

## **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**10 JANUARY 2023**

Present: Councillor P Jeffree (Chair)  
Councillor R Martins (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors N Bell, J Pattinson, A Saffery, G Saffery, R Smith,  
S Trebar and M Watkin

Also present: Emily Stillman, Warner Bros Studios Leavesden  
Romek Kowalewski, Local Resident

Officers: Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy  
Strategic Applications Manager  
Democratic Services Officer (BR)

### **Conduct of the meeting**

The committee will take items in the following order:

1. All items where people wish to speak and have registered with Democratic Services.
2. Any remaining items the committee agrees can be determined without further debate.
3. Those applications which the committee wishes to discuss in detail.

### **35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies were received.

### **36 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

No disclosures of interest were made.

### **37 MINUTES**

The minutes from the meeting on 6 December 2022 were approved and signed.

**22/00322/FULM WARNER BROS. STUDIOS LEAVESDEN, WARNER DRIVE,  
WATFORD HERTFORDSHIRE WD25 7LP**

The Strategic Applications Manager delivered her report and presented her update sheet to the committee.

The Chair thanked the officer for her report and invited Romek Kowalewski to speak against the development. He stated that he was not against the entire development but rather specific aspects. His first objection was to the Island Site becoming a carpark, Mr Kowalewski claimed that building a car park on green land went against the Green Travel Plan and was not justified. He continued to speak stating he objected to the number of tourists the site attracted especially as this had been steadily increasing. He further objected to the cutting down of an oak tree.

The other main area of concern for Mr Kowalewski related to water; both the potential effects on water pressure in the area and that there was no clear plan for rain water run off or increased ground water due to the added concrete ground replacing green land.

The Chair thanked Mr Kowalewski for his comments and invited the committee to ask questions of the Strategic Applications Manager in relation to his comments.

The Officer clarified points around both water pressure stating that both Thames Water and Affinity Water – the two local water suppliers – had been consulted and not raised objection in respect of the pressure situation and in this instance were the experts on the matter. She continued to discuss how the plans outlined on how to deal with the rain water and surface water runoff and that this met the required standards. Further reports with additional detail of management of this would be on this made prior to the construction period. The Greenbelt issue was also briefly addressed, clarifying that the Greenbelt area was part of Three Rivers although the same procedures would be followed in respect of the determination of the application.

The Chair thanked the officer for her input and invited Emily Stillman from Warner Bros to talk on behalf of the development.

Emily Stillman introduced herself to the committee and thanked them for their time. She spoke about Warner Bros and their history in Watford. She went on to discuss the changes in the entertainment industry and the move towards high budget television. The new site would be designed to cater to this industry demand and would provide around

1600 additional jobs directly on site as well as many more work opportunities working in cooperation with other organisation around the Watford area. It would boost the local economy by around £85 million.

She went on to discuss some of Warner Bros' other local connections and partnership work including charity work with the likes of the Peace Hospice and others, as well the their film-themed childcare and connections with both Hertfordshire University and West Herts College. Ms Stillman discussed opportunities for people outside of the film industry to retrain to work within it and talked about the dedicated nature area that would be open to the public as part of the new development.

The Chair thanked her for her input and added his own comments stating that Warner Bros brought a lot to the area economically and held tremendous opportunities for the town. However, he pointed out that these enormous benefits should not override normal planning considerations, emphasising that planning was about balance and noted that the Green Belt area was in Three Rivers. He believed the only downside of the development was that the exterior building were quite dull with all the excitement inside.

The Chair then invited the committee to comment.

It was mentioned that any development of this size and scale would have some issues, the main ones viewed here were the effect on the Green Belt area but it was acknowledged that this was not an issue for Watford. It was also asked if anything more would be done about the potential issue with the water pressure.

The Strategic Applications Officer stated that they would continue to work with experts from the water suppliers, but they raised no objections or concerns about the water.

The question was also raised around the use of HGVs being used where they should not be, it was pointed out that this is an issue for county council and highways. Further, as detailed in the submitted Transport assessment, having previously been investigated by the applicant, it was found that a number of the vehicles misusing the area were not related to the studio.

Committee members also recognised the benefits of the economic growth that would come with the development.

There was understanding of residents' concerns in relation to the carpark and the question was raised if excess spaces could be used by local residents. It was stated while that was not a planning condition that

could be imposed however Warner Bros were present and could hear and consider the idea.

The Chair moved for the committee to vote on the officer's recommendation.

On being put to the committee the application was approved.

RESOLVED –

The application be referred to the Secretary of State for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021.

Provided the Secretary of State does not call in the application for his/her own determination, the application be delegated to the Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy to grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. Time Limit

The development to which this permission relates shall be begun within a period of three years commencing on the date of this permission.

2. Approved Drawings and Documents

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings and documents:

MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-00-DR-A-00001  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-00-DR-A-00002 – P6  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-00-DR-A-00003 – P5  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-SX-DR-A-00005 – P3  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-SX-DR-A-00007 – P1  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-SX-DR-A-00009 – P1

MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-00-DR-A-10000  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-01-DR-A-10001  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-02-DR-A-10002  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-03-DR-A-10003  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-R1-DR-A-10004  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-EL-DR-A-20000  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-SX-DR-A-30000  
MERLIN-DNA-2E-00-DR-A-10100  
MERLIN-DNA-2E-01-DR-A-10101  
MERLIN-DNA-2E-02-DR-A-10102  
MERLIN-DNA-2E-R1-DR-A-10103  
MERLIN-DNA-2E-EL-DR-A-20100  
MERLIN-DNA-2E-SX-DR-A-30100

MERLIN-DNA-2F-00-DR-A-10200  
MERLIN-DNA-2F-01-DR-A-10201  
MERLIN-DNA-2F-02-DR-A-10202  
MERLIN-DNA-2F-R1-DR-A-10203  
MERLIN-DNA-2F-EL-DR-A-20200  
MERLIN-DNA-2F-SX-DR-A-30200  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-00-DR-A-10300  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-01-DR-A-10301  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-02-DR-A-10302  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-03-DR-A-10303  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-R1-DR-A-10304 – P2  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-EL-DR-A-20300 – P2  
MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-SX-DR-A-30300 – P2  
MERLIN-DNA-73-00-DR-A-10400  
MERLIN-DNA-73-M1-DR-A-10401  
MERLIN-DNA-73-01-DR-A-10402  
MERLIN-DNA-73-R1-DR-A-10403  
MERLIN-DNA-73-EL-DR-A-20400  
MERLIN-DNA-73-SX-DR-A-30400  
MERLIN-DNA-72-00-DR-A-10400  
MERLIN-DNA-72-M1-DR-A-10401  
MERLIN-DNA-72-01-DR-A-10402  
MERLIN-DNA-72-R1-DR-A-10403  
MERLIN-DNA-72-EL-DR-A-20400  
MERLIN-DNA-72-SX-DR-A-30400  
MERLIN-DNA-18-00-DR-A-01400  
MERLIN-DNA-18-01-DR-A-01401  
MERLIN-DNA-18-R1-DR-A-01402  
MERLIN-DNA-18-EL-DR-A-01403  
MERLIN-DNA-18-SX-DR-A-01404  
MERLIN-DNA-18-00-DR-A-10400  
MERLIN-DNA-18-M1-DR-A-10401  
MERLIN-DNA-18-01-DR-A-10402  
MERLIN-DNA-18-R1-DR-A-10403

MERLIN-DNA-18-EL-DR-A-20400  
MERLIN-DNA-18-SX-DR-A-30400  
MERLIN-DNA-56-00-DR-A-10500  
MERLIN-DNA-56-R1-DR-A-10501  
MERLIN-DNA-56-EL-DR-A-20500  
MERLIN-DNA-56-SX-DR-A-30500  
MERLIN-DNA-80-00-DR-A-10600  
MERLIN-DNA-80-01-DR-A-10601  
MERLIN-DNA-80-02-DR-A-10602  
MERLIN-DNA-80-03-DR-A-10603  
MERLIN-DNA-80-04-DR-A-10604

MERLIN-DNA-80-R1-DR-A-10605  
MERLIN-DNA-80-EL-DR-A-20600  
MERLIN-DNA-80-SX-DR-A-30600  
MERLIN-DNA-80-SX-DR-A-30602  
MERLIN-DNA-76-00-DR-A-10700  
MERLIN-DNA-76-01-DR-A-10701  
MERLIN-DNA-76-R1-DR-A-10702  
MERLIN-DNA-76-EL-DR-A-20700  
MERLIN-DNA-76-SX-DR-A-30700  
MERLIN-DNA-75-00-DR-A-10900  
MERLIN-DNA-75-M1-DR-A-10901  
MERLIN-DNA-75-R1-DR-A-10902  
MERLIN-DNA-75-EL-DR-A-20900  
MERLIN-DNA-75-SX-DR-A-30900

MERLIN-DNA-41-00-DR-A-10800  
MERLIN-DNA-41-01-DR-A-10801  
MERLIN-DNA-41-R1-DR-A-10802  
MERLIN-DNA-41-EL-DR-A-20800  
MERLIN-QCL-ZZ-XX-DR-C-0030-P01  
MERLIN-QCL-ZZ-XX-DR-C-0031-P01  
MERLIN-QCL-ZZ-XX-DR-C-0004-P01  
MERLIN-QCL-ZZ-XX-DR-C-0002-P04  
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1366-SC-201-P2  
1366-SC-202-P2  
1366-SC-203-P2

MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0001 Rev J  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0002 Rev E  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0003 Rev D  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0004 Rev F  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0005 Rev D  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0006 Rev C  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0007 Rev B  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0008 Rev D  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0009 Rev B  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0010 Rev D  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0011 Rev F  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0012 Rev I  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0013 Rev C  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0014 Rev C  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-SH-L-90-0001 Rev D  
MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0016 Rev A  
21011-2  
21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-0002 P03

21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-0003 P01  
21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-0001 P02  
21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1100 P02  
21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1101 P02  
21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1102 P04  
21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1103 P02  
21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1104 P02  
21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1105 P02  
21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1106 P02  
21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1107 P02  
21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1108 P01

### 3. Highway Details

No new built development shall commence until full details (in the form of scaled plans and/or written specifications) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to illustrate the following:

- i) Roads, footways.
- ii) Cycleways.
- iii) Foul and surface water drainage.
- iv) Visibility splays
- v) Access arrangements
- vi) Parking provision in accordance with adopted standard.
- vii) Loading areas.
- viii) Turning areas.

### 4. Access Completion

No new buildings shall be occupied until the vehicular access for that building has been completed and thereafter retained as shown on drawing number (21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C- 1102 P04) in accordance with details/specifications to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Prior to use appropriate arrangements shall be made for surface water to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge from or onto the highway carriageway.

### 5. Surface Water

No new buildings shall be occupied until arrangement has been made for surface water from each phase of the proposed development to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge onto the highway carriageway.

### 6. Electric Vehicles

No new buildings shall be occupied until provision has been made for 20% of the car parking spaces to have active provision for EV charging and 80% of the car parking spaces to have passive provision for EV charging.

#### 7. Cycle Parking

No new built development shall commence until a scheme for the parking of cycles including details of the design, level and siting has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be fully implemented before any new buildings are first occupied (or brought into use) and thereafter retained for this purpose.

#### 8. Construction Management Plan

No new built development shall commence until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan: The Construction Management Plan shall include details of:

- a. Construction vehicle numbers, type, routing;
- b. Access arrangements to the site;
- c. Traffic management requirements
- d. Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking, loading / unloading and turning areas);
- e. Siting and details of wheel washing facilities;
- f. Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway;
- g. Timing of construction activities (including delivery times and removal of waste) and to avoid school pick up/drop off times;
- h. Provision of sufficient on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities;
- i. Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and temporary access to the public highway;
- j. where works cannot be contained wholly within the site a plan should be submitted showing the site layout on the highway including extent of hoarding, pedestrian routes and remaining road width for vehicle movements;
- k. Phasing Plan.

#### 9. Source of Illumination

The new sound stages hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the intensity of illumination has been provided at a level that is within the limit recommended by the Institution of Lighting Professionals in the publication 'Technical Report No 5: Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements' and 'Guidance Note for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light GN01:20'.



## 10. Highway Improvements – Cycle Network

### A) Design Approval

Notwithstanding the details indicated on the approved drawings, no on-site works above slab level for the new buildings shall commence until a detailed scheme for the off-site highway improvement works as indicated on drawing numbers 21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-0001 P02, 21134-MA-XXXX-DR-C-1100 P02, 21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1101 P02, 21134-MA-XX-XXDR-C-1102 P04, 21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1103 P02, 21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1104 P02, 21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1105 P02, 21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1106 P02, 21134-MA-XX-XXDR-C-1107 P02 and 21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1108 P01 have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

### B) Implementation / Construction

No new building shall be occupied until the improvement works referred to in part A of this condition have been completed in accordance with the approved details.

## 11. Highway Improvements – A41 Toucan to the Hempstead Road underpass

### A) Design Approval

No on-site works above slab level shall commence until a detailed scheme for the provision of a toucan crossing of the A41 connecting the local cycle network improvements shown on drawing number 21134-MA-XX-XX-DR-C-1100 P02 to the A41 pedestrian/ cycle subway below the A41/ Hempstead Road roundabout have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

### B) Implementation / Construction

**No new buildings shall be occupied until** the improvement works referred to in part A of this condition shall be completed in accordance with the approved details.

## 12. Travel Plan

At least 3 months prior to the first occupation of the new buildings hereby permitted a detailed Travel Plan for the Studio Site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Travel Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the timetable and target contained therein and shall continue to be implemented as long as any part of the development is occupied, subject to approved modifications agreed by the Local Planning Authority as part of the annual review.

## 13. Materials

The buildings shall not be erected other than in the materials as have been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority as stated on the

application form and shown on the approved plans and no external materials shall be used other than those approved.

#### 14. Energy Statement

The new sound stages hereby permitted shall not be first occupied until the energy saving and renewable energy measures detailed within the approved Energy Statement (March 2022) prepared by Ramboll are incorporated into the approved development.

#### 15. Operational Management Plan

The use of the Replacement Backlot and Support Facilities (Backlot 2) as shown on drawing number MERLIN-DNA-ZZ-00-DR-A-00002-P6 shall at all times be carried out in accordance with the approved Operational Management Plan (March 2022).

#### 16. Boundary treatment

All boundary treatments shall be maintained in accordance with the details shown on the approved plans.

#### 17. Noise

All permanent plant, machinery and equipment installed or operated in connection with the development shall be so enclosed and/or attenuated so that noise there from does not exceed a level of 45 dB(A) during the day and 30 dB(A) during the night when measured at a distance of 1 metre away.

#### 18. Remediation Strategy

Prior to the commencement of each phase of the built development approved by this planning permission a remediation strategy to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the relevant phase in respect of the development hereby permitted, must be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. This strategy will include the following components:

1. A site investigation scheme to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off-site.
2. The results of the site investigation and the detailed risk assessment referred to in (1) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.
3. A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in the remediation strategy in (2) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.

#### 19. Verification Report

Prior to any part of the built development being brought into use, a verification report demonstrating the completion of works set out in the approved remediation strategy and the effectiveness of the remediation shall be submitted to, and approved in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. The report shall include results of sampling and monitoring carried out in accordance with the approved verification plan to demonstrate that the site remediation criteria have been met.

#### 20. Long term monitoring

If identified in respect of Condition 18 (Remediation Strategy), the relevant phase of the development hereby permitted shall not commence until a long-term monitoring and maintenance plan in respect of contamination, including a timetable of monitoring and submission of reports to the local planning authority, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. Reports as specified in the approved plan, including details of any necessary contingency action arising from the monitoring, shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. Alternatively if a long-term monitoring and maintenance plan is not deemed necessary for a given phase of the development, a written statement based on prior contamination assessment shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority, confirming that long term monitoring and maintenance measures are not required and the reasons why the measures are not required.

#### 21. Previously unidentified contamination

If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority) shall be carried out until a Page 40

remediation strategy detailing how this contamination will be dealt with has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

#### 22. Infiltration to surface water

No drainage systems for the infiltration of surface water to the ground are permitted other than with the written consent of the Local Planning Authority. Any proposals for such systems must be supported by an assessment of the risks to controlled waters. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

#### 23. Piling

Piling/other foundation designs using penetrative methods shall not be carried out other than with the written consent of the Local Planning

Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

#### 24. Decommissioning of boreholes

Prior to the commencement of any built development, a scheme for managing any borehole installed for the investigation of soils, groundwater or geotechnical purposes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall provide details of how redundant boreholes are to be decommissioned and how any boreholes that need to be retained, post-development, for monitoring purposes will be secured, protected and inspected. The scheme as approved shall be implemented prior to the occupation of that phase of the permitted development where boreholes are to be located.

#### 25. Surface Water drainage contamination

Prior to the commencement of any built development, details of a Surface Water Drainage Scheme that considers ground contamination and public water supply as a receptor of that contamination shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

#### 26. Surface Water Drainage

Upon completion of the drainage works for each phase of development including all SuDS drainage features in accordance with the timing / phasing, a management and maintenance plan for the SuDS features and drainage network must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The management and maintenance plan shall include;

1. Provision of complete set of built drawings for site drainage.

2. Maintenance provisions and operational requirements for the installed drainage system.

3. Arrangements for adoption and any other measures to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

#### 27. Lighting

External lighting shall be erected only in accordance with the External Lighting Strategy and Impact Assessment (03/08/2022) prepared by Ramboll unless details have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

#### 28. Construction Environmental Management Plan

The development shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved Construction Environmental Management Plan Rev 6, dated 30/11/22.

#### 29. Mechanical Ventilation Strategy

The development shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved Ventilation and Extraction Statement prepared by Ramboll March 2022 (Rev 04, dated 08/03/22).

**30. Landscaping as approved**

Within 3 months of the date of the planning permission hereby permitted, a programme for the implementation and management of the soft landscape details and bunds hereby approved and shown on drawings: MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0002 Rev E, MERLINTOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0003 Rev D, MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0004 Rev F, MERLINTOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0005 Rev D, MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0006 Rev C, MERLINTOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0007 Rev C, MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0008 Rev D, MERLINTOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0009 Rev B, MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0010 Rev D, MERLINTOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0011 Rev F, MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0012 Rev I, MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0013 Rev C, MERLIN-TOR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-90-0014 Rev C, MERLIN-TOR-ZZZZ-SH-L-90-0001 Rev D, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings and programme unless otherwise agreed in writing.

**39            22/01213/FULM 495 WHIPPENDELL ROAD WATFORD HERTFORDSHIRE  
WD18 7PN**

The Chair informed the committee that this application had been withdrawn.

Chair

The Meeting started at 1900  
and finished at 1955