

## Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Regeneration

**Address** BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL OUTBOROUGH MIDDLESEX

**Development:** Out of Borough consultation for outline planning permission with all matters reserved (except for principal points of access) for the phased development of a screen industries global growth hub of up to 750,000 sq ft (70,000 sq m) comprising:  
- A visitor attraction of 350,000 sq ft comprising a series of buildings,  
- 350,000 sq ft of film production buildings (including sound stages, workshops, offices and an external film backlot),  
- An education hub (25,000 sq ft),  
- A business growth hub (25,000 sq ft),  
- Associated parking and servicing,  
- Green Infrastructure.

**LBH Ref Nos:** 39707/APP/2020/3247

**Drawing Nos:**  
3770-FBA-XX-00-DR-A-01-100 Site Location Plan  
3770-FBA-XX-00-DR-A-01-101 Existing Site Plan  
3770-FBA-XX-00-DR-A-01-110 ILLUSTRATIVE\_MASTERPLAN\_\_  
3770-FBA-XX-00-DR-A-01-111 ILLUSTRATIVE\_MASTERPLAN\_\_  
Planning Statement  
The Case for Growth and Recovery  
Transport Assessment and Framework Travel Plan  
3770-FB-XX-00-DR-A-01-120 Rev P1  
P1A\_SITE\_CONTEXT\_CURRENT\_LEVELS  
3770-FB-XX-00-DR-A-01-121 Rev P1  
PP1B\_SITE\_CONTEXT\_PROPOSED\_LEVELS  
3770-FB-XX-00-DR-A-01-122 Rev P1 PP2\_DEVELOPMENT\_ZONES  
3770-FB-XX-00-DR-A-01-123 Rev P1 PP3A\_LAND\_USE  
3770-FB-XX-00-DR-A-01-124 Rev P1 PP3B\_LAND\_USE  
3770-FB-XX-00-DR-A-01-125 Rev P1 PP4\_GREEN\_INFRASTRUCTURE  
3770-FB-XX-00-DR-A-01-126 Rev P1 PP5\_ACCESS\_AND\_MOVEMENT  
3770-FB-XX-00-DR-A-01-127 Rev P1 PP6A\_BUILDING\_HEIGHT  
3770-FB-XX-00-DR-A-01-128 Rev P1 PP6B\_BUILDING\_HEIGHT  
3770-FB-XX-00-SC-A-01-000 Rev P1  
PP7\_DEVELOPMENT\_NUMBERS\_AND\_YIELD  
Economics and Social Benefits Assessment

**Date Plans Received:** 09/10/2020

**Date(s) of Amendment(s):**

**Date Application Valid:** 09/10/2020

### 1. SUMMARY

This application is being reported to the Major Applications Planning Committee so officers may issue an objection on behalf of the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) to Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC).

The application site lies entirely within the administrative boundary of BCC and the site itself is located 2.6km to the west of LBH, whilst the site is not in the Borough, the proposal has the potential to impact LBH. The proposal seeks outline planning permission for with all matters reserved (except for principal points of access) for the phased development of a screen industries global growth hub of up to 750,000 sq ft (70,000 sq m) comprising:

- A visitor attraction of 350,000 sq ft comprising a series of buildings;
- 350,000 sq ft of film production buildings (including sound stages, workshops, offices and an external film backlot);
- An education hub (25,000 sq ft);
- A business growth hub (25,000 sq ft);
- Associated parking and servicing; and
- Green Infrastructure.

The proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt for which Very Special Circumstances need to be demonstrated.

There are significant concerns relating to the potential highways impacts of the proposed development. Whilst traffic modelling has been carried out, the modelling relates to 'best case scenarios' and does not take into account 'worst case scenarios'. There is insufficient evidence and traffic modelling to demonstrate that the highways impacts of the proposed development would not have a significantly adverse impact on the local and wider highway network.

The proposal fails to sufficiently demonstrate that there are 'Very Special Circumstances' for the proposed development within the Green Belt.

For the reasons outlined within this report, it is recommended that an objection is raised to the application and a request is made to BCC that the application is refused. If further information is provided by the Applicant on highways matters, it is requested that LBH is consulted on the additional information.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

### **OBJECTION:**

**The London Borough of Hillingdon objects to the application which is an inappropriate development within a large area of the Green Belt requiring very special circumstances to be robustly justified. There is insufficient information demonstrating the proposal would not result in an adverse impact on the local highway network.**

**It is requested that a decision is not made on the application under ref: PL/20/3280/OA until further detail is provided in respect of highways impact and the London Borough of Hillingdon is consulted on the additional information provided.**

## **3. CONSIDERATIONS**

### **3.1 Site and Locality**

The application site is located within Buckinghamshire County Council and comprises land south of Pinewood Studios, Pinewood Road, Iver Heath, Buckinghamshire, SL0 0NH. The site is located on the northern side of Uxbridge Road (A412) at the junction with Pinewood Road, adjacent to the 'Five Points' roundabout in Iver. The main connecting route from the site to the London Borough of Hillingdon's boundary is the A4007 - Slough Road which runs east to west and leads to St Johns Road/Rockingham Road/New Windsor Street which terminate at Uxbridge Town centre.

The application site is located approximately 2.6km away from the London Borough of

Hillingdon and approximately 2.7km away from residential dwellings in Hillingdon.

### **3.2 Proposed Scheme**

The application is to provide observations on an outline planning application submitted to Buckinghamshire County Council (ref: PL/20/3280/OA). The Outline planning permission with all matters reserved (except for principal points of access) is for the phased development of a screen industries global growth hub of up to 750,000 sq ft (70,000 sq m) comprising:

- A visitor attraction of 350,000 sq ft comprising a series of buildings;
- 350,000 sq ft of film production buildings (including sound stages, workshops, offices and an external film backlot);
- An education hub (25,000 sq ft);
- A business growth hub (25,000 sq ft);
- Associated parking and servicing; and
- Green Infrastructure.

### **3.3 Relevant Planning History**

#### **Comment on Relevant Planning History**

The National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

#### **UDP / LDF Designation and London Plan**

The following Local Plan Policies are considered relevant to the application:-

Part 1 Policies:

Part 2 Policies:

#### **5. Advertisement and Site Notice**

**5.1** Advertisement Expiry Date:- Not applicable

**5.2** Site Notice Expiry Date:- Not applicable

#### **6. Consultations**

#### **7. MAIN PLANNING ISSUES**

##### **7.01 The principle of the development**

The proposal seeks permission for an extension to the existing Pinewood Film Studios to provide education and employment opportunities for the creative and tourism industries.

The proposed development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There is an objection to the application as the London Borough of Hillingdon does not support a strategic level of Green Belt development outside of the development plan process.

The proposal would need to demonstrate that 'Very Special Circumstances' exist in order to allow for such a large scale development within the Green Belt. Buckinghamshire County Council would need to assess the impact of the proposed development in line with their own Development Plan Policies relating to the surrounding Green Belt.

The London Borough of Hillingdon request that a local employment contract is secured by a Section 106 legal agreement, should planning permission be granted.

## **7.10 Traffic impact, Car/cycle parking, pedestrian safety**

The application site is located approximately 2.6km from the boundary of the London Borough of Hillingdon. The site is on the corner of Pinewood Road & Uxbridge Road (A412) adjacent to the 'Five Points' roundabout in Iver. The main connecting route from the site to the London Borough of Hillingdon's borough boundary is the A4007 - Slough Road which runs east to west and leads to St Johns Road/Rockingham Road/New Windsor Street which terminate at Uxbridge Town centre. This route is therefore likely to be the most affected as a consequence of the proposals.

Whilst the application site is connected to the highways network through a number of vehicle routes, there is limited public transport close to the site; the number 7 bus (Uxbridge to Slough via Iver/Langley) is the only bus route within a reasonable distance of the site. Whilst the applicant's submission states that visitors would not use this bus service to visit the site, given it is the only 'regular' bus service operating in the area it is likely that this service may be used by users of the education hub and staff of the development, resulting in an increase in bus passengers and thereby impacting on bus stops and the capacity of the bus route. It is noted that a shuttle bus from Slough (connected to the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail)) and related infrastructure is proposed; whilst it has been stated that the shuttle bus will be advertised at point of sale and will be free or a nominal charge, and that the possibility of a rail/attraction ticket would be explored, it is unclear as to the potential impact and use of the proposed shuttle bus service. Given that families visiting the site are more likely to use a car (for ease and convenience), the proposed shuttle bus service should be absorbed into the ticket price and should be free to use for visitors.

There are also limited opportunities for walking and cycling within the immediate area. Whilst there are some proposed improvements to the local footpath network, given that the site is not too far from the Grand Union Canal at Uxbridge/Langley, the applicants should look at cycle connections and improvements to this facility in order to open up a large cycle network and encourage cycling.

Given the size and make up of the local population and the large amount of staff required for the development, it is considered that a large number of staff would be sourced from a wider area outside of the local area. The large number of staff, combined with large numbers of visitors expected for a development of this scale, are most likely to access the site by car, thereby resulting in large numbers of vehicle movements on the local and surrounding highway network. Increases in vehicle movements would result in increased pressure on the surrounding highway network, which already experiences a lot of traffic flow associated with the 'Five Points' roundabout; two arms of the roundabout, Church Road and Slough Road, provide key connections to and from Uxbridge Town Centre and so the London Borough of Hillingdon has concerns that the proposed development would have an adverse impact on Hillingdon's highway network. Although the applicants have provided traffic modelling of the proposed development, indicating that the 'Five Points' roundabout could deal with the traffic associated with the development in order to allow adequate continued access to and from Uxbridge town centre, this would be the 'best case' scenario.

Modelling has also been provided in relation to proposed improvements to Seven Hills Road which is currently accessed by a priority junction with the Denham Road, leading back to Denham Roundabout/Oxford Road; this junction currently experiences heavy traffic flows even with limited numbers currently using the road, meaning that queues can quickly form when cars wish to turn in, especially across traffic, often resulting in queues forming

back to Denham Roundabout/Oxford Road. It is proposed to convert the existing priority junction to a signalled junction; whilst the modelling suggests that this will work close to optimum capacity as a best case scenario, additional modelling should be carried out in order to fully assess the impact an increase in cars would have on this junction as it could be very close to the 'tipping point' of the network and, as even in normal conditions the conversion to signals can also mean more delays. It is noted that the M25 junction with the M40 also gets particularly congested, with frequent problems on this section leading to significant knock on problems for Iver and the surrounding area.

The traffic modelling carried out as part of the application submission have suggested that the proposed upgrades resulting from the development would improve the general capacity of the junctions. However, as some congestions at local junctions may cause knock on impacts to Uxbridge, the London Borough of Hillingdon's Highways Team considers that the current modelling provided as part of the application is the 'best case scenario' and therefore does not take into account the 'worst' case scenario; given that more trips are expected by car after the Covid-pandemic, the applicants should provide modelling of a 'worst case scenario' at both Seven Hill Road and 'Five Point' signals with a 5-10% increase in traffic numbers.

Therefore, given the lack of 'worst case scenario' traffic modelling and the limited public transport, the proposal fails to demonstrate that the development would not have a significantly adverse impact on the local and wider highway network. It is requested that the London Borough of Hillingdon is consulted on any additional information provided by the Applicant.

## **7.22 Other Issues**

From an Economic development perspective the application to create a range of new facilities at Pinewood studios is welcome for the potential benefits the expansion will bring to the local economy.

The application to expand film studio facilities at Pinewood serves to enhance and expand the capacity of film production in the West London area. This is welcomed as it serves to re-enforce West London and the surrounding area as the focus of the UK's film production sector.

The supporting information in the application emphasises the value of the film sector to both the regional and national economy. The concentration of film and TV production in the West London area is important not only in terms of the direct employment the film and tv production sector provides but as the recent West London film studios application highlights the importance of film production in terms of businesses that supply and equip the film industry. The concentration of film studio production in the West London area is having a positive impact in terms of the film support sector with film equipment and props hire companies hire, film production services and catering and transport support all benefiting from the expansion of the sector. Many of these businesses are well represented in Hillingdon, particularly in Uxbridge due to its close proximity to Pinewood.

The Screen hub UK application also includes a major visitor attraction facility, potentially replicating the Harry Potter experience which has been successfully operating at Warner Brother Leavesden Studios since 2012. The economic evaluation supporting the application highlights the value of this initiative and cites the impact that the development will have on jobs and the immediate local economy. The application reports that over 600 jobs will be created by the facility (approximately 400 full time equivalent). This is similar to Warner Brothers facility which provides a reported 360 jobs and hosts up to 6000 visitors

per day. The majority of positions created will be in customer experience, hospitality and catering services.

As with the film production sector, Hillingdon's close proximity to Pinewood studios should potentially provide good employment opportunities to Hillingdon residents.

It is noted that if approved the construction period for the development is estimated at some 3 years and will provide employment some 800+ jobs during this period. Again this potentially creates employment and supply chain opportunities for borough residents and businesses.

The application serves to highlight the impact of Covid-19 on local employment and since July 2020 when the supporting economic narrative was written, the negative impact of the virus on employment and business has significantly increased. To this end an application creating a major visitor attraction on the boroughs border creating opportunities for local businesses and long term employment opportunities for residents is welcomed.

The London Borough of Hillingdon request that a local employment contract (construction phase and long term employment) is secured by a legal agreement, should planning permission be granted, to secure jobs for local residents of both Bucks and LB of Hillingdon.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

For the reasons set out in this report, Officers request the Major Applications Planning Committee agree the response to BCC.

**Contact Officer:** Katherine Mills

**Telephone No:** 01895 250230