



ENV\_21 - 22/03374/OUT

RBWM Planning and Property Services  
Town Hall  
St Ives Road  
Maidenhead  
SL6 1RF

7 February 2023

### 22/03374/OUT - Land North and South of Gays Lane, Holyport

It is very difficult to find words to express the sheer incredulity which can be the only immediate reaction to this pitifully ridiculous application. It is a completely cynical piece of attempted Alchemy to Transmute **Green** into **GOLD**. This particular developer seems to repeatedly attempt this particular piece of Alchemy all over the Country - their greed must not be allowed to destroy more Green Belt in our area.

#### 1 - Green Belt

The “exceptional circumstances” for overriding Green Belt protections submitted to justify this application are absolutely nonsensical ... and simply pathetic. “We couldn’t find another suitable site” ? ! “it’s much cheaper (we make more money !) to build on a green field site than a brown field one” ? ! Well of course it is ... land worth a few thousand will have just been turned into MILLIONS. Are these kind of things what we are really expected to consider seriously as legitimate reasons to pour many tons of concrete onto a wonderful Green Belt location which is highly prized and much used by the local population ?

“Don’t worry ...” we are told, “... because we will be creating a lovely nature resource for the local people to stroll through to enjoy the environment”. Do they mean ... AS WE ALREADY DO ? Far from improving the amenities they intend to close many footpaths currently much enjoyed and redirect them around the edges of the site, along the roadside and round a roundabout, which they predict will carry as many as 1000 extra cars a day and 80 heavy trucks ... “so that walkers can enjoy the *frontage*” ... really ?

One of the most incredible things about this whole situation is the sheer arrogance of assuming that the local people are somehow educationally sub-normal and expected to tolerate such ridiculously transparent and puerile justifications for the outrageous levels of greed.

Also very difficult to understand is the response of RBWM’s Environmental “**PROTECTION**” Officer to 22/90192/PREAPP. The Officer’s opinion expressed in this is basically that there is no objection in general but that the Applicant should maybe pay attention to some possible extra Light Pollution and Traffic Noise issues. The staggering thing is that this Environmental “**PROTECTION**” Officer makes absolutely no reference to the **GREEN BELT**. It begs the question - “What is the job description for this post ?” I am clearly far too naive to expect the clue to be in the words of the job title.

## **2 - Traffic**

The Environmental Protection Officer's mention of Traffic is really a HUGE understatement. The predicted level of expected traffic movements is an absolutely MASSIVE increase. The access routes to and from the single site entrance consist of what were really simple country roads never designed to be able to deal with either the volume or weight of even the current traffic let alone the horrific levels anticipated. Trying to imagine the potential wear and tear and damage to the actual infrastructure is difficult enough but to that must be added the 24 hour constant noise inflicted on those who live nearby or along the access routes.

## **3 - The Proposed Site itself**

There are a few things about the proposed site that are immediately obvious and inescapable. There is only a single access point to the whole site. One accident or breakdown at the roundabout would cause absolute havoc - not only to the continued flow of traffic east-west but also to those trapped within the site or trying to enter or exit. The Applicant supposes 1000 cars a day plus many heavy trucks - by any standards that represents an enormous backup if it all grinds to a halt with no alternative route. Bray Studios administration I'm sure would be familiar with that concern. Other well-known studios have several access points.

The "back lot" can only be accessed by moving back and forth across a much used bridle path. What would be the intention here to maintain the safety of the horses and riders and walkers etc ? Would there be some sort of marked crossing ? Traffic lights ? Barriers ? Who has right of way ? Would horses and riders and pedestrians be required to wait while vehicles and equipment cross to and from the "back lot" ? ... or vice-versa ?

Most major Studios have a generally rectangular footprint allowing an internal grid structure with more than a single access to that grid. This particular site plan shows immediately that there is another glaring problem. The site is "squeezed" in the middle with yet another potential choke point south-north which could easily lead to the need, in extremity, to use Gay's Lane. There is a proposed Pedestrian and cycle access point on Gay's Lane for the northern area of the site. Pretty clearly it will not be long before an Application appears to allow an additional vehicle access from Langworthy Lane via Gay's Lane to the northern area of the site. Once again - that route is clearly unsuitable and should never be contemplated.

## **4 - The "Business Plan" and local employment benefits**

Britain's economy, we are told, is in dire need of more and more Film and TV studios, particularly within reach of the West London "cluster", and that the local economy will flourish with all the new jobs this will create. Unfortunately neither of these statements stand up to scrutiny. We know that Netflix has recently closed thousands of jobs because of the downturn in streaming subscriptions and there is possibly an imminent shift in the subsidies and tax incentives which make the UK such an attractive commercial environment for entertainment production. We understand that Unions are also trying to establish new pay scale guidelines. It is inevitable that all of this must also be true for the other streamers and content producers such as Amazon Prime, Disney, etc. The very least we can say about the industry is that the top of the curve has passed and there is a slow slide into the downward slope of that curve.

The other attractive aspect of the UK for content creation is the abundance of high quality creative talent and technical skills. But by no stretch of the imagination can it be claimed that those requirements could be met in any one local area. The truth is that these come from all around, from near and far, and last as long as the particular production needs their particular skills. Hence the 1000 or so cars expected. Just like Bray Studios. There may be one or two

possible peripheral opportunities such as cleaning jobs but these are more likely to be supplied by large contractors. Maybe a few taxi journeys now and then ? Couriers ? Again ... the drivers don't necessarily live anywhere nearby. Anecdotally Bray Studios uses one local craftsman for leather work. Of course there are freelancers who live within reach ... but the productions they are already working on are in other studios.

## **5 - Water - crucial to this entire local area**

For years we have been told by "Experts" that there is no groundwater to worry about in this area - the reason there is water in a hole is because of runoff from the surface. Well, those of us who actually live here know that to be blatant nonsense. In 1984, when having to dig two holes 18 inches deep for vertical H-beams inside a barn, about 4 inches of water was sitting in the bottom within an hour or 2. That was in early summer. Clearly nothing has really changed in the intervening 39 years except that now you might expect more than 4 inches of water in that hole. And none of this should be surprising when we consider that we live within the valley of the flood plain of the River Thames. For thousands of years - perhaps more - water has been coming off the Drift Road ridge on its way to the Thames. It gets down here and becomes a bit sedentary, lurking just a little below the surface.

The "Flood Risk" supporting documentation diagram shows a couple of "ponds" which will be excavated to 0.4m below surface level. That's grand, but unfortunately at the time when these are most needed there will already be a fair bit of water sitting in the bottom. When they are full it is not clear what happens to excess overflow. Where does it flow out to ? Or does it just stay there ? Hopefully not into the ditches along Gay's Lane because that ends up flooding the "cricket pitch". The diagram label mentions possibly creating a surrounding bund for each pond of 0.5m height to "prevent ingress of excess flood water." So clearly these particular ponds in themselves are not intended to help deal with excess water ... in fact it seems that excess water is to be discouraged by building 0.5m bunds around these ponds.

In the "nature park" there are two more ponds which the labels refer to as "Flood Storage Ponds". Maybe these are more promising ? Apparently these are to be excavated to 25.87 **mAODN**. It has taken some time to research but apparently this piece of professional jargon obfuscation actually means **METERS ABOVE ORDINANCE DATUM NEWLYN**. Very useful to find out what it means but no discernible reason for referring to depths and heights in straightforward meters for the first 2 ponds but not for these. It is immediately clear that there is no method of making any sense of these dimensions UNLESS we know the mean **mAODN** of the entire site surface level. What is the **mAODN** for the piece of earth next to the pond ? Without that essential piece of data it is impossible to calculate any height or depth.

So we have no clue how deep these "Flood Storage" areas are intended to be and therefore no way of achieving some sort of understanding of the volume of water they might be capable of coping with. But however deep they are at the time of greatest need they will already contain a considerable quantity of water ... unless of course they are actually sealed tank units. There is no indication that they are and the irregular shapes suggest not. The labels say that these ponds exit into the nearest ditches but as the west-east ditch flows towards them and the the one from the south flows northward there is only one route available - directly north to Stroud Farm's pond and onward to the A308. Unfortunately the "cricket pitch" area also wants to go to Stroud Farm's pond but because it can't always escape quickly enough ends up flooding the whole of the north-western boundary to a depth similar to the first 2 ponds ... which of course don't want any more water than they already have and wouldn't help in any case since they are up-stream of this. Once again - at the time of greatest need the "Flood Storage" ponds will very quickly be full ... and so will the exit ditches. What happens then ? When more rain falls and more speedy hard surface runoff happens where does it go if it can't get out into a ditch ?

The diagram labels refer the reader to paras 4.3 and 4.4 for more detailed information. This entire document is full of surface water maps, graphs of precipitation and run-off and column after column of obscure lists of numbers. But nowhere is there any text that contains “para” ... except in the 2 label boxes that direct you to paras 4.3 and 4.4 ! In another document perhaps ? Having searched and searched through many of the other documents I have found incidents of paras 4.3 and 4.4 ... but none of them relate to anything remotely connected with WATER.

The diagram shows 2 areas of land that are to be raised. Unfortunately the height is stated in **mAODN** again which leaves us in the same trap of having no way to calculate an actual real dimension. But no matter what the actual intended height the labels suggest the intention is to create a fall from west to east. This is interesting because that directs more water towards the ditches along Gay’s Lane. This is where the 2 ponds are that don’t want more water and more interesting because the ditches are already frequently at capacity and as there is no exit towards Holyport they must deliver their water onto the “cricket pitch” instead.

There is one final label that points to “Two 3m wide culverts under Gay’s Lane”. That would be 20 feet of Gay’s Lane ! Certainly a very impressive volume capability. Presumably this would be to cope with all the new hard surface run-off now being fed towards Gay’s Lane and would flow into a new and widened ditch heading north towards a new culvert under a track ... but then confusingly seems to stop before getting to the “Flood Storage Ponds”.

There are a couple of new bunds marked on the diagram which seem to be intended as protection from the new wide ditches. What I know from personal experience 22 years ago is that water does not necessarily threaten from the surface ... it quite happily comes up through the floor instead. There is so much confusing and contradictory content here that it looks as if there is simply no real grasp of the amount of water that will have to be dealt with.

## **6 - Sewage**

The same could probably apply to this heading. For such a major concern this seems to have received very little attention. The application suggests that parking will be provided for 1000 cars. We must assume that there will be other forms of arrival and departure such as taxis, minibus and coach links with public transport, etc. Difficult to quantify but let’s take a guess at another 200, to include the truck drivers, of which we are told there could be as many as 80. Of course there will sometimes be more than one person per car or truck but that is impossible to guess at so let’s stick with a conservative total of possibly 1200 humans.

We cannot assume that all 1200 people will need to visit the toilet while they are on site but neither can it be assumed that some will not need to visit twice ... or more. So let’s be really conservative and fix our number at only 1000 toilet visits. Not easy to put a proper cubic volume value to this but if I visualize an approximate volume for my own movements and multiply that by 1000 that is a pretty significant amount of material to be disposed of and treated ... daily.

We understand that the Applicant has been informed that Thames Water do not have the capacity to deal with such a volume locally. We also hear (it must be stressed that this is hearsay and we have no direct information on this) that the Applicant is therefore considering the possibility of pumping up to the Drift Road ridge. Not sure what happens there ... is it still Thames Water who need to deal with it there ? It is not clear where its destination might be or why it might then become more manageable.

## **7 - Conclusion**

This Developer claims that their aim is to pursue projects that serve the Nation’s Economy

and bring much needed benefits to Communities. It is clear to absolutely everyone that this is absolute nonsense as they batter away repeatedly in their assault to turn historical Communities and their environs into piles of concrete trash. Film Studio business plan didn't work out ? ... oh well, we're here now, so let's do a Retirement Village instead ... or a Data Park ... or a housing estate ... or as all this concrete has already been laid we might as well just do an Industrial Estate. It all works just as well for the Alchemy which is the main point of it all.

Once upon a time ... long ago in my youth ... I remember a phrase in use at the time that seems to have dropped out of the language. That phrase was "Caring Capitalism". In that marvelous alternative Universe sheer greed would be mitigated by conscience and moral choices. Sheer profit would be balanced against harm and choices might be made to make a little less profit in favour of improvement rather than wanton destruction.

If Brown Field sites were chosen instead these projects would be welcomed as repairing and improving while simultaneously realising the ideas that would turn them into true beneficially productive areas. They would be welcomed and encouraged by local communities rather than the angry opposition that is ignited by the relentless greed-driven scramble to trash more and more of our planet. The Human species seems absolutely determined to commit suicide but there is no need for us to all willingly join the Lemmings dashing for the cliffs.

This location is blatantly inappropriate for any kind of industrial or urban development so please pay attention to the obviously high level of unhappiness, anger, and objection in the population you represent and make sure this is dismissed and that future similar attempts or appeals are discouraged.

Thank you,



Rod Lord  
**OGAFCA** Environment