

Date: 12th January 2017

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BBC Caversham Park

Initial Pre-application Scoping Meeting (19/12/2016) Minutes

Dear Susanna,

Please find below the minutes I took away from the Initial Pre-application Scoping Meeting with regards to the BBC's Caversham Park development proposals.

Reading Borough Council Attendees:

- Lynette Baker (LB) – North Team Leader;
- Susanna Bedford (SB) – Principal Planner;
- Sara Hanson (SH)– Trees & Landscape Officer;
- Giles Sutton (GS) – Ecology Officer

Applicant Team Attendees:

- Paul Smith (BBC Workplace) – Head of Estates Management;
- Nigel Philp (LSH) – Director London, BBC Client Director;
- Mark Dodds (LSH) – National Head of Planning & Development Consultancy;
- Thaddaeus Jackson-Browne (LSH) – Senior Planner, London Office;
- Phillip Hunter (LSH) – Director, Reading Office;
- Toby Wincer (OWAL Architects) – Director of Architecture & Design;

TREES, LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGY

- The objection/proposed amendment to the TPO has been received by the Council (14/12/2016) and the acknowledgement/Council response letter has since been received (22/12/2016). Aspect Arboriculture have been instructed to carry out the detailed Tree Survey which is scheduled to take place on 12/01/2017 and 13/01/2017, following which Aspect Arboriculture will meet with the Council's Trees and Landscape Officer (SH) to agree/reassess the 'Area' TPO;
- At the Initial Scoping Meeting (19/12/2016), SH and SB raised concerns over new homes along the access into the site (Gateway and The Orchard sites) on the grounds that it would be inappropriate to have the entrance into the historic park and garden lined with homes. The applicant team agreed to revise this element of the proposal;
- SH noted issues with loss of the 'traditional orchard' as a result of the People's Trust List of Endangered Species;
- All Officers raised concerns over the potential level of harm to the existing woodland belt along the northern site perimeter which serves as a landscape buffer separating the site from new development along Lowfield Road. The applicant team will amend the layouts to set homes further back from this to allow a greater number of trees here to be retained;
- SB asked if feasible to retain trees shown in gardens of new homes, where the likelihood is that these would need to be removed (root circumferences infringed or infringing on building foundations and unacceptable impact upon amenity through loss of daylight and sunlight). The applicant team agreed to amend proposal to factor in where tree retention within gardens is not likely to be viable;
- GS confirmed that an Ecological Management Plan would be required for any scheme going forward and that a grazing area on the meadows (with public access) would be a suitable/best outcome. GS can provide contact details for prospective agricultural tenants in light of the current tenant's impending departure;
- GS stated that the Ecological assessment submitted plays down the ecological value of woodland areas on site. The Applicant team will review this;
- GS explained that whilst the potential for there to be newt and bat habitats on the site, these should not be considered to be 'showstoppers'. Appropriate surveys should however be undertaken at this early stage to ensure that any habitat mitigation measures would be suitable;
- All Officers were keen to understand what kind of site/estate management arrangement is proposed following disposal of the site. The applicant team will provide a note on this prior to the next meeting with Officers;

HERITAGE

- SB confirmed that the Council had no objections in principle to the conversion and change of use of the main house, although suggested that the quantum of units within proposed might be higher than they would usually support. The applicant team agreed to review this to see if a more appropriate arrangement can be proposed;
- SB confirmed that the proposed level of development (of new homes on the site outside of the Listed house) would have an unacceptable impact upon the historic significance of the heritage assets, therefore a slightly lesser developed scheme should be explored. The applicant team explained that other options have been explored and we will present a revised proposal taking this into account along with the comments on the trees when we next meet with Officers in 2017;
- SB questioned the separation distances between new homes proposed and will comment on alternative options once a revised proposal has been reviewed;
- SB has forwarded on RBC's Heritage Officer's comments (09/01/2017). The applicant team will take these comments into consideration when revising the proposal;
- SB commented that similarly to SH and GS's comments, a tree-lined access drive would be more appropriate;
- SB advised that we consult Historic England and various other societies and amenity groups at this pre-application stage, however the applicant team suggested that it might be more appropriate to restrict initial consultation to Historic England at this stage.

OTHER:

- SB confirmed that she is still waiting for comments from the Council's Highways Officer before providing written comments on the initial proposal presented;
- The applicant team mentioned discussions that had taken place with the Council regarding the potential for cemetery extension options as part of a land deal. It was left that discussions with RBC Valuers could be resumed if this is something the Council might be interested in progressing with the BBC.
- All in attendance agreed with the intention to secure a date for a follow-up meeting in early 2017, with Officers confirming that a date in early March would be realistic;

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TJB', written in a cursive style.

Thaddaeus Jackson-Browne MRTPI
Senior Town Planning Consultant

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