

Oakley Green, Fifield & District Community Association



November 5, 2013

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Environment and Planning Department
Development Control
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
SL6 1RF

Attn: Peter Carey

Dear Sirs,

Applications 13/02719 and 13/02720 – Land at Windsor Road, Water Oakley, Windsor.

I write on behalf of the Oakley Green, Fifield and District Community Association in response to the two Planning Applications above.

The subject of the potential development of the Land at Water Oakley has been of great interest to the local Community for a number of years now. It is generally recognised that:-

- This Site is in the Green Belt and The Setting of the Thames
- It is a significant part of the extremely important “Gap” between the conurbations of Maidenhead and Windsor. This area has recently been labelled as “Gold Belt” in Consultation exercises to reflect this importance.
- The Site is currently made up of a mixture of occupied and abandoned Housing (16 in total), a successful Gymnasium and a number of Commercial activities are carried out in old Farm Buildings. There are also a significant amount of open space which was once part of a working Farm. But overall, the Site it is in no way an attractive part of our local Green Belt.

There have been a number of recent Planning Applications in the adjacent area (see Attachment for more details of Applications and outcomes), but in summary and in chronological order:-

- Planning Application (05/02654/OUT) - submitted on October 26, 2005 for 65 Residential Units at the same Water Oakley Site – Refused by RBWM.
- Planning Application (10/00461/FULL) - submitted on March 10, 2010 for the Change of use of the land for 2 caravans and gypsy pitches at Brayfield Stables – Refused by RBWM. On Appeal however, Approval was granted for temporary permission for 4 years until February 2015 and purely on the Grounds that there were insufficient Gypsy Pitches available to the Applicant to go to in the Royal Borough at the time.
- Planning Application 11/00474/Full - submitted on March 7, 2011 for the Change of use of Down Place to a residential dwelling and the construction of 7 detached dwellings and a detached two storey office building at Bray Studios – Approved by RBWM, but development limited.
- Planning Application 11/02912/FULL - submitted on October 19, 2011 for the Construction of one detached dwelling - Approved by RBWM, but on the condition that it was to provide agricultural workers accommodation to replace an existing mobile home at Brayfield Farm.

So we can see that there has already been some development on this the Northern Side of the A308 Windsor Road. The successful Applications have been limited in scope, in order to continue to protect the Green Belt and each has been required to demonstrate “Very Special Circumstances”.

More recently, from September to December 2012, there were a number of Public Consultation exercises which were part of the Bray Parish Neighbourhood Plan and then the RBWM Local Plan initiatives. This Association was heavily involved in these Consultation Exercises. In particular, the RBWM Local Plan said:-

“.. some previously developed sites in the Green Belt ..” are included in the list of potential Sites “.. to determine if there are more appropriate uses for the sites which would already be acceptable under current national planning guidance ...”

.. and Land at Water Oakley was specifically identified as one of these Sites.

We collaborated with The Oakley Green & Fifield Residents Association (OGFRA), The Down Place Residents Association (DPRA) and The West Windsor Residents Association (WWRA) and organised two public meetings – one on December 8 and one on December 11 2012 and over 150 people came along.

At both meetings there were lively and extensive discussions and attendees were asked to record their overall views on the suitability of the sites for development. An “exit poll” after the two Meetings revealed, inter alia:-

- The local community is overwhelmingly in favour of preserving The Green Belt and the area between Windsor and Maidenhead in particular.
- Given the current untidy nature of the Land at the Water Oakley Farm site, special circumstances could apply and over 80% of participants who responded supported limited residential development at the site, subject to strict controls to preserve the openness of The Green Belt.

Turning to these two Applications, it is appreciated that:-

- A lot of thought has gone into this proposed development by the Applicant and it looks attractive.
- Local Residents have been consulted.
- The proposed Building line has been moved back from the A308 during Consultation.

In principle - we do support some development at this Site - but we have a number of concerns:-

1. The Size and Scope of this proposed Development – which at 44 Houses is almost 3 times the number that it will replace and all of them are much much bigger too, so the Housing Footprint is many times larger than existing.
2. Houses would be built on a significant area of Green Field/Agricultural Land - especially along the Northern (River) side and to the West.
3. The significant adverse impact on local Infrastructure and Road Traffic on the extremely busy A308 in particular – especially during the “Rush Hours” in School Term Time. There are over 100 Garages in the Proposal! Local Residents are particularly concerned about this as Traffic flow and speed are hot topics.
4. Some of the Building will take place on Landfill and in the Floodplain.
5. Some of the Site is right next to the River and will development will have an adverse impact on The Setting of The Thames.
6. We would lose a very popular and well respected Gymnasium facility.
7. Not all Down Place Residents are entirely happy with the Proposal.
8. The Applicants have also purchased a significant part of the remaining Land to the West of this Site so there is local concern that this Development could be just “the thin edge of the wedge” and further Applications in our precious Gold Belt may be looming.
9. The Application appears to fail to demonstrate that “Very Special Circumstances exist to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt” as other Applications on Sites immediately adjacent to this one have been required to do.

It all comes down to what is meant by “limited residential development” as supported by Residents recently. In many people’s minds this would be replacing the existing 16 Houses on a similar Footprint, removing/replacing the unsightly Buildings and returning the remaining Land to Agricultural use.

We hope that you find these comments constructive and urge you to take them on board when considering this large Development in our “Gold Belt” as it become to be known.

Yours sincerely,

Grenville Annetts
Chairman

Copies to:-

RBWM Bray Ward Councillors - David Burbage, David Coppinger and Leo Walters

Bray Parish Oakley Green and Fifield Ward Councillors - Nick Pellew and Chris Yates

Bray Parish Council Planning Committee Chair - Louvaine Kneen

Bray Parish Council Clerk - Janice Eden-Bagley

Bray Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Chairman - Chris Graham

Down Place Residents Association Chairman - David Short

Oakley Green & Fifield Residents Association Chairman - Rod Ball

West Windsor Residents Association Chairman - John Holdstock

Oakley Green, Fifield and District Community Association Limited by Guarantee.

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Details of 4 recent Planning Applications in the Green Belt on the A308 Windsor Road

October 26, 2005 – Planning Application 05/02654/OUT

Erection of 65 residential units (including 20 affordable) plus associated play area, two sports pitches, nature reserve, informal open space, highway access improvements, access roads, cycle ways/ footpaths, parking and landscaping following demolition of existing buildings.

Land at Water Oakley Including Farm And Cottages Windsor Road Water Oakley Windsor Berkshire

The RBWM Notice of Decision of April 2006 said:-

“The proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. In addition the scale and likely form of the development would also result in significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt and the character of the countryside. The “very special circumstances” identified by the applicant to justify such inappropriate development in the Green Belt are not considered, either individually, or collectively to be sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm that would be caused to the Green Belt through the inappropriateness of the development, the harm to its openness and character and the harm to the purposes of including land within it. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies GB1, GB2 and GB3 of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan of 1999 (incorporating Alterations adopted in June 2003) and Policy DP3 of the Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016.”

“The Site is extremely poorly served in terms of accessibility to shops, leisure, educational and employment opportunities and public transport facilities. The future occupants of the site would therefore be wholly reliant on private car and would have no choice but to live wholly unsustainable lifestyles, contrary to Policies DP1 and T1 of the Structure Plan.”

“The development would have an urbanising effect on the appearance of this part of the countryside”

March 10, 2010 - Planning Application 10/00461/FULL

Change of use of the land for 2 caravans and gypsy pitches with day rooms and ancillary hardstanding, including improvements to access.

Brayfield Stables, Windsor Road, Water Oakley, Windsor. SL4 5UJ.

This Site is in the Green Belt and located to the West of Water Oakley. The Application was Refused by RBWM and their Notice of Decision of April 2010 said:-

“The Application Site is located within an important part of the Greenbelt between the towns of Windsor and Maidenhead and the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt in terms of Local Plan Policy GB1 and Planning Policy Guidance 2. The openness and flat level of this area provides a clear physical and visual distinction between the towns. The proposed development would erode this clear distinction and partly as a result of its siting close to the Windsor Road would appear prominent in the locality. It would be harmful to the purposes of including the land in the Green Belt,

specifically to prevent the sprawl of built up areas, to assist in the safeguarding from encroachment and to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another”

The Applicant Appealed and won the case, but only for temporary permission for 4 years until February 2015 and purely on the Grounds that there were insufficient Gypsy Pitches available to the Applicant to go to in the Royal Borough at the time.

March 7, 2011 - Planning Application 11/00474/Full

Change of use of Down Place to residential dwelling, including alterations and single storey extension. Demolition of buildings to allow for the construction of 7 detached dwellings and detached two storey office building, security gatehouse and boundary treatment works including associated works.

Bray Studios, Down Place, Water Oakley, Windsor. SL4 5UG

This Site is in the Green Belt and located to the West of Water Oakley and was Approved in October 2012. The RBWM Notice of Decision said:-

“The reason planning permission has been granted is that although the development represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt, contrary to the provisions of the development plan, the applicant has demonstrated that very special circumstances exist in this case to justify the development proposed. These very special circumstances are: removal of existing inappropriate development, reduction in scale of built development leading to improved openness, restoration of fabric and setting of an iconic listed building, reduction in traffic volumes. The relevant policies/proposals of the development plan are: Local Plan GB1, GB2, GB3, LB2, DG1, NAP4, H10, H11, P1, R3, IMP1.

October 19, 2011 – Planning Application 11/02912/FULL

Construction of a detached dwelling to provide agricultural workers accommodation to replace existing mobile home.

Brayfield Farm, Windsor Road, Water Oakley, Windsor. SL4 5UJ.

This Site is in the Green Belt and located to the West of Water Oakley and was Approved in January 2012. The RBWM Notice of Decision said:-

“The occupation of the dwelling shall be limited to a person solely or mainly working, or last working, in the locality in agriculture (as defined in section 336 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or in forestry, or a widow or widower of such a person, and to any resident dependants.

Reason: The site of the dwelling lies within the designated Green Belt and permission is only granted to meet proven agricultural needs. Relevant Policies - Local Plan GB1, and GB3.”