## **Windsor Neighbourhood Plan**

**LEGOLAND REPORT V3 CM Aug 2017**

**Introduction**

14.1 The LEGOLAND Theme Park (herein after “the Park”) is one of the most visited top 10 tourist destinations in the country and a key local employer, with approximately 290 permanent employees and 1,800 seasonal employees living in the SL4 area. This creates approximately £9.9m in direct and indirect expenditure in the local economy. It also provides community benefits through local activities, particularly for local schools and community groups. It is therefore clearly one of the important aspects of our areas economic and community vitality. However, there are considerable local concerns about traffic congestion which are frequently blamed on the site.

**Context and current policy background**

14.2 The Park is within the Green Belt south of Windsor and therefore has to comply with existing national Green Belt policies, including the Very Special Circumstances test. It is adjacent to Windsor Forest SSSI and lies within an area of Special Landscape Importance, which are subject to International designation as Special Areas of Conservation. Therefore any development both within the site has to respect the requirements of the relevant National and Borough GB SAC and SLI legislation.

14.3 RBWMs former Local Plan policy on the Park (Local Plan 2003, Policy TM7, Appendix 13 Site 6) is to allow development infill or replacement within a defined area of the site, the so-called “development envelope” denoted on the map below ( See *Figure 0-8*) provided that it retains the open and green nature of the GB. This policy has been superseded by the NPPF para 89 – Green Belt exceptions. The emerging BLP identifies Legoland as an “Important Previously Developed Site within the Green Belt” and is expected to allow development/redevelopment as before. A new Appendix is expected but not yet available.

Figure X - LEGOLAND Windsor showing the site boundary and the inner development envelope.(Source: Local Plan July 2003)

14.4 RBWM Local Plan Appendix 13 mentions that the original Planning permission for Legoland included a “buffer zone” along the northern edge to protect the nearby properties, and to protect the SSSI on the western edge of the site. Any development is also expected to be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the landscape. Height is also restricted to the height of the highest existing building on the site and be sensitive to location tree cover and wildlife habitats.

14.5 This has not stopped development taking place on the site, with a hotel having been built, a hotel extension has been granted planning approval and replacement and additions to existing rides and attractions within the development envelope (eg: Haunted House) and car parks outside of it. The owners have also bought the farm to the west of the site (in Bray Parish) and are using this as overspill car parking. It is also believed that the site is looking at potential other access routes through to the west, including through Windsor Forest to the south and through to Oakley Green Road, although there is no real evidence as to whether these are possible, they are unlikely to be popular with residents in those locations.

14.6 Possible future development proposals may include Lodge type accommodation possibly at the Bray end of the site as well as more replacement of rides within the development envelope and possible encroachment onto the buffer zone on the Windsor Forest side.

**Appearance**

14.7 Some but not all of the site is visible from close up along Winkfield Road and at long distance across the Great Park from Sheet Street Road, more so in winter, and the entrance to the site has been configured to be attractive to customers. As it has developed there is more visibility of the site from both Winkfield Road and Sheet Street Road across the Great Park especially in winter.

**Transport**

14.8 Access to the Park is along the B3022 Winkfield Road from either the north through Windsor or south from Ascot. The 702 Greenline Bus run through the site providing a local link to Bracknell Windsor and London, and LEGOLAND operate a shuttle bus for staff and customers to and from Central Windsor/Riverside Station. They also have a Travel Plan for staff.

14.9 LEGOLAND has taken steps to mitigate the traffic it generates including;

* operational changes especially during busy periods
* local signage changes to distribute traffic more widely around different routes from and to the local motorways and routes through and around Windsor
* working with other nearby venues such as Windsor Racecourse and Ascot Racecourse (using “live” traffic monitors) to manage traffic flows for major events which may happen at the same time.

These seem to have had some success although they do come at the cost of spreading the traffic load around more roads.

14.10 A multi -agency working group comprising representatives from LEGOLAND and RBWM, Bracknell Forest Council, Highways England and Surrey County Council, currently provides a forum for discussions with local institutions and searches for solutions to issues relating to the park, and management of the park also hold meetings with local residents, and issues Newsletters.

14.11 The WNP has sought to research traffic issues to reach sensible conclusions with an understanding of the facts and base our policies on objective data.

14.12 However our research has shown that a complete model of traffic flows around Windsor and past LEGOLAND is not yet possible due to gaps in the data; for example there is no traffic measuring point south of LEGOLAND to establish how much traffic bypasses LEGOLAND or turns South out of the Park.

14.13 There is also some evidence that traffic generated by LEGOLAND activities is quite stable in terms of numbers of cars going to the site, and that new attractions are refreshing what the park offers, rather than increasing traffic (Data provided at the Haunted House public inquiry – Appeal ref APP/T0355/W/15/3005191). It is LEGOLAND policy to increase length of stay of guests and there is some potential for hotel operations to help spread arrivals and departures throughout the day.

14.14 Therefore we looked again at more recent data to consider the traffic issue and specifically measuring point 86 on the Winkfield Road. Refer attached Excel “Traffic Data from Winkfield Road Measuring Point 0086”. These results are not conclusive but do indicate that there are other factors at work. We compared (1) a typical August 2015 Monday with August Bank Holiday Monday when LEGOLAND was open and (2) two normal Mondays in January and February 2016 when LEGOLAND was closed.

14.15 The typical August Monday recorded over 10,000 vehicles in both directions over the 24 hour period (ie: commuters & LEGOLAND traffic) whereas on the Bank Holiday Monday this figure had fallen to around 7,000 (ie: no commuters). The North bound peak was in the order of 760 vehicles per hour between 4pm-7pm and two South bound peaks in the order of 800 vehicles around 9-10am an 4pm-5pm. This is a possibly “a typical going to Legoland” type flow.

14.16 On the two Winter Mondays, traffic flow North and South was in the order of 8,500 vehicles over the 24 hour period, but the peaks had reversed. The North bound peak in the order of 840 vehicles per hour was at 7am and the South bound peak was in the order of 800 vehicles around 5pm. Arguably this is a possible typical commuter pattern which was broadly consistent over the two selected days.

14.17 It was noted that that the hourly peaks in the winter months were equal to or greater than the summer peaks when LEGOLAND is open.

14.18 We conclude only that LEGOLAND is not the only driver in local traffic flows. There is enormous daily variation in traffic through Windsor from all other sources such as commuter traffic and other local events, even without LEGOLAND being operational.

14.19 However, when LEGOLAND is in operation and its arrival and departure traffic is added to those other peaks then more congestion problems occur and for several hours at a time during busy mornings (over 700 per hour) and late afternoon/ evenings.

14.20 LEGOLANDs main car park capacity is around 3,500, so this implies that up to this number of cars would be converging on the site in the mornings and leaving in the afternoon evenings on busy days. The key to managing this number of cars going in an out would seem to an operational one for the park through managing arrival and departure times of customers, as well as ensuring they are well distributed through local access roads.

14.21 There is an existing Park and Ride facility for the public at the site using the Carpark facilities and linked to the 702 bus stop. There is some evidence that it is not very well used, although no numbers are available. It has been used by Windsor employers, e,g. Princess Margaret Hospital had a staff parking P&R scheme using a couple of mini buses at peak times, but stopped when they increased the size of their hospital carpark as this was more convenient for staff. The lack of popularity may be for many reasons; visibility, location, not large enough, too far out, insufficient transport frequency. But in our view it does no harm, might be used by Windsor employers again and so we see no real reason to change it.

**Conclusion**

14.22 We conclude that LEGOLAND is not the only driver in local traffic flows, and that one has to look at all of the sources of traffic to understand the problem fully. This can then lead to solutions through working to reduce traffic from ALL of the sources, and to help work with LEGOLAND to improve mitigation, and even out peaks of arrivals and departures.

14.23 Areas where the WNP can add value to existing policies.

1. Support park development under particular conditions
2. Support better collection of traffic evidence data
3. Support improved road configurations and alternative transport
4. Appearance, including views protection near and far
5. Park and Ride facility
6. Buffer zone maintenance

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