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# COOKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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Clerk to the Council: Mr Mark Hollands

Ms Helen Skinner  
The Planning Inspectorate  
Room 3/0 Kite Wing, Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Bristol  
BS1 6PN

7 August 2017

Dear Ms Skinner

**Appeal APP/T0355/W/17/3174346 by Berkeley Homes (Western) Ltd, Open Space Between Terrys Lane and Poundfield Lane, Cookham, Berkshire, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Application No 16/02300/FULL**

We are writing on behalf of Cookham Parish Council to note our concerns about this appeal.

For many years there has been consistent and vocal opposition from residents about development in the Poundfield area, including the large undeveloped area rising from the historic and protected Pound, to which this appeal applies. The Parish Council has supported residents and parish councillors have made clear their objection to this proposed development.

The longstanding value of this area has been noted by RBWM councillors, with the support of residents, in agreeing to designate the Poundfield area as local green space in the new borough local plan. This would go some way to recognise the importance of the area, which became green belt in July 1999. The owners of parts of the area sought to challenge this, but the green belt status was affirmed by the High Court in March 2000. A complex technical issue led to only these owners' parts of the area being marginally and reluctantly removed from the green belt by the Court of Appeal in February 2001. As well as rejecting all other issues presented by the owners, important parts of the site relevant to this appeal e.g. Poundfield Lane, were left in the green belt and the presiding Lord Justice Longmore made clear his concerns:

*48. Even though, if my Lords agree, this site will now remain outside the Green Belt, the appellants can have small cause only to rejoice. Other rigorous planning controls will still apply to the land (that, indeed, was one of Mr Village's points) and there can be little expectation of any extensive planning permissions. The Cookham Society and others interested in this area need not be too concerned. It will, I suspect, be many years yet before Stanley Spencer's view of Poundfield becomes available only in the Southampton City Art Gallery. 49. I would allow this appeal and quash the Local Plan insofar as it relates to the appellants' land.*

It is worth noting there were over 600 letters of objection, from Cookham residents and many visitors to the area, and support from the Prime Minister, Theresa May. The RBWM

Conservation Consultants and other heritage and art experts, including ten national and international institutions and galleries, all echoed local concern about the loss of local views, including the impact on those portrayed in Sir Stanley Spencer's iconic paintings. Similarly, the RBWM Public Rights of Way, Ecology and Tree Officers expanded on the need to protect the trees, habitat and much-loved views from the footpaths through the site. This development does not justify its clear and substantial harm, including the significant heritage and ecological damage that would inevitably occur.

There were also significant issues with the application, as demonstrated by the gaps in the documentation. There were claims made about heritage, public benefit, traffic and other issues which were based on poor or absent evidence.

The Parish Council's Planning Committee on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2016 was attended by more than 100 residents who raised numerous strongly held concerns about the proposal. The parish councillors voted unanimously to object in the strongest possible terms to the above application on the following grounds:

1. Contrary to RBWM's agreement that Poundfield should be designated as a Local Green Space in the Borough Local Plan, which is now at the Regulation 19 Consultation Stage;
2. Inappropriate development in the Conservation Area (CA1-6) leading to an adverse impact on the setting of heritage and listed properties and views;
3. Known existing evidence of possible archaeological remains on the site without adequate archaeological evaluation;
4. Adverse impact on and inadequate evaluation of the risk to protected trees, flora and fauna and the loss of vital habitat;
5. The views across the site have been immortalised in Stanley Spencer's paintings with international renown and their setting and environs must be preserved;
6. The access and egress to the site is not fit for purpose for the substantial increase in traffic flow and will result in congestion and deterioration in pedestrian road safety, including on a well-used walking route to local primary schools with already limited pavement capacity;
7. No evidence that the proposal meets any local housing need, noting the site is not allocated in the emerging Borough Local Plan which otherwise satisfies 100% of the Borough's objectively assessed need for additional housing;
8. The Cookham Village Design Statement Guidance VDS states categorically that the role of Poundfield in providing a green wedge separating the Pound from Station Hill area should not be compromised and the following specific guidance are ignored:
  - a. G2.1 Location and setting
  - b. G4.5 Poundfield
  - c. G6.4 Rural and semi-rural
  - d. G8.2 Cookham Rise and Station Hill
  - e. G11.1 Cookham's homecoming routes.

At the RBWM development control panel, no one was present to defend or promote the virtue of this application and it was soundly rejected.

We would urge the inspector to note local concerns and allow for the appeal to be heard in public. Hearings in secret do not allow local people to express their views and contribute to this important decision-making process. We would also hope that the inspector notes that this area is a much-loved green jewel at the heart of the community and we lose such areas at our peril.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Andrew Nye  
Chair, Cookham Parish Council

Cllr MJ Saunders  
Chair, Cookham Parish Council Planning Committee  
& RBWM Cabinet Member