



The Inspector

BY EMAIL

27 January 2024

Dear Mr Bristow

Appeal related to Scotland Park Phase 2 – APP-R3650-3327643

I appeared at the virtual session of the Inquiry hearing the appeal relating to Scotland Park Phase 2, on behalf of The Haslemere Society, to raise a series of concerns about water matters. I felt that it might be helpful if I set out my statement in writing.

I should, however, start by stating that The Haslemere Society has a number of significant objections to this scheme, which we have set out in previous submissions to the original application and to this Inquiry. These objections are not restated here but we stand by them.

I mentioned three elements of water concerns: surface water/flooding; foul water; and potable water. I will deal with them in turn, below.

Surface water/flooding

- This is an acknowledged concern. Issues around surface water were raised as a ‘red flag’ by the Atkins Report, commissioned by WBC. There is already regular flooding of the roads around the Scotland Park Phase 1 development and the proposed Phase 2 development. Local residents argue that the flooding has worsened since the works on the Phase 1 development started. During the virtual hearing, Mr Eastham of WBC announced that there is an ongoing enforcement investigation into this.
- In August and December 2022, Thames Water stated that the relevant surface water system would be unable to cope with the proposed Phase 2 development. Then, four months later, in April 2023, Thames noted that the new development is not to drain into this system so that Thames now has no objection on these grounds. It is not clear what changed in those four months. We are not aware that the applicant reworked their plans during that time to change how surface water across the entire development was to be managed.
- We submit that any determination of the current appeal will require a clear understanding of the basis for Thames’ change of view to April 2023 and also clarity regarding whether the surface water scheme for Phase 1 is, in fact, effective. While this development is now owned by a different firm, the surface water arrangements there were clearly considered to be adequate when this scheme was granted permission (on appeal). If, in fact, they now turn out not to be adequate there will be lessons to be

learned from that which must be applied to the current application. We do not see therefore, how it will be possible to determine this appeal until WBC's investigation is complete.

Foul water

- This was also raised as an issue by the Atkins Report.
- Again, Thames Water's letters of August and December 2022 stated that the relevant foul water system would be unable to cope with the proposed development. The letter of April 2023 repeats this assertion.
- A brief note from November states that an initial modelling study showed no detriment but that concerns raised by Lynchmere Parish Council relating to possible sewer flooding would require a further investigation. This would require the installation of a depth-monitor in the Sturt Road area (the proposed development here will use the same foul water system as the Sturt Road development). As far as we are able to ascertain, the depth-monitor has not yet been installed.
- We should note that the level of incidents of sewage overflow at the Wey Hill outlet does not suggest that the system is entirely able to cope with existing demands upon it, never mind a significant additional burden, bearing in mind that the Sturt Road development is not yet occupied.
- On that basis, and despite the applicant's assertion that this matter has been resolved, the latest position from Thames Water remains their statement from April 2023 that the foul water system would be unable to cope with this proposed development. The promised additional investigations do not appear even to have started.

Potable water

- Here again, Thames Water's letters of August and December 2022 indicate problems. Thames states, in both letters, that they have 'some capacity' to supply 49 dwellings but these are the properties in Phase 1, which is now underway. The letters state that 'beyond that upgrades to the network would be required'.
- And again, in April 2023, only four months later, Thames changed their view and withdrew their objection. No information is given as to what caused that change of mind. No upgrades to the network were proposed or initiated during that timeframe or since.
- Indeed, in a public meeting attended by Jeremy Hunt, Thames stated that substantial investment over a period of many years will be required to resolve Haslemere's water supply issues. Part of the programme of resolution is meant to be the compulsory installation of smart meters across the area, which is expected to reduce water demand, but this program is behind schedule – as a resident I can categorically state that I have had no communication from Thames about the installation of a smart meter and I'm not aware of any local friends or neighbours who had had such a communication either [note that I did not make this point at the virtual session]. Further investment in the water supply network may also be called into question by Thames' precarious financial position.
- Thames is unable even to reliably meet existing water demand in the area, despite local heavy seasonal rainfall. There have been a series of incidents of low pressure or complete water outage affecting significant parts of the town in recent years. Furthermore, Thames has only been able to manage water provision to this level by replenishing the Blackdown Reservoir by lorry – residents of Haste Hill have told us that relays of lorries up to the reservoir have continued through the autumn and we believe

that separate deliveries have been necessary to the Haslemere Hospital. We do not have access to accurate information about the number of lorries in use etc but we trust that the Inquiry does have such access and will use it. Thames' track record in the area has not been such as to allow confidence in their ability to meet significantly increased demand in the area in a short timeframe.

I trust that you will be able to access more detailed information on some of these matters than have been available to us and that you will be able to assess the likelihood of Thames being able to meet the claims it has made in your overall decision, rather than simply relying on the company's assertions.

Yours Sincerely

S. Dullaway (by email)
(on behalf of The Haslemere Society)