



Maidenhead Development Control Panel - Wednesday March 16, 2016

Application : 15/02107/FULL

Proposal : Re-location of Phoenix Gym Club including building, access, car parking and landscaping.

Location : Land to the North of Longlea Nursing Home, Fifield Road, Fifield, Maidenhead

This application is recommended for REFUSAL by planning officers. We support this view, but for many more reasons than those detailed in the officer's report.

Overview

- The Proposal is to re-locate the successful and increasingly popular Phoenix Gymnastics Club from an existing building on a brownfield site in Water Oakley to a new building on a greenfield site under plough with a new access off the Fifield Road.
- The area and immediate environs are prone to flooding and RBWM consultants recommend REFUSAL.
- The Gym building, site and expanding activity level to 7 days a week will severely degrade visual and rural amenity.
- Gym Users with 626 to 1246 vehicle movements a day will be joining a weekday average of over 2400 vehicles per day on the Rural and Unclassified Fifield Road - exacerbating existing congestion and increasing safety risk.

Proposed Location and Planning Policy

- The proposed site is in the Green Belt in a field which is currently under plough in the recently designated "Bray Green Gap" (as described in the Draft Bray Parish Neighbourhood Plan).
- It lies immediately to the north and just outside of the recognised settlement of Fifield Village and is bordered immediately to the south by public footpath 51A.

The new Gym would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and harmful to its openness - contrary to Policy GB1. The Planning Officer's Report agrees.

Flooding

- Flooding has been an issue in this area for many years and OGAFCA has been working with RBWM on alleviation measures. Some progress has been made but challenges still exist.
- The size of roof and car park will create a large amount of surface water run off which needs to be addressed.
- The Site is wholly located in Flood Zone 1. The original application was reviewed by the RBWM's Consultant (WSP Parsons Brinkerhoff). The report questioned the capability of the SUDS scheme and the absence of a Flood Risk Assessment.
- The revised Application includes a Flood Risk Assessment and the Environment Agency surface water flooding map. (This image alone should be enough to convince anyone that the Fifield Road is not a sensible location for a new build, when over a third of the proposed site is designated as "HIGH RISK").
- RBWM again commissioned the same independent consultant to look at the revised SUDS scheme and new Flood Risk Assessment. Their second report is as damning as the first report and recommends refusal of the application because it does not comply with paragraph 103 of the NPPF as it has not been demonstrated that the proposed development would not increase flood risk in the area.
- The application shows no evidence that consultations have taken place with South East Water about the fact that a 1.2 metre diameter and very high pressure water main installed in 2008 runs under the western side of the site. One of the proposed 1.5 metre deep water attenuation pools is sited immediately above the pipeline – which is only 1.2 metres below the Surface at that point.

The Planning Officer's report concludes that the Greenbelt and Flooding points are more than sufficient to outweigh the Very Special Circumstances claimed by the applicant. However, contrary to what the Officer's report says, local residents believe a number of other significant issues also weigh heavily AGAINST the application.

Scale and Visual Impact

- The Site is 2.03 hectares and will house a large building - 42 metres long, 24 metres wide and 10.25 metres high (996 square metres and 7730 cubic metres) – as well as 84 parking spaces – dwarfing all other buildings in the area.
- The Visual Impact Statement identified 4 viewpoints with significant visual effects degrading the Visual Amenity of Users of Public Rights of Way.

Road Traffic and Safety

- The Transport Assessment estimates that the Gym will generate between 626 and 1246 vehicular trips per day, but has no information on weekend Traffic as currently only open Saturday Mornings.
- The Phoenix Gym shares what amounts to a private drive with about 6 houses and a few Industrial properties which at most may currently generate say 50 traffic movements per day. This in effect gives current Gym users little competition for access to and from the A308 throughout the day.
- The Fifield Road and roads immediately off however are all public highways and have a total of 210 Houses on them. The road is also a cut through to and from the A308 and experiences congestion at both ends at many times during the day.
- At OGAFCA's request, RBWM carried out a traffic survey on the Fifield Road – just north of the 30 MPH speed limit sign - immediately adjacent to the proposed site. It recorded traffic volumes and speeds in both directions for the 17 day period from January 22 to February 8, 2016.
- On current traffic numbers: northbound - typically over 1200 vehicles/day weekdays and 600 to 700 at weekends. Southbound - typically over 1200 vehicles/day weekdays and 600 to 800 at weekends. In total over 15,000 traffic movements per week and the huge majority during Gym opening hours.
On traffic speed: northbound - typically 48% exceeded the speed limit with a Max of 54 mph. Southbound - typically 63 % exceeded the Speed limit with a Max of 59mph.
- On top of this, the Fifield Road is currently heavily used by horses, riders and grooms (many of them Children from Wayside Stables which is just a couple of hundred metres along the road), as well as pedestrians and dog walkers.

Neighbours – Noise/Light/Air Pollution

- The proposed development is on the northern end of Fifield Village - located immediately next to the long established Longlea Nursing Home.
- Public footpath 51A runs along the southern boundary of the site.
- Having this size of Facility which will operate from 09:00 to 21:00 Monday to Friday and for significantly expanded hours from 9:00 to 18:00 on Saturday & Sunday (currently operates on Saturday Mornings only) will be un-neighbourly to the Nursing Home, footpath users and nearby residents due to the adverse impacts from vehicular traffic, noise, light and air pollution.

With these additional points the application clearly also fails the tests of policies GB2 and DG1.

Sequential Test for alternative Sites

A Sequential Test for alternative locations was submitted with the original application. At the Bray Parish Council Extraordinary Planning Committee Meeting on February 8, 2016 the applicant was asked “Why has the applicant not submitted an updated detailed sequential testing report that takes into account that the proposed building has been significantly reduced and therefore what evidence can the applicant provide to show how many sites were considered ...” The Applicant's reply was that the original Sequential Test was done based on the reduced size (and not the original size) so no additional tests were required ! Attendees present were more than surprised at the response.

Trojan Horse ?

The original application was for a site of 1.86 hectares with an even larger building (47.5m deep x 35m wide x 14m high) and more parking spaces (121). However, the revised application is for a Site of 2.03 hectares – almost 10% larger. Residents are concerned that :-

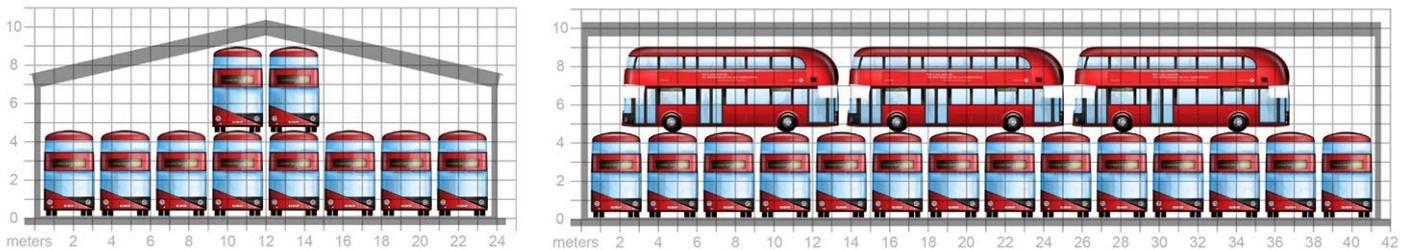
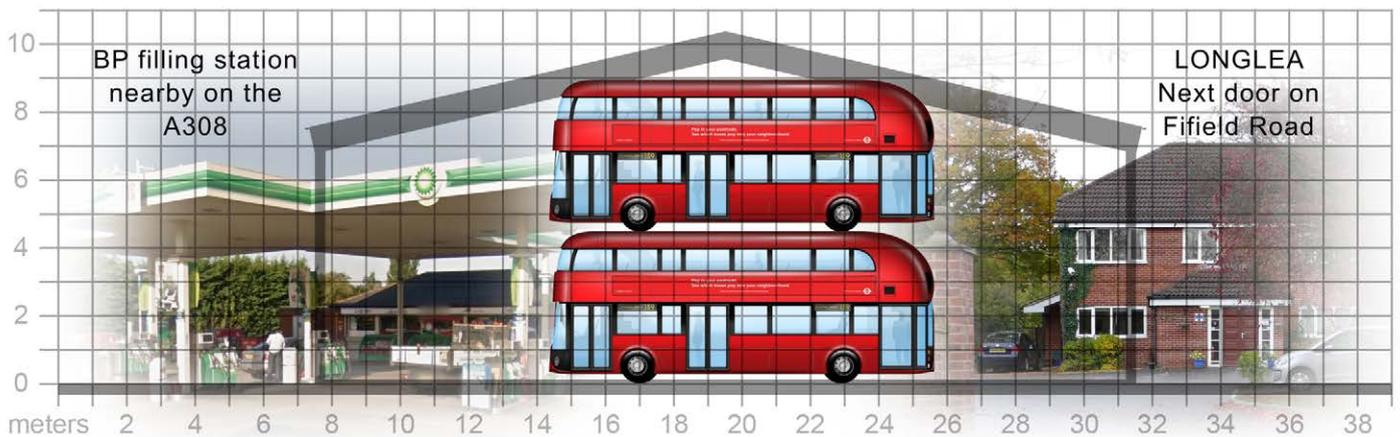
- the Club still has plans for a larger facility in the future - to bring in the Phoenix Flyers Trampoline Club from East Berks College in Langley for example - and this revised application is just a first and smaller step.
and/or
- if the application is approved, the site effectively becomes brownfield in the Green Belt and much more open to future development in the event of the demise or relocation of the Gym Club.

Summary

We believe that the accumulation of all the issues above more than outweigh the Very Special Circumstances put forward by the applicant and therefore ask that Borough Councillors support the recommendation of planning officers and the views of local residents and REFUSE this application. We also urge the current Landlord (Farmglade) and RBWM to work together to find a more suitable and appropriate location.



The proposed site ... and just on the other side of the Fifield Road water does not naturally drain away.



30 buses parked like this 3 rows deep ... or 34 buses parked like this 2 rows deep.



The Environment Agency Surface Water map ... driving past the proposed new site ... and just a bit further south !