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HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Site Viewing Working Party held on 13 July 2023

Present

Councillor: Keast (Chairman)

Councillors: Linger, Patel, Rason and Weeks

Officers: Jonathan Deacon, Democratic Services Officer
Ernest Lam, Democratic Services Officer
Tina Pickup, Senior Planning Officer
Steve Weaver, Development Manager

36 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Coates and Patrick.

37 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interests relating to matters on the agenda.

38 APP/23/00004 - Pavilion, Bidbury Lane, Havant

Proposal: Temporary use of land to carry out ground investigation works comprising the drilling of 2 no. boreholes and the installation of headworks and equipment to monitor ground conditions for a period of 18 months including mobilisation, decommissioning and full restoration periods.

The site was viewed in view of a request by a ward member that this application be determined by the Planning Committee.

The Working Party received a report by the Executive Head of Place.

The Working Party viewed the site, the subject of the application, to assess whether there were any additional matters that should be considered by the Planning Committee.

RESOLVED that, based on the site inspection and information available at the time, no additional information be provided to the Planning Committee.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 1.43 pm

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Chairman

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Planning application for the drilling of 2no. test boreholes at the Bedhampton Mariners Cricket Club, Bidbury Lane

Planning Committee Deputation – 20th July 2023 5pm

Planning Application Reference:

APP/23/00004

July 2023

Issue and Revision Record

Revision	Date	Originator	Checker	Approver
1.0	18/07/2023	Lawrence Blyth	Matthew Sharpe	Ian Frost



Deputation for planning application APP/23/00004

Chair and members of the Planning Committee – thank-you for allowing me to speak in relation to this planning application. My name is Lawrence Blyth and I am speaking on behalf of the applicant, Southern Water. The case officer has already provided a clear overview of the scheme, and members of the local community have raised issues about the proposed boreholes.

I wanted to highlight a number of points, which should help provide some further context and background for you in considering this application.

The two proposed boreholes are needed for ground investigations in relation to Southern Water's proposed pipeline that will run from a new facility proposed to be built on land close to Budds Farm up to Havant Thicket Reservoir. The data from the boreholes will help us understand the underlying geology and ground water conditions which will inform the detailed routing of the pipeline.

As part of the wider surveys and investigations for Southern Water's Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Project, 102 boreholes have been, and are currently being, installed in locations all along the proposed pipeline routes. Almost all of these boreholes are being installed as permitted development as they are required for less than 6 months. The reason that we need planning permission for the two boreholes at Bidbury Mead Park is because they are required for 12 months to allow for longer term monitoring linked to the groundwater levels and pressures which fluctuate much more in these locations so we need a complete year of data to better determine the character of the ground and inform the tunnelling design.

The temporary boreholes are to be drilled by using both mobile and tracked drilling rigs. These will either be towed by a 4x4 or manoeuvred to the drilling location via a special temporary surface called a Trakmat, to protect the sports fields. It is expected to take no more than 3 weeks to drill each borehole. We will only work on one borehole at a time to minimise disruption to the park.

Once each borehole has been installed, the drilling rig will be removed and the small compounds reduced in size to protect the above ground headworks, which will remain in place for 12 months.

We have sited the boreholes, in agreement with the Council's Estates department and Cricket Club, so that the compounds will not impact on the use of the Cricket field and the timing of works will mean that both boreholes will be drilled before the football season commences in October.

It will still be possible for the park to be accessed by the public and the sports clubs throughout the construction, monitoring and restoration phases.

Only the small compounds will be fenced off from the public. Once monitoring is complete, the headworks and fencing will be completely removed and the ground fully restored to its original condition.

Whilst the drillings rigs are in place, the temporary compounds will include mobile CCTV equipment which will provide 24/7 monitoring to deter vandalism and damage to the equipment.

During the mobilisation period for the first borehole, a small area of land about the size of 3 parking spaces would be fenced off for approximately 8 days to allow delivery and set up of the equipment for the compounds.

We are also aware that discussions are ongoing between the Council and Southern Water regarding the wider Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Project and we are committed to continuing this dialogue with you. We want to reassure you that allowing these boreholes in no way pre-empts any decision making on that wider project, which still needs to go through further public consultation next year and a separate planning consent process.

The proposals before you today are simply to enable the investigations necessary to inform the designs and assessments for that project.

We have undertaken a significant amount of pre-application discussions with your officers and the estates team in relation to the design and siting of the works. This has sought to minimise any impacts and disruption and ensure that the scheme is acceptable in planning terms. As your officers have indicated, the scheme is consistent with all relevant planning policies and have recommended that the scheme is granted planning permission.

We are therefore respectfully asking that the Planning Committee approves this application today.

Thank-you.

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This planning application to drill two boreholes in a public park is premature; we don't yet know what the Secretary of State is going to decide or even when he is going to decide. Bidbury is a much-loved park used by many over the year but especially in the summer months: children, dog walkers, cricketers, footballers and people just out enjoying it. Why cause disruption in the usage of this park when it might not be necessary? Children and contractors with heavy drilling equipment do not mix, dogs running free and contractors with heavy drilling equipment do not mix, people enjoying a walk in the park and contractors with heavy drilling equipment do not mix. I am well aware that saying the application is premature is not a valid planning reason but this committee must be able to take into account the public interest – otherwise what is the point in involving councillors in decisions? Especially when the boreholes may not even be necessary.

Since this application was submitted Portsmouth Water and Southern Water have announced they're working on a joint one tunnel approach which means the reservoir will be used for drinking water in our area – replacing the beautiful spring water we have used since time immemorial. Unsurprisingly, this has not gone down well with the public (including me, if you haven't guessed), none of us want water shortages but there is a strong local feeling that the reservoir should be used to ameliorate this without degrading local drinking water. And now this committee is being asked to connive at this disgraceful intent by approving the drilling of bore hole before the decision is even taken. Given the above I believe the planning application is premature as it will only be needed if Southern Water are given permission by the national government to go ahead with the contentious and locally very unpopular plan. It may well be that a decision is deferred till after the next general election and who knows what the view of an incoming government will be – it may have a very small majority and be unwilling to court unpopularity; we just don't know. The digging of these bore holes may well be a waste of time and yet people will have to suffer the considerable disruption that is inevitably involved.

Please refuse this application.

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Deputation on APP/23/00004 - Pavilion, Bidbury Lane, Havant, to Planning Committee Meeting, 20th July 2023

The work proposed in this planning application, to drill 2 boreholes in Bidbury Mead Park, is part of the Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Project, which is Southern Water's plan to build a water processing plant at Broadmarsh. The plant will only be needed if Southern Water are given permission by national government to go ahead with the contentious, and locally very unpopular, plan to store recycled effluent in Havant Thicket Reservoir.

Since this application was submitted, Portsmouth Water and Southern Water have announced that they are working on a joint 'one tunnel' approach which means that the reservoir will be finished later than originally planned. The new completion date will be confirmed once the seasonal nature of the required earthworks, that can only take place during dry summer months, as well as the reservoir filling that requires a surplus of spring water in the winter has been considered and planning and regulatory approvals are in place,

The proposal to use Havant Thicket Reservoir to store anything other than water from our local springs took us all by surprise, and the full details are not yet known. Southern Water say that the reservoir is the only viable solution to the chronic shortage of water across Southern England but have not provided the evidence to back up this claim. None of us want water shortages, but there is a strong feeling locally that there are alternative ways to solve the problem and the case has not yet been made for water recycling. Furthermore, Bedhampton residents have concerns about the proposed location of the water processing plant on the former landfill site at Broadmarsh.

Given the above, I believe planning application APP/23/00004 - Pavilion, Bidbury Lane, Havant) is premature. Bidbury Mead is a much-loved community asset, however carefully the boreholes are dug they will detract from the pleasure of using the park. Havant residents should not have to put up with a degraded leisure area while it is not clear that the work will ever be needed.

Please refuse permission for this project.

Cllr Philippa Gray

Bedhampton Ward

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