



Oakley Green & Fifield Residents Association

Established 1970

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Planning Policy Unit
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
SL6 1RF

Attention: Simon Hurrell, Head of Planning and Property Services

3 January 2013

Dear Sir,

Response to '*Borough Local Plan Sites Consultation*' on sites in Bray Parish

I am writing in response to the '*Borough Local Plan Sites Consultation*' launched by the Council in November. Three sites have been identified in Bray Parish, concentrated in the area to the east of the Parish - these sites are Wyevale Garden Centre, Squires Garden Centre and Water Oakley Farm.

Summary

For this to be a meaningful consultation it is important to engage fully with the local community, and we have been very concerned at the failure of the Borough to properly notify the community around Oakley Green, Fifield and the adjoining area to the west of Windsor, being the communities closest to the nominated sites. This failure is exacerbated by the very limited consultation period.

To ensure that our community was properly consulted three local community based associations have collaborated and delivered our own flyer to over 1,000 households and businesses in the immediate area, and held two public meetings which attracted over 150 participants.

It was clear from the public meetings that the local community is overwhelmingly in favour of preserving the crucial area of Green Belt between Windsor and Maidenhead, and on the specific sites 98% of participants consider that there should be no development at the two garden centres, but it was considered that special circumstances could apply at the Water Oakley site and over 80% supported limited residential development at the site, subject to strict controls to preserve the open character of the area.

Consultation

As noted above three local community based associations - Oakley Green & Fifield Residents Association (OGFRA), Oakley Green, Fifield & District Community Association (OGAFCA) and West Windsor Residents Association (WWRA) - were concerned at the failure of the Borough to properly notify the community around Oakley Green, Fifield and adjoining area to the west of Windsor (being the communities closest to the nominated sites within Bray Parish) of the 'Borough Local Plan Sites Consultation'.

In addition to delivery of over 1,000 flyers to households and businesses in the immediate area, two public meetings were held on 8 December and 11 December which attracted over 150 participants. The vast majority of participants confirmed that they had not received the Borough leaflet on the consultation exercise or the latest edition of the Around the Royal Borough. This also raises wider concerns about the consultation process for the entire Borough Local Plan.

Representatives of Wyevale, Squires and Water Oakley Farm were also invited to the meetings, but only Farmglade (Water Oakley Farm) took up the invitation. There was extensive discussion on all three sites, and specific comments on the sites are given below. Participants were asked to record their overall views on the suitability of the sites for development at the end of the meetings and the results are summarised below:

Site	No	Yes	No opinion
Wyevale	98%	0%	2%
Squires	98%	0%	2%
Water Oakley	9%	81%	10%

Comments on sites

All three sites are designated Green Belt, and comfort had previously been drawn from the Council's stated commitment to preserving the level of Green Belt land in the Borough and to ensuring this is reflected in the Borough Local Plan. The inclusion of the subject sites appears to be on the basis that they are 'already developed' sites, a rather vague concept that does not justify inclusion. There was also considerable dissatisfaction that the sites nominated by the Borough were concentrated within a small area of the Parish.

However a distinction was made between the two garden centre sites and Water Oakley Farm, which had a mixture of existing residential dwellings and commercial activities/structures on the site, and was currently a mess.

- a) **Wyevale Garden Centre and Squires Garden Centre.** The garden centres provide demonstrable benefits to the community from the retail operations and other amenities and should be retained. The original approvals were restrictive and these businesses should either continue as currently authorised, or the sites should revert to green fields. It would set an unacceptable precedent to allow other use. A summary of comments on the garden centre sites is provided at Appendix 1.
- b) **Water Oakley Farm.** In the case of Water Oakley Farm it was recognised that special circumstances could be considered to apply and that some residential development, subject to tight constraints, could result in an overall improvement to that specific site (and contribute

towards the Borough's housing targets). The most important factor is to preserve the open nature of the area, and it is essential that a strictly observed 'building line' (distance that housing is set back from the A308) should be imposed. At the public meetings the

- c) representative from Farmglade made reference to the setting of Oakley Court Hotel. This is set back just under 150 metres from the A308 and this is considered the minimum that should apply to any residential development at the Water Oakley Farm site.

The Water Oakley Farm site has been the subject of prior discussion between Farmglade and local residents and the Down Place Residents Association (DPRA), representing residents on the adjoining land, has set out certain minimum criteria that should apply to any residential development at the site (see Appendix 2). These criteria were discussed at the meeting and had previously been presented to local residents at the Bray Parish Neighbourhood Plan (BPNP) workshop in October and were strongly supported. These criteria have been supported by the BPNP and it is expected that they will be fully reflected in the Borough Local Plan.

In conclusion

In conclusion the overwhelming view of the local community is to oppose any development at the Wyevale Garden Centre and Squires Garden Centre, but it is considered that special circumstances could be deemed to apply at the Water Oakley Farm site which could support limited residential development at the site, subject to strict controls to preserve the open nature of the area. The views expressed in this letter reflect the results of the public meetings and the views of the four local community based associations – OGFRA, OGAFCA, WWRA and DPRA.

I would be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt of this letter and confirm that the views presented herein will be given due consideration as part of the consultation exercise.

Yours faithfully,

Roderick J S Ball
Chairman
Oakley Green & Fifield Residents Association

Copy to: Cllr Leo Walters, Cllr M J Saunders, Cllr Paul McGrath
Cllr David Burbage, Cllr David Coppinger
Bray Ward Cllrs David Burbage and David Coppinger
West Windsor Cllr Cynthia Endacott
Chris Graham, Chairman of the BPNP Steering Group
Bray Parish Cllrs John Foulger, Chris Yates, Helen Howard and Michael Airey

Wyevale Garden Centre and Squires Garden Centre

Basis for objections to development of these sites:

- The sites are in the Green Belt and therefore subject to Green Belt policy.
- The Borough has categorically stated that there should be no development in the Green Belt.
- The BPNP states that “Bray Parish Green Belt is inviolable except in special circumstances where there is significant community support and benefit.”
- There is overwhelming community support against any development of these sites.
- There is significant concern that the three sites are close together within the Parish
- Both garden centres are key local community assets. As well as making gardening provision and supporting other small businesses, they are valuable meeting places for the wider community of the Borough with their restaurant/café facilities.
- The two sites are close to each other and any development could be seen as establishing precedent for the development of the land in between.
- Local infrastructure would be put under extra strain, especially with the increase in traffic.

Appendix 2

Water Oakley Farm Site

It is accepted that the site is a mess and that appropriate development could constitute an improvement. The Bray Studios development should provide a useful template in terms of the quality, density and positioning of the buildings. Minimum criteria to apply to any development are:

- All commercial activity must cease. This will reduce noise and disturbance and enhance the rural feel of the area.
- Any development should be limited to residential housing, which must be low density, up-market and “green”. Lack of public transport and amenities make the site unsuitable for low cost housing.
- The approved plan for Bray Studios should constitute a “building line” for this stretch of the A308. The present footprint on the site must not be exceeded and no buildings should be nearer the road than those in the Bray Studios plan (150m). This will help to preserve the open nature of the area.
- The A308 should be widened at the entrance to the site to provide a third right-turn lane [or alternative arrangements put in place] to improve traffic flow.
- The Phoenix Gym should be relocated to a more accessible and convenient location. If it were to be built on the site it must be behind the “building line”.
- The area between the A308 and the buildings should be appropriately landscaped with an emphasis on an “open” feel.