

Email from Emma Fuller dated 17th April

Dear Mr Gallah

I have now had an opportunity to review the above application and I write to provide initial comments on the scheme. Unfortunately the application lacks a significant level of detail and for this reason a number of holding objections have been raised. Given the visual sensitivity of the site, as highlighted by previous inspectors and national/local landscape designations concern is also raised for the outline nature of this application. Please see comments below. Those from consultees can be viewed in full on line.

Highways:

Further information is required with regards to whether this new facility is likely to generate additional visitor's to those that currently visit the Park, or is it to compliment the existing facilities? In addition, will there be an increase in staff? Details of any increase in visitor's and staff should be quantified so that the impact of the development on the surrounding highway can be assessed. No alterations to the vehicular access or parking are proposed. The floor area has been shown on the application form as 548 sqm which is quite large.

Trees:

The current level of information provided to determine the application is insufficient, a full tree survey should be carried out in accordance with BS5837:2012 and should identify the trees both on and adjacent to the site, those trees proposed for retention and those to be lost and also provide information on the requirements of the tree protective fencing and any Arb method statements.

The following information should be provided to ensure the impact to the trees has been fully considered.

- Tree survey in accordance with BS5837:2012 & Arb implications assessment and Tree protective fencing details and an indicative landscaping plan showing an overall indication of the proposed level of landscaping for the site to mitigate losses.

Full details of the Tree officer comments can be viewed on the website.

Ecology:

Insufficient information has been submitted to assess the implications of this proposal. A holding objection has therefore been raised.

Firstly some of the site is within a Local Wildlife Site and yet no assessment of the impact of this development on the LWS has been submitted. For instance records show that nearby to this site in the LWS are Broad Leaved Helleborines and Loddon Lily. An extended phase 1 habitat survey should be undertaken as a minimum.

Secondly no information has been submitted to show what trees and shrubs will have to be removed to accommodate this application - a full tree survey is required showing which trees need to be removed.

Thirdly the application makes clear that it is the intention for one of the boats to leave the museum by water, yet no details are given of works outside the application necessary for this to happen. The fishing pond may need dredging and the footbridge over the entrance to the pond will need removing and the channel widening. The application area needs extending to cover these works.

Landscape:

A landscape Architect has not been consulted at this stage given the absence of any information upon which to assess the impact of the scheme. The site is highly visible both from within the site, for example the access road out of Beale Park and the Thames path and the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns AONB. Given its location a Landscape Impact Assessment is required. Notwithstanding this I am very concerned for the visual impact of a building of the size shown. The footprint proposed is of a significant scale.

Breeam excellent:

In accordance with policy CS15 of the Core Strategy the new building is required to achieve a Breeam excellent rating. The application should be accompanied by a pre-assessment estimator to show that this can be achieved.

Additional information required to assess the scheme:

- It is unclear from the scheme as to whether the proposal will support the existing Beale Park facilities or become an independent tourist destination incurring separate entrance costs and its own visitors. - -

- Furthermore details regarding additional employees is required.

- With regards to the movement of boats a plan is required to show the routes to be used. I am conscious that there are restrictions on the use of the lake as discussed under application 07/01717/FUL. Also please can you confirm whether any works will need to be undertaken to allow this route to be used. On site it was apparent that the water was shallow at points and it was difficult to see the route that would be taken from the river.

- Details of land/ground levels - will these be changing? Clarification is sought as to whether the building will be partly built on stilts.

- Request indicative elevations as a minimum. It is however considered that a full application would be more suitable for this scheme.

In the absence of a significant level of information I am unable to fully assess this scheme. At present a number of concerns are held for the impact of the proposal on trees, ecology, Breeam and the visual impact of the development. Furthermore, given the complexity of this scheme and the issues which need to be considered I am concerned that there is insufficient time for the above documents to be prepared and to allow for this to be assessed. For this reason I am unable to seek further information under this application and this application will be refused over the forthcoming weeks.

Please note that at present I am still waiting responses from the Environment Agency, Parish, Drainage, North Wessex Downs AONB and others. Should you decide to withdraw this application I would be happy to update you with the outstanding comments once they are received to help in preparing for the pre-application in advance of any new submission.

In my view the best way to proceed with a scheme at this site would be to withdraw this application and to enter into pre-application discussions. As part of the formal pre-application service it is requested that the above information is submitted and the necessary consultations

can be undertaken. These documents can be used as a basis for discussions. At present, in the absence of any details I am unable to comment on the likely acceptability of any building within this part of the site, you will need to demonstrate that a new building can be accommodated without any visual harm.

I appreciate that this is disappointing news however this is an extremely sensitive site and any application needs to fully recognise and address the planning issues. This has not been done by the current submission.

I would be grateful if you could advise on how you wish to proceed no later than 26th April 2013. If I have not heard from you by this time the application will be refused. Should you wish to discuss the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Emma Fuller