

**LOCATION:** LAND SOUTH WEST OF FRITH HILL ROAD AND, DEEPCUT BRIDGE ROAD, DEEPCUT, CAMBERLEY

**PROPOSAL:** Change of use of use of land/hardstanding for film-making, including construction of sets and use of land for filming, stationing of support services, associated storage and parking for a temporary period. (Amended plan rec'd 09/01/2019.) (Additional information & plans Rec'd 17.01.2018)

**TYPE:** Full Planning Application

**APPLICANT:** Ms Sharma

**OFFICER:** Duncan Carty

**This application would normally be determined under the Council's Scheme of Delegation, however, it is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee at the request of Cllr Deach because of concerns about the impact upon neighbouring residential properties.**

**RECOMMENDATION: GRANT, subject to conditions**

## 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This application relates to land on the west side of Deepcut Bridge Road and south of Frith Hill Road. The land extends to 45 hectares and is Ministry of Defence land. The proposal is to change the use of land for film making including the construction of sets and the use of land for filming, stationing of support services, associated storage and parking for a temporary period until the end of September 2019; with the site cleared by the end of October 2019.
- 1.2 There is no objection to the proposal in respect of local character and highway safety. Due to the temporary nature of the proposal, and given that conditions can be imposed to control this, it would provide limited harm to the countryside and residential amenity. In addition, the proposal would provide clear social and economic benefits to the Borough. As such, the application is recommended for approval.

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site falls within the countryside beyond the Green Belt. The site relates to land on the west side of Deepcut Bridge Road and south of Frith Hill Road, a gated access road onto military land, which is used on an informal basis by walkers. The land extends to 45 hectares and is Ministry of Defence land. The residential properties in Dettingen estate face towards the application site from the east side of Deepcut Bridge Road. The north boundary of the site is with Frith Hill Road, a private road/footpath, and countryside (woodland) beyond with the remaining site boundaries also with countryside (woodland).

- 2.2 The application site is on land previously used as barracks (closed with buildings removed in the 1970's) with areas of hardstanding surrounded by predominately coniferous woodland. The site has more recently been used for military exercises. There has recently been some minor tree works at the edge of the hardstanding areas and the site has been fenced with a security hut at the site entrance. The application site is relatively flat, but with the rear (south west) part of the site on lower land.
- 2.3 Access to the site is from an access immediately south of the southern roundabout junction into the Alma Dettingen estate.

### **3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 3.1 SU/08/0275 – Temporary change of use to allow hard standing to be used for storage and distribution of motor vehicles for a period of four months (on part of the application site).  
*Refused in June 2005 due to the impact of the development on the countryside.*

### **4.0 THE PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 This application relates to the change the use of land for film making including the construction of film sets and the use of land for filming, stationing of support services, associated storage and parking with security (heras) fencing for a temporary period. It is proposed that the filming takes place from March to September 2019 with site restoration by the end of October 2019.
- 4.2 The proposal is required to be provided for a new Netflix series regarding the Arthurian legend and would include the provision of sets including the construction of a medieval village/town, market square and port with a viking ship with the additional provision of a green screen. This would be provided in the middle of the application site with the provision of back-up facilities, including welfare accommodation, at the rear.
- 4.3 The general height of sets would be about 6-7 metres, but with a maximum height of about 14 metres, which is lower than the general tree canopy height, around the hardstanding areas. The site is to be completely enclosed by temporary "Heras" type fencing which stand upon feet, rather than fixed to the ground, with the retention of the security hut and external lighting. The external lighting is in the form of 4 no lighting towers extendable up to a height of 8.5 metres and directed towards the sets (i.e. filming) including one placed close to the access point (the nearest point at 100 metres from the residential properties).
- 4.4 The proposal would be predominantly used during summer daylight hours (from 07:00 to 18:00 hours), but there may be a requirement for very limited night shoots (from 18.00 to 02:00 hours). The back-up facilities would be required from 05:00 until 18:00 hours on filming days. There are not proposed to be any noise sequences filmed (e.g. gun fire or explosions) but there may be some "controlled" fire sequences shot; which accords with the medieval setting of the TV series.
- 4.5 Parking would be provided towards the site frontage with some crew and actors staying in the local area and travelling to the site on a daily basis. The remainder will travel to site via minibus or cars from the London area. There will be no overnight accommodation (except related to the security of the site). The site has capacity for 400 cars and 15 light goods vehicles. The movements per day is estimated to be as follows:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Vehicles</b>
Preparation/Post filming (Strike)	Cars/vans: 30-40 Trucks: 5-10 per day Plant: 2-3 per day
Filming	Cars: 120-150 per day Mini-buses: 8-12 Technical vehicles: 5-10

There will also be one-off deliveries and collections, at the start and end of the process, for the portakabins, site offices, filming equipment, etc. The level of activity within the site, including the number of people on the site, would be expected to vary during this process as below:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Activity level</b>
Preparation	40-60 people from site including the groundwork team and construction department
Filming	120-150 people on site from all departments
Post filming (Strike)	60 people on site, including the groundwork team; and art, locations and construction departments

- 4.6 The applicant has provided a traffic management plan which indicates signage close to the site access warning traffic on Deepcut Bridge Road of slow moving traffic in and out of the site, and a process of traffic management when larger quantities of vehicles need to exit the site at any one time which is to be marshalled by security staff. A conditions survey of the access points has also been provided.

## **5.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

- 5.1 County Highway Authority No objection in principle but have requested further details of traffic management, etc., which have been provided (see Paragraph 4.5 above) and are currently under consideration. Any formal comments will be reported on the Committee Update.
- 5.2 Tree Officer No objections.
- 5.3 Surrey Wildlife Trust No comments received to date. Any formal comments will be reported on the Committee Update.
- 5.4 Environmental Health No objections.

5.5 Scientific Officer No objections, subject to condition.

## 6.0 REPRESENTATION

6.1 At the time of preparation of this report, no representations in support or raising an objection have been received.

## 7.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATION

7.1 The application site falls within the Countryside beyond the Green Belt. The application is therefore considered against Policies CP1, CP2, CP8, CP11, CP14, DM9 and DM11 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2012 (CSDMP); and the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 (NPPF).

7.2 The main issues to be addressed are as follows:

- Impact on the countryside character and social and economic benefits of the proposal;
- Impact on residential amenity;
- Impact on highway safety; and
- Impact on ecology.

### 7.3 Impact on the countryside character and social and economic benefits of the proposal

7.3.1 Policy CP1 of the CSDMP sets out the spatial strategy for the Borough. The strategy indicates that new development will come forward largely through the redevelopment of previously developed land in the western part of the Borough. The application site falls within the western part of the Borough but the land has been cleared of development for a significant period of time; but has been used for military exercises. Annex 2 of the NPPF defines previously developed land; with exceptions include *“land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed structure have blended into the landscape.”* In this case, there is no evidence of the previous structures on the site and, as such, the land would not be considered to be previously developed land.

7.3.2 Policy CP1 of the CSDMP also indicates that development in the countryside beyond the Green Belt which results in the coalescence of settlements will not be permitted. The proposal would be provided within a gap between the settlements of Deepcut and Frimley (reducing the minimum developed gap in this location from 1,200 metres to 900 metres between Alma Dettingen and St Catherines Road, but with smaller gaps (e.g. around 700 metres retained between St Catherines Road and Blackdown Road) nearby. However, noting the limited time period for this development/use, it is not considered that this proposal would result in any long term harm to this countryside gap.

7.3.3 Paragraph 170 of the NPPF indicates that in assessing proposal, the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised; and paragraph 5.6 supporting Policy CP12 reiterates this. The application site, as indicated above, relates to hardstanding areas, surrounded by woodland. It is clear that there would be limited views of the proposal from the surrounding countryside. However, the proposal would provide substantial built form in this location which would result in significant harm to the countryside character. However, taking into consideration the limited period for the use

(and associated works/development), it is considered that the proposal would provide a limited harm to the countryside in the longer term.

- 7.3.4 Paragraphs 7 and 8 of the NPPF indicate that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and that in achieving sustainable development, there are three overarching objectives: the economic objective, the social objective and the environmental objective. Whilst there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, this does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. As indicated above, the proposal would result in a limited harm to the countryside (i.e. the environmental objective). It is therefore incumbent upon the Local Planning Authority to assess the social and economic impacts of the development; against this limited harm in environmental terms i.e. the "planning balance".
- 7.3.5 This application has been supported by a planning statement which indicates the economic benefits of this proposal. The proposal would provide for filming which can provide a considerable economic spin-off benefits to an area. The planning statement indicates that the film proposed for the application site will employ upwards of 1,000 British cast and crew across a number of sites with up to 200 people likely to be involved on this specific site. It is estimated that for every 10 jobs directly employed by the core UK film industry, another 10 are supported indirectly in the supply chain and from the induced spending of those directly or indirectly employed by the core film industry. During the construction and filming the staff and production company will use local facilities and services; including the need for hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation. This will boost to the local economy in Surrey Heath and provide local employment. It is predicted that approximately £500,000 will be spent within the local area alone, which will feed into the local economy.
- 7.3.6 As such, it is considered that the social and economic benefits of the current proposal is a factor which weighs heavily in support of this proposal. In terms of the planning balance between the social and economic benefits and any environmental disbenefits of the proposal, and noting the limited the period proposed, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable on these grounds.
- 7.3.7 It is therefore considered that whilst the proposal would result in limited harm in the countryside, the social and economic benefits outweigh this harm and the proposal can be supported on these grounds, complying with Policy CP1 of the CSDMP and the NPPF.

#### **7.4 Impact on residential amenity**

- 7.4.1 The proposed use would include the main activity (set building and filming) to take place in the middle of the site, and would be set over 100 metres from the front walls of the nearest residential properties on the Alma Dettingen residential estate; with the main set area set away about 200 metres. The back-up facilities would be positioned further to the rear and on lower land and set about 300 metres from these nearest residential properties. The site is also wooded to the front with more limited views into the site from these properties. The external lighting is to be provided below the general tree canopy height surrounding the site and would only be used for a limited time for dayshoots (only required at the start and end of the filming until 7pm.). As such, and noting the level of separation from residential properties, it is not considered that the presence of the construction (sets and back-up facilities) and external lighting would have any significant impact upon residential amenities.
- 7.4.2 The proposal would increase activity on the site. The amount of activity is set out in the economic benefits below but it will mostly be restricted to working hours. Noting the higher background noise levels for the adjoining highway (Deepcut Bridge Road) and

separation distances, as well as the limited time period concerned, it is not considered that the proposal would have any significant impact upon residential amenity.

- 7.4.3 The applicant has confirmed that there may be a requirement for limited number of night shoots. These are expected to extend until about 2am with vehicles leaving the site. The activity and lighting could cause some disturbance to residential properties and controls by condition are required to mitigate such effects. These controls include a maximum height of external lighting; and that the lighting is directed downwards so that it does not extend or is lit above the general tree canopy. The Environmental Health Officer supports this approach.
- 7.4.4 Under these circumstances, the proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable on these grounds complying with Policy DM9 of the CSDMP.

## **7.5 Impact on highway safety**

- 7.5.1 The proposal would provide informal accommodation for the parking of vehicles to the front of the site to support the use, with the access being provided from an existing access to the site, just south of the southern roundabout junction with the Alma Dettingen residential estate. The planning statement confirms that some of the crew and actors would stay in the local area and travel to the site on a daily basis. The remainder will travel to site via minibus or cars from the London area.
- 7.5.2 The applicant has indicated in their planning statement that if it proves necessary, a traffic management plan can be put in place to manage traffic movements to ensure the free flow of traffic on the local highway network. These details have been provided (see paragraph 4.5 above). Whilst the County Highway Authority has raised no objections, in principle, this impact is to be assessed with any further comments provided as an update to this report. Due to the hours of operation, it is considered likely that the largest number of traffic movements (as indicated in the table at paragraph 4.3 above) would relate to larger number of cars during filming, but a management of the traffic flow (by marshalling) at peak movements of the site is to be provided. However, the most significant traffic movements would however occur outside peak traffic hours due to the earlier start (before morning traffic peaks) and later ending (after evening traffic peaks) of filming at the site.
- 7.5.3 However, the comments of the County Highway Authority on the traffic management details are awaited and, subject to their comments, no objections are raised to the proposal on parking or highway safety grounds with the proposal complying with Policies CP11 and DM11 of the CSDMP; and the NPPF.

## **7.6 Impact on ecology**

- 7.6.1 The proposal would provide built form and activity in a countryside location. Whilst the operations are on existing hardstanding, there may be some impact on the ecology within the adjoining woodland. The comments of the Surrey Wildlife Trust are awaited and, subject to their comments, no objections are raised to the proposal on ecology grounds with the proposal complying with Policy CP14 of the CSDMP; and the NPPF.

## **7.7 Other matters**

- 7.7.1 The proposal relates to land previously developed for which the level of land contamination is not known. Whilst the works are not likely to involve site excavations and the stationing of structures on existing hardstanding, the Scientific Officer has advised the taking of a cautionary approach such that a process needs to be undertaken if any contamination is encountered or suspected during the operations relating to this use. This process is set out by Condition. Under these circumstances, no objections

are raised to the proposal on these grounds with the proposal complying with the NPPF.

- 7.7.2 It is noted that an earlier proposal on part of the application site for the storage of cars for a limited period (under SU/08/0275) was considered to be harmful to the countryside. The policies in force at the time of the consideration of that proposal (within the 2000 Local Plan) were more restrictive for development in the countryside. The external lighting was more extensive and required for a 24 hour operation. In addition, the economic benefits of that proposal (relating to the temporary expansion of an existing business in the borough) would not have resulted in the economic benefits as set out in Paragraph 7.3.5 above and the NPPF, which has replaced national policy in place at that time, requires the planning balance between environmental, social and economic factors needs to be addressed in planning decision making.
- 7.7.3 Noting the temporary nature of the proposal, a condition to limit the use and operations as well as securing the reinstatement of land is to be imposed.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The current proposal would provide limited harm to the countryside; but there are clear social and economic benefits of the proposal which it is considered outweigh this harm, particularly noting the limited period of the proposed use. It is therefore considered to be acceptable on this ground.
- 8.2 The current proposal is considered to be acceptable on residential amenity and land contamination grounds. Subject to the comments of key consultees, no objections are raised on highway safety and ecological grounds. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

## **9.0 POSITIVE/PROACTIVE WORKING**

In assessing this application, officers have worked with the applicant in a positive, creative and proactive manner consistent with the requirements of paragraphs 38-41 of the NPPF. This included the following:

- a) Provided or made available pre application advice to seek to resolve problems before the application was submitted and to foster the delivery of sustainable development.
- b) Provided feedback through the validation process including information on the website, to correct identified problems to ensure that the application was correct and could be registered.

## **10.0 RECOMMENDATION**

GRANT subject to the following conditions:-

1. The proposed development shall be built in accordance with the following approved plans: Central layout plan and Site plan, unless the prior written approval has been obtained from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning and as advised in ID.17a of the Planning Practice Guidance.

2. The permission hereby granted shall limit the approved use to the period expiring on the 30 September 2019 on or before which date the use hereby permitted shall be discontinued and the land reinstated to the reasonable satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority by 31 October 2019.

Reason: To protect the visual amenity of the Countryside character and to comply with Policies CP1, CP2 and DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012; and the National Planning Policy Framework 2018.

3. A strategy for monitoring and reporting on ground conditions and actions shall be taken should there be the discovery of contamination will be adopted. If, prior to or during development, ground contamination is suspected or manifests itself then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until the developer has submitted an appropriate remediation strategy to the Local Planning Authority and the written approval of the Local Planning Authority has been received. The remediation strategy should detail how the contamination shall be managed and any agreed remediation verified.

Reason: To comply with Paragraphs 178-180 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 which requires development to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from unacceptable levels of contamination.

4. The external lighting provided for this temporary use shall be at no greater height than 8.5 metres and the lighting shall be directed downwards unless the prior written approval has been obtained from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity and to comply with Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012.

5. The traffic management for the use shall be undertaken in accordance with the Appendix 2 - Traffic Information, vehicle routing plans and signage plan provided on 19 January 2019; unless the prior written approval has been obtained from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to comply with Policies CP11 and DM11 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2018.

#### Informative(s)

1. Notwithstanding any permission granted under the Planning Acts, no signs, devices or other apparatus may be erected within the limits of the highway without the express approval of the Highway Authority.