/02107/FULL - Relocation of Phoenix Gym to Fifield Road

We have now had an opportunity to look at the amended plans submitted by the applicant at the last minute on Jan 25 2016. We have replaced on the OGAFCFA Website the first version of the Revised Applicant's Planning Statement uploaded to your web site on Jan 25 2016 with the later one uploaded to your web site on Feb 01 2016.

An expansion of the overall plot occurred in previous amendments of the Application but as "amateurs" we can only detect a couple of changes in this latest amended submission - the size of the building and the size of the car park. The approach to water management and drainage don't appear to have changed. While the area of hard surface obviously influences runoff quantity these token adjustments do not remove serious concerns and anomalies.



We are pleased to note that the applicant has at least now included in their amended documents a section of the Environment Agency Surface Flooding Map. In our opinion this image on its own should be sufficient to convince anyone at all that this is not a sensible location. When more than a third of the proposed site is designated by the Environment Agency as being at HIGH RISK of surface flooding it would be difficult to find a possible location that is less suitable.

Some drill data diagrams have been included apparently to show that there really is no groundwater problem. It is impossible to give this data any credence when set beside the experience of local people who KNOW that it doesn't require a very big hole for it to be half full of water.

I can vouch for this personally, not just from trivial observation of our own excavations for pipes, ditches, posts, etc, but also because in October 2000 in Coningsby Lane we had 5 inches of water with sewage suspended in it in our ground floor. This did not enter from the outside because of excess surface water but rather came up through and around the concrete floor from sheer ground water pressure because the ground was so saturated there was nowhere else for it to go.

We can colour this further with a conversation between a local resident and a drilling team carrying out exploratory drilling down the east side of Fifield Road in January 2016. They had found so much water that when the local resident asked about the viability of building in the area the professional opinion was that nobody in their right mind would contemplate such a thing. Anecdotal and unverifiable - but colourfully relevant just the same.

In all the words and numbers swilling around connected with this application there has been much talk of 1:30 years or even 1:100 years. The photographic evidence we have offered in the past has been rejected as being from extraordinary years and that the problem really only amounts to a bit of a puddle in Coningsby Lane which has been described as “half a mile” from the proposed site. Just as a matter of record Coningsby Lane is only about 265 m from the south west corner of the proposed site, which is actually only a sixth of a mile.

The pictures below were not taken in an extraordinary year. In fact they were taken in early January this year after only a single day of light rain. We have been extremely lucky this year with the Jet Stream flowing much further north than usual, yet this one day of rain produced the situation shown here. The picture on the left is virtually opposite the proposed new entrance and the other two less than 100 m to the south. Local residents can testify that these conditions do not require exceptional years in order to materialise.



Fifield Road, January 11 2016, after only a single day of relatively gentle rain.

The amended Water Management Plan does not seem to have changed and proposes that all this water can be dealt with by using 3 ephemeral pools and a sub-base under the car parking areas. Several figures are quoted to claim that the capacity of this system is vastly over provided. It claims that water will all be fed slowly to a final water attenuation pond from where it will gradually dissipate into the ground. What it does not mention or appear to allow for is the point made early in this process by RBWM's own Flood Risk Manager that when these “ponds” are most needed they will be half full of water already, severely diminishing their effective capacity. If there had been 2 days of rain in January could the proposed system have coped with that ? What about 3 days ? From local experience there's not a lot of water simply disappearing into the ground. If it isn't led away it stays where it is ! Yet we are asked to believe that no water will leave the site ... it will all be held within it and dissipated into the ground below it. One cannot help but wonder “how ?”



On the opposite (western) side of the Fifield Road and slightly north is an area once operated by Biffa. This is an expanse of concrete probably a bit smaller in area than the hard surface area now proposed for Phoenix. The containing edges are simply soil and scrub and the concrete base is not perfect - the continuity is compromised along several fault lines. Yet the water that collects from this run-off does not simply dissipate into the ground. This photo was taken 2 days after the same single day of rain as the 3 photos above. The water is still, a month later, deep enough for our adult Labrador to be immersed up to her chest. This is a pretty

useful indication of what happens when water in this area has no actual exit such as a pipe or ditch to take it away ... when it is “kept entirely on site”. After days of rain I have seen the site shown above completely covered in water and flowing out of the entrance between the trees top right onto Fifield Road - as shown in photos below taken in 2009. Can we honestly rely on some technical calculations, a string of more numbers, to guarantee that the proposed scheme will perform any better ? Will it really cope after several days of rain ? What if it doesn't ?



February 2009 - Biffa entrance looking east. Proposed Phoenix site is right distance.

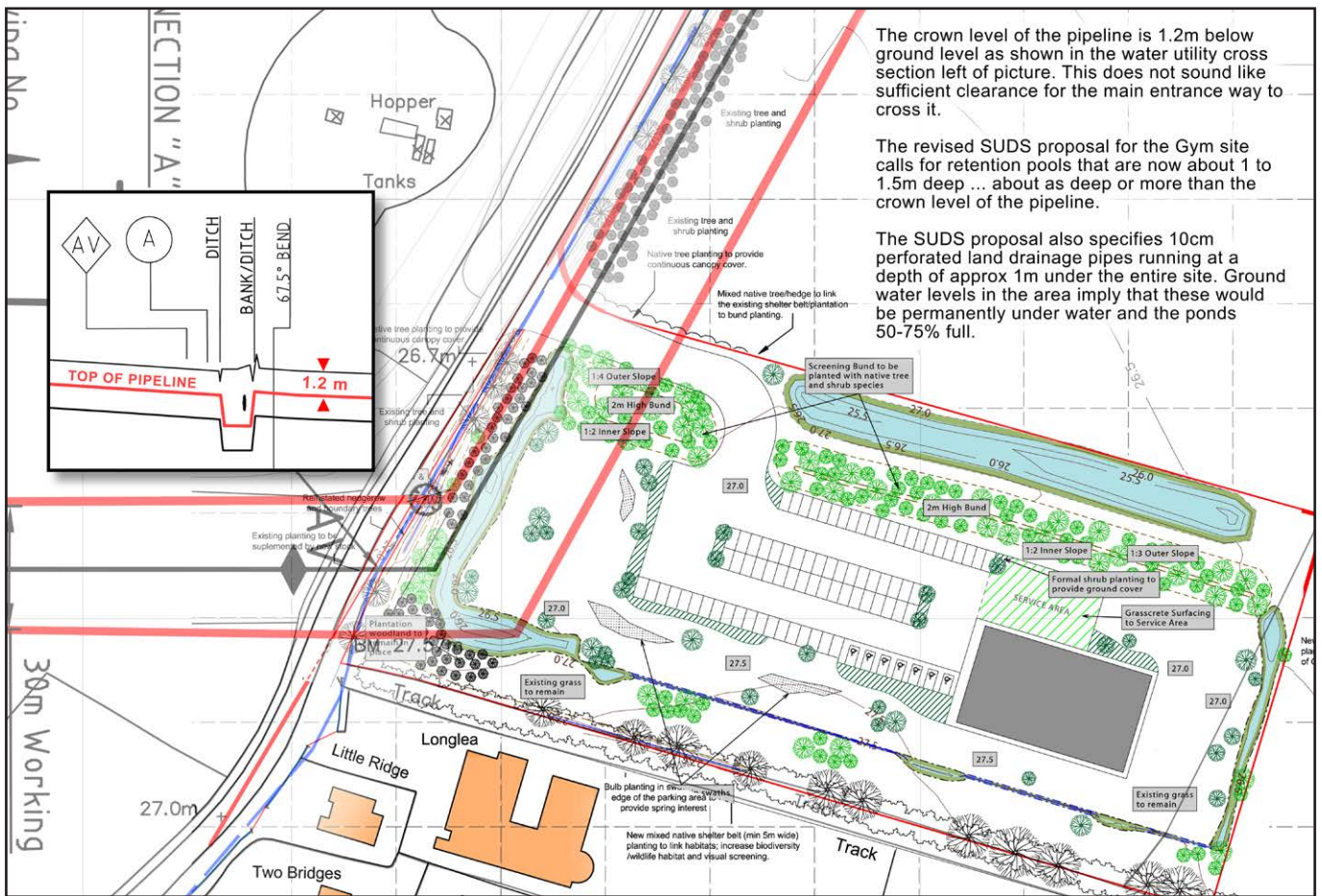
The amended Application Statement devotes much space to quoting extensively from OGAFCA Environment drainage reports and updates. While this is undoubtedly sort of flattering and indicative that we are being taken seriously it is not at all clear why this is the case or how the Applicants think this benefits them. The best we can surmise is that because it is problematic to find realistic solutions to expedite the onward flow we have suggested in the past that it might be useful to investigate the possibility of trying to slow down and delay the flow of water before it arrives. It seems that a word search for “pond” has been carried out and the results extracted and used as a way of saying “You see ... you’ve been saying all along that you’d like some ponds. So here we are being really kind and providing just what you need.”

This is somewhat puzzling because the Applicant also says that as the proposed site is downstream of the village it therefore cannot exacerbate the situation but will in fact improve it by providing ponds. This is extremely confusing because our suggestions involve investigating the viability of creating sumps BEFORE water reaches us ... not AFTER. However many ponds are created after the bottleneck the situation before it can hardly be expected to benefit from them.

There is a continuing tendency to try and twist OGAFCA Environment’s use of a simple traffic light colouring system to indicate progress in each of our “wet spots”. We have had to raise this before but it is obviously being ignored so we will just have to re-instate it. There has never been any attempt to propose unrealistic “final solutions” to the 9 “wet spots” we have identified. We have been quite clear that the best we can hope for is to encourage the improvement of the situation wherever feasible. In the case of “wet spot” 2 nearby in Fifield Road our stated target aim was to re-instate a roadside ditch that had been neglected for 25 years and had recently been further degraded by vandalism. Our “RED” condition on this site remained for a very long time and only changed to “AMBER” when Streetcare managed to achieve the funding to properly clear the ditch. Once the ditch was cleared the status became “GREEN”. The Applicant attempts to make much of this, suggesting that things must now be OK because OGAFCA has given the “wet spot” a GREEN LIGHT. I will keep repeating this as often as seems necessary - the “GREEN” status was because our original target of clearing the neglected ditch had been achieved ... **NOT BECAUSE ANY FINAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM HAD BEEN REACHED**. As we have also said before, anything resembling a proper solution to this situation could only be addressed by a huge investment of funds in the installation of a major storm drain from Meadow Way northward under the Fifield Road, the A308 and Monkey Island Lane to the Thames. In fact we are about to return the “wet spot” to “AMBER” status as it has not been maintained and is currently beginning to cause the historical problems we are all used to.

So once again we need to request the Applicant and their consultants and advisors to desist from trying to be too clever for their own good by taking reports, words, and colour coding out of context and twisting them to their own purposes. We will not ignore these attempts and will always point them out because our attempts to emphasize the unsuitability of this site are not some recently invented wheeze to frustrate the Applicants. They have actually been the subject of constant effort and focus since 2009 when a survey of the population revealed that local drainage issues were of significant concern to a large portion of the local population.

We cannot find any revised Sequential Testing Report amongst these amended documents. Have we missed it? Has one been submitted? By changing the size of the building itself and the car parking area many more potential sites either for purchase or rent must surely now become more viable than using Green Belt land in a High Risk Surface Water flooding area.



South East Water pipeline.

Finally we wonder if anybody has thought to ask South East Water what their response is to this proposal? The diagram above shows that a major water pipeline passes under the western side of the proposed site. The Water utility drawings are overlaid on the proposed Phoenix site. The scales have been matched using the indications of the buildings and roads shown on both separate sets of drawings - particularly Longlea, the track north of it, and Fifield Road.

According to the Water utility drawings the crown depth of the 1.2 m pipe is 1.2m below surface, except where it crosses Fifield Road at the South West corner of the proposed site. The proposed ephemeral pond on the western side of the proposed site appears to be specified at about 1.5 m deep. The juxtaposition of these 2 items would suggest that potentially the proposed pond would have the crown of the pipeline projecting up into the bottom and western side of it by about 0.3 m. This seems a very unlikely and certainly undesirable state of affairs.

Furthermore perhaps South East Water should be asked to pronounce on whether they are happy with the proposed main entrance being only 1.2m above the crown level of their pipeline.

We presume that RBWM Engineering Consultants **WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff** in Basingstoke are currently assessing the amended Application. We await their conclusions with interest but given the very minor adjustments in hard surface square area it is difficult to imagine how they can conclude anything different to their report dated October 26 2015 in which they state "On the basis of the submitted information we would recommend refusal of the application."

Yours sincerely,

Rod Lord
OGAFCA Environment Work Group