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R Whear Esq.,
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By Email: local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk

Dear Mr Whear,

Hertsmere Local Plan Review - Call for Employment Sites 2021

Land at Rowley Lane, Borehamwood

Information Submitted on behalf of Gilston Investments Ltd owners of the Wrotham Park Estate

Context

Our client, Gilston Investments Ltd owners of the Wrotham Park Estate, is promoting **land at Rowley Lane, Borehamwood** as a sustainable location to accommodate an **employment allocation** that could result in the **creation of a world leading film studio complex**.

A number of plans and particulars are enclosed and are submitted in support of the promotion of the site as an appropriate location to accommodate a significant employment opportunity in the form of a **new film studio complex** to create a **world leading facility** which, alongside Sky and the existing BBC and Elstree Studios, will project Borehamwood to be one of the largest film and HETV (High End Television) production centres in the world.

As such, the Site affords the opportunity for the Council to capture the UK film studio requirement(s) in Hertsmere. Accordingly, allocation of the Site for the proposed uses can assist in achieving the Council's stated social and economic objectives through the emerging Local Plan process.

Submission of this information is intended to assist the Council in its assessment of the site having regard to its suitability as a sustainable location to accommodate a **world leading employment facility**.

Our client is the landowner and welcomes the opportunity to work with the Council on a collaborative basis in seeking to realise the development potential of this sustainably located site.

The accompanying technical work confirms there are no known constraints to the early delivery of the site, such that the Council can have confidence in relying upon it for the purpose of meeting identified employment needs and creating significant high skilled job opportunities during the early part of the plan period.

Plans and Particulars

The plans and particulars submitted in support of the proposed allocation of the site for employment generating purposes comprise as follows:

1. Concept Masterplan Layout No. 19109.SK002B
2. Film Studio Concept Document (Bidwells) (March 2021)
3. Transport Feasibility Report (Stantec) (March 2021)
4. Energy & Sustainability Strategy (Hoare Lee) (March 2021)
5. Landscape and Visual Overview (CSA Environmental) (March 2021)
6. Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy (MLM) (March 2021)
7. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CSA Environmental) (March 2021)
8. Economic Impacts Assessment (Oxford Economics) (March 2021)
9. Completed Questionnaire

The Environmental Benefits of the Scheme

Environmental Credentials

As shown on the enclosed particulars, the site is located at Rowley Lane on the eastern side of Borehamwood¹.

The illustrative scheme design has been refined and informed by a thorough review of the on-site opportunities and constraints.

The scheme provides a unique opportunity to deliver a sustainable and energy efficient-led scheme that will create a world leading film complex and the creation of a significant number of jobs.

The inclusion of significant planting, ecology areas, attenuation features as part of the sustainable drainage strategy, car club, electric vehicle charging points, green roofs, an overall low carbon development, air source heat pumps and solar panels.

Schematics

The development proposes to develop the site to provide a new film studio complex include the following indicative land uses (to be refined through the evolution of the scheme design):

¹ The western part of the site was previously included in the Council's Planning for Growth consultation (Oct 2018) under Site Refs BE4 as a potential strategic housing site.

- Film Studios - 1,005,000 GFA (sqft) / 93,368 GFA (sqm)
- Office - 240,000 GFA (sqft) / 22,296 GFA (sqm)
- Industrial - 215,000 GFA (sqft) / 19,974 GFA (sqm)
- College - 30,000 GFA (sqft)
- Hotel - 210 Rooms

The allocation will facilitate a purpose-built facility that will be master-planned, landscaped and sustainable.

Significant Social and Economic Benefits

The Scheme will result in significant number of social and economic benefits, to include (but not limited to):

- **Employment creation** – Oxford Economics have written a brief report on the studio proposal and calculate the creation of **14,490** jobs
- **Supporting government policy** – Government have committed to tax credits for the industry. This development supports this specific policy and more regional/local policies in the HBC Local Plan.
- **Economic growth** –we have seen significant growth on investment into film and HETV, increasing year-on-year. Our proposal will consolidate this investment into the Borough. Oxford Economics report the completed scheme should contribute **£1.17bn GDP** pa and **£234m tax revenues**.
- The proposed development will be a master-planned and landscaped facility with **state-of-the-art** stages suitable for all modern filming requirements. This will be the single largest studio in the UK and coupled with the Sky development, will create a film and digital hub to rival anything on a global scale.
- **Global Status** – launching Borehamwood as the home of a global leading technology hub
- Borehamwood/Elstree would be elevated to become the prime film studio location in the UK and a **global leader** in the industry.
- **Financial benefits to the local economy through increased** local spend, business rates and tax collection for HBC.
- **Education and skills learning** - establishment of education centre to ensure a continued supply of a skilled workforce and **local apprenticeships**, to operate in conjunction with Elstree Screen Arts Academy.
- Strong **central Government support** for the concept has already been expressed – MHCLG, DIT and the British Film Commission (part of DCMS) all keen to see the scheme proceed.
- Create a **best-in-class** and dominant film location to attract world leading production companies.
- **Regenerating** the historical importance of the town as a major film production centre.

- **Investment** into leading technology employment.
- **Hotel accommodation** to attract support/supply chain employment.
- **International** Investment –high demand from investors to increase exposure to the film studio sector.

Technical Considerations

General

As set out above, the Masterplan proposals have been informed by a thorough appraisal of the character and context of the local area. This has included a detailed analysis of the on-site opportunities and constraints. The detailed surveys have also assessed the impact of the proposed allocation of the site for employment generating using on the local area, which studies have included a transport analysis.

A summary of the supporting technical reports is set out below.

Transport Feasibility Report

The Transport Feasibility Report prepared by Stantec has assessed the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding highway network and considered a strategy for the highway, walking & cycling provision, public transport and parking within the site.

It concludes in relation to the merits of the site in accessibility terms that the development will aim to encourage sustainable and active travel modes, providing safe and suitable access to the site for all users, promoting sustainable transport through the introduction of a shuttle bus service and improving safety and crossing facilities on Rowley Lane. Overall, the development would improve highway safety and mitigate any cumulative impacts on the road network.

The following measures are proposed as part of the development:

- a) New signalised junction at Studio Way / Rowley Lane creating the Southern Site Access.
- b) Proposed controlled pedestrian and cyclist facilities at the junction.
- c) New priority junction from Rowley Lane forming northern site access.
- d) Widening of section of Rowley Lane between northern access and A1 junction, including provided a shared pedestrian / cycle path.
- e) Upgrade of junction of Rowley Lane (north) / A1 to bring merge and diverge up to current standards to improve safety for vehicles exiting and joining the A1.
- f) Amendments to signal control at Rowley Lane / Elstree Way / New Sky Studios access.
- g) New signalised junction at the Rowley Lane / A1 slip road / Newark Green Figure 8 roundabout, incorporating controlled pedestrian crossing facilities.
- h) New toucan crossing on Elstree Way at southern end of Studio Way

- i) Upgrade of footway on western side of Rowley Lane to provide shared pedestrian and cycle lane.
- j) Shuttle Bus Service between the site and Elstree & Borehamwood Train Station.
- k) Electric Vehicle Charging Points located within parking areas.

With the proposed measures in place, which requirements are to be identified in detailed policy wording for the site, development in this location will provide for a sustainable form of development.

Landscape and Visual Overview

The Landscape and Visual Overview prepared by CSA concludes in relation to the acceptability of the allocation of the site for employment generating uses in Green Belt and landscape terms as follows:

- a) The Site is located adjacent to the north eastern edge of Borehamwood, with the A1 dual carriageway to the east and Rowley Lane to the west.
- b) The Site is not covered by any designations for landscape character of quality. It is not publicly accessible, although a footpath crosses the eastern part of the Site. Overall, the Site is assessed as being of medium landscape quality and value.
- c) The proposals will retain the vast majority of existing boundary vegetation, which will provide a strong enclosure to the new built form. The majority of the mature trees within the internal field boundaries will also be retained wherever possible, and incorporated into areas of open space.
- d) The proposed development will be well contained by the Site's retained boundary vegetation, with partial views of the new built form being limited to near distance views.
- e) Sky Studios development to the south), is physically contained by the A1 dual carriageway to the east, and visually well contained by mature vegetation. The Site represents a sustainable location for a new film studio complex, and would help to deliver the Borough's strategic employment growth needs, on the edge of Borehamwood, subject to the release of the Site from the Green Belt.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The supporting document provides a preliminary appraisal of flood risk and drainage matters and concludes as follows:

- a) The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is not as risk of flooding from tidal or fluvial sources. The site is assessed as being at a low risk of flooding from all other sources.
- b) The on-site drainage and levels should be designed so that if any flooding from the on-site sewers or drains occurs, then the flood water would flow away from the buildings.
- c) Surface water run-off from the site should be collected and attenuated on-site prior to discharge from the site in accordance with the SuDS hierarchy.

- d) It is most likely that surface water drainage will require attenuation and a restricted discharge into the surface water ditch network located across the site.
- e) Open attenuation should be investigated as part of the detailed design to maximise the features wherever possible, and to provide the attenuation of the surface water. The most suitable location for the basin has been indicated towards the south of the site where ground levels are lower, however this does depend upon the outfall route, and will be subject to detailed design.
- f) SuDS features should be utilised at the site for the attenuation and removal of pollutants from surface water prior to discharge from the site.

Based upon information provided within this report, it is concluded that the Site is presented as sustainable in terms of flood risk and compliant with the criteria set out in the NPPF.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

CSA Environmental have undertaken a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the Site to (i) identify ecological constraints to development, (ii) inform recommendations for design, (iii) highlight opportunities for ecological enhancement; and (iv) determine any additional investigation/survey work necessary.

As part of this PEA, a desk study and extended Phase 1 Habitat survey of the Site were undertaken in January 2021. The Site comprises two areas of land to the south and north of Rowley Lane, measuring approximately 34.76ha and 8.72ha respectively.

The PEA identified that habitats across the Site are dominated by horse-grazed grassland, with hedgerows including frequent mature oak trees. At the centre of the Site is a farm comprising hardstanding, barns and stables, in addition to residential properties and a telecommunications mast.

Recommendations have been provided for ecological enhancement measures that could be delivered as part of the proposed development as follows:

- a) Habitat restoration in line with Hertfordshire Ecological Network Map, either on-site or as part of off-site habitat compensation.
- b) Incorporation of native plant species and those of wildlife importance within the formal landscaping scheme to provide foraging opportunities for birds, invertebrates and bats.
- c) Provision of green roofs and walls to including native plant species and those of wildlife importance, to increase the area available for ecological enhancement at the Site.
- d) Provision of new bat roosting and bird nesting opportunities within new buildings and retained mature trees (numbers and specification to be determined at detailed design stage).
- e) Provision of wildlife ponds to increase availability of aquatic habitats for great crested newt and other amphibians within the local area.

Summary

As set out above, the Illustrative Masterplan has been informed by a series of technical considerations and provides for a sustainable form of development in an accessible location.

The accompanying technical work confirms there are no known constraints to the early delivery of the site, such that the Council can have confidence in relying upon it for the purpose of securing employment opportunities in the early part of the plan period.

Allocating the site to accommodate a significant employment opportunity in the form of a **new film studio complex**, thus creating a **world leading facility** which, alongside Sky and the existing BBC and Elstree Studios, will project Borehamwood to be one of the largest film and HETV (High End Television) production centres in the world. Importantly, the site affords the opportunity for the Council to capture the UK film studio requirement(s) in Hertsmere.

We trust the above is of assistance and look forward to hearing from you with a view to progressing site specific policy wording to inform the allocation of the site for employment uses through preparation of the emerging Local Plan.

Yours sincerely,

Woolf Bond Planning LLP

Steven Brown BSc DipTP MRTPI
For and on behalf of Woolf Bond Planning LLP

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