

Comments for Planning Application 22/06443/FULEA

Application Summary

Application Number: 22/06443/FULEA

Address: Land Adjacent South Side Marlow Road And A404 Junction Westthorpe Park Little Marlow Buckinghamshire

Proposal: Full planning permission for production space and supporting buildings for screen-based media and associated services/industries. The development of approximately 168,718 sqm GEA total floorspace comprising : sound stages, workshops , office accommodation, studio hub associated outdoor space such as backlots and unit bases; entrance structures and reception; security infrastructure, mobility hub; cafes; parking; bridge; incidental supporting buildings; associated infrastructure; public art; upgraded vehicular access onto Marlow Road; new cycle and pedestrian accesses; a new cultural/educational/recreational building; a new community building and associated landscaping, publicly accessible recreational land and ecological and environmental enhancements/habitat creation

Case Officer: Emma Crotty

Customer Details

Name: Behalf of Transition Town Marlow Cycling and Walking Group

Address: 85 Oak Tree Road, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 3EU

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Community Organisations

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: This proposed development does not have the required 'very special circumstances' needed to warrant damaging the environment in the area outlined. This land is Green Belt, part of the designated Little Marlow Lakes Country Park and includes several key wildlife habitats.

The Cycling & Walking Group of Transition Town Marlow is also particularly concerned about the transport impact of the site, both from a local environment perspective and from a wider climate change viewpoint.

The applicant has drawn up a 'Sustainable Transport Strategy' to try to mitigate the impact of huge numbers of people accessing the site daily. However, the Shepperton Studios data (in 'Transport Assessment Part 3') shows that 88% of workers drive to the site. The Marlow Film Studio project aims to mode-shift many of these anticipated car drivers to give a maximum of 60% arriving by car and the rest by public transport and active travel.

While this is still a huge increase in vehicle traffic, the 60% target is unlikely to be achieved as the required infrastructure is not present - public transport is infrequent or missing entirely and the

active travel infrastructure in the area is very poor. The additional bus transport suggestions are not backed up with a commitment to finance them and there is little investment for commuter cycling.

The new roundabout suggested at the proposed studio entrance does not increase the likelihood that people will walk or cycle this route. Particular problems are:

1. The proposal is not compliant with LTN1/20. In fact, it appears that no attempt has been made to make a cycle-friendly design.
2. There is no assistance provided for walkers or cyclists to cross the A4155. Suggested crossing points appear to be just lowered kerbs, with no protection from traffic.
3. There is no improvement in the north side shared-use path (currently woefully inadequate). There are no crossing markings on the exit road from the Garden Centre for example to give cyclists priority in crossing - or even to indicate that this is a shared-use path.
4. There is no obvious safe link to the current roads/paths at the A4155-end of the new north/south shared-use path (the latter being provided on land located between the proposed Film Studio and the east side of the A404). This new path is not clearly marked on the new roundabout proposal plan, but there is no cycling provision where the path appears to join the roundabout. Perhaps cyclists are meant to join the studio exit/entrance road and then attempt to join the 2-lane roundabout. There is no obvious assistance for pedestrians or cyclists to cross the proposed studio entrance if they wish to stay off-road at this point.
5. Bisham roundabout is a well-known danger spot for traffic and the local road cycling group, Marlow Riders, says it is too unsafe to use. Creating a similar dangerous roundabout along the A4155 should be avoided.

In addition, the following improvement opportunities have not been taken:

1. Improving active travel provision on the south of the A4155: The westbound shared-use path to the south of the A4155 stops abruptly after the 40mph Little Marlow section of the road and any cyclist rejoining the road at this point rapidly finds themselves in an intimidating stretch without any warning or means of moving to safety once they arrive at this part of the road. There is the opportunity to create an extended westbound off-road track, part of which could use land in front of the proposed studio.
2. Reducing speed limits: Requests for lower speed limits on Westhorpe roundabout and this section of the A4155 have been previously rejected by Buckinghamshire Council. It would be helpful if the proposed speed limits were clearly indicated on the plan, and both Westhorpe roundabout and this A4155 section were no higher than 30mph and certainly no more than 40mph.
3. Adding off-road cycling provision to Westhorpe roundabout (cyclists are instructed to walk on the 'shared-use' path due to a low parapet).

The entrance to the proposed studio has been amended in response to the cancellation of the Westhorpe Interchange investment due to safety concerns. As such a big % modal shift is

required for the Film Studio's proposed Transport Strategy, it would make sense for Westhorpe Interchange to be redesigned with high active travel throughput in mind (active travel considerations have been ignored so far in the consideration of Westhorpe roundabout).

In summary, the transport section is not ambitious enough to drive the claimed modal shift. Where the project does have good ideas, this is not backed up with enough investment guarantees to make it likely that the modal shift will occur. Opportunities to improve the local east-west active travel along the A4155 have not been taken.

Transition Town Marlow Cycling & Walking Group therefore objects to this proposal.