

Alison Webster
Planning Department
Gravesham Borough Council
Civic Centre
Windmill Street
Gravesend
Kent
DA12 1AU

Our ref: JAL/19-02858
Your ref: TBC
Date: 11 July 2023

Dear Alison

Re: Gravesend - Former Tollgate Hotel, Land at the junction of the A2 with Wrotham Road

As you are aware, I work on behalf of BP Oil (UK) Ltd in respect of the above site (Site), and you will recall that we sought pre-application advice relative to the site about a year ago. As reviewed during the course of those discussions, the site has a lengthy planning history, reviewed in summary later in this letter, relating to proposals for a petrol filling station and, initially a drive-thru unit.

However, as confirmed last year, my client's intentions for the Site have now evolved to reflect the changing road vehicle market and the to underscore the importance of according with and helping deliver the government's net zero policy agenda. By way of an update, these aspirations remain, however the proposals have required significant review both in the interests of ensuring that the proposals work practically, are viable and address all necessary planning issues.

In this context my client's aspirations are still to provide an electric vehicle (EV) charging hub at the site, together with a petrol offer to meet current customer requirements. It should also be noted that it remains BP's intention to remove the petrol offer element of the facility in the future once emerging trends in the personal motor vehicle market allow, and to replace it with additional EV charging spaces (and the scheme is still specifically designed to allow for this). Beyond this, the scheme has evolved a little since it was last reviewed by you, however, and the proposal is outlined in more detail in the Proposal section of this letter.

In this context, I write to you to by way of further engagement in advance of a planning application, and to request a meeting to update you on my client's aspirations at this key site..

The Site

By way of a recap, the Site extends to approximately 1.01 hectares and is located to the north of, and alongside, the eastbound slip road on to the A2 dual carriageway. As previously

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confirmed, it lies adjacent to the A2's junction with Wrotham Road, and benefits from an existing access onto the northern roundabout serving the junction. It is therefore easily accessible to traffic travelling in both directions on the A2, and north and southbound traffic entering and leaving Gravesend on Wrotham Road.

Though in the Green Belt within the current Development Plan, the site accommodates a number of vacant but maintained buildings which remain capable of being brought back into use, including:

- A single and two storey building of a mock-tudor style in the north-west corner of the site;
- A two storey "L" shaped flat roofed block, accommodating the former hotel rooms, adjoining the northern and eastern boundaries of the site, and
- Two single storey buildings centrally located within the site.

The rest of the site accommodates maintained hardstanding, other paved areas and amenity landscaping, all in the curtilage of the above buildings, and largely enclosed by them.

The existing layout of the Site is illustrated on the Existing Site Plan appended to this letter.

Planning History

The site has a lengthy planning history relating to its previous use as a hotel, with various new buildings and extensions in the 1960's and 1970's. Further planning applications were made in 1990 and 2001 for two storey and three storey extensions, but not implemented at the Site.

The use of the site as temporary site offices for the A2 widening scheme was granted permission in 2006 and the Site was used for that purpose until the opening of the new A2 route in 2009.

Over the last 10 years the following applications have been submitted to the council in relation to the Site:

- A planning application (reference number 20131018) for a petrol filling station and a drive thru, originally submitted in November 2013, granted planning permission twice, but twice quashed and finally withdrawn in November 2017.
- A second planning application (reference number 20160215) for a petrol filling station only, originally submitted in March 2016, granted in February 2018 but subsequently quashed, and then subject to an appeal against non-determination in March 2019 (with the appeal being withdrawn in January 2020).

In light of this extensive planning history, my client remains keen to engage with the local authority in pre-application discussion, in this case to update the local authority on my client's aspirations in light of the passage of time since the previous pre-application approach.

The Proposal

On 12 February 2020 BP announced its new ambition to become a net zero company by 2050 which covers BP's greenhouse gas emissions from its retail operations worldwide, as well as the carbon in the oil and gas that it produces. In this context, and as confirmed during the last pre-application approach, BP's aspirations have moved way from a petrol filling station at the site, towards an EV Charging Hub, with an initial but temporary petrol offer.

In this context, please find attached drawings and elevations of BP's most recent iteration of its aspirations, which provide further preliminary details and visuals of the proposal:

- Drawing ref: 13979/20 - Existing Site Plan
- Drawing ref: 13979/22 Rev D - Proposed Site Plan
- Drawing ref: 13979/23 Rev B - Proposed Site Elevations
- Drawing ref: 13979/23-1 Rev A- Proposed Shop Elevations
- Drawing ref: 13979/OS - Site Location Plan

However, as with the previous pre-application approach, when reviewing the plans it should be noted that the final design and/or location of the individual elements of the proposed scheme may be subject to change as a result of specialist consultancy and local authority feedback.

The main elements of the proposal can be summarised are broadly as per the previous pre-application package, as follows:

- Demolition of all existing buildings on the Site, in favour of an EV Hub (albeit with an initial petrol offer);
- Provision of 24 Electric Vehicle Charging points;
- Erection of a single storey building that is likely to be used as a forecourt shop and café area (similar to a petrol filling station) with wraparound canopy;
- Erection of six petrol/diesel fuel pump islands in a "domino six" layout, with a canopy above and fuel storage tanks below, all to the rear of the amenity building,;
- Provision of two air/water bays;
- Provision of customer parking to the front on the retail building;
- Construction of vehicle access and circulation areas, with access to the site via the existing (albeit improved) crossover;
- Provision of supporting infrastructure such as a sub-station and plant room; and
- Perimeter landscaped areas, including new trees, to provide a soft interface between the development proposal and its wider context.

Planning Context

The Development Plan for the Site is the same as that adopted during the previous pre-application approach, and consists of the:

- Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014);
- Remaining Saved Policies of the Local Plan First Review (1994), and
- Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-2030 (July 2016)

Within the Development Plan, the site is confirmed as lying within the Green Belt.

In 2020, the Local Authority undertook a consultation to review the Development Plan, referred to as the Emerging Local Plan Partial Review, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Regulation 18 - Stage 2) consultation. Within this document, the site is proposed to be allocated for commercial development (reference GB07). It is understood that further consultation will take place on the emerging plan later this year.

Purpose of high-level pre-application approach

In the context of the above, I request a meeting with you and your colleagues to discuss the changes to the scheme (which relate mainly to a change in appearance), and provide an opportunity for both the applicant and the local authority to update one another relative to the scheme proposals and timescales to application.

Following the meeting, BP and its consultancy team will take the feedback received into account, and at this stage still envisage submitting a more detailed pre-application package (for which it is accepted a fee would be applied) to secure more detailed views in advance of the formal submission of a planning application.

I would be grateful if you could contact me at the earliest possible juncture to confirm that you will still be dealing with this site, and advise availability for a meeting.

Yours sincerely

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