



STRATFORD-ON-AVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Application Ref: 21/00456/FUL

Installation and operation of an observation wheel with associated equipment for a period of six months in each calendar year for a temporary period of up to five years.

I am speaking on behalf of the Stratford Society and Mr Cyril Bennis.

If granted, this application would breach policies to which the Council has undertaken to adhere. Under the Local Neighbourhood Plan – endorsed by voters in 2018 – developments on designated Local Green Space (including the Recreation Ground) which would harm its openness or special character would not be permitted. The Car Park falls within the ambit of that Plan. The Planning Officer's report acknowledges that the observation wheel and its "associated paraphernalia" would result in "some harm to the open nature of the Recreation Ground and the character of the Area of Restraint", as designated by the Council in its Core Strategy 2011-31.

Furthermore, the site is in close proximity to a number of Listed Buildings and is within the Conservation Area. In the words of the report, "The wheel does not relate to local historic features and local distinctiveness."

When, earlier this month, the Council published revised plans for a Riverside Corridor, no mention was made of the possibility of an observation wheel along the site. Instead, the Corridor is described as creating a new outdoor green space which would be a positive attraction to draw visitors back to the Town.

Since there have already been two temporary permissions for the wheel, the recommendation for a further so-called "temporary period of up to five years" is surprising. In using the consequences of Covid 19 as justification, the report overlooks the general view that staycations will be popular this year. Stratford can expect to be a beneficiary of this, with visitors coming to the town for its

historic character, green open spaces and riverside aspect. Rather than being a further attraction, a 40m high wheel – visible well above the tree-line, and in position for the very months which see the most tourists – would be an eyesore.

In short, while recommending that this application be granted, the Planning Officer's report does, in fact, set out the very grounds on which it should be rejected. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the Council should have received only one letter of support against 55 letters of objection, including from neighbours concerned about the level of noise and loss of privacy.

In conclusion, the installation of the wheel at the end of March this year was obviously at some cost to the operators. Coming some four weeks before today's Planning Committee meeting, the applicant must have been confident that installation for six months a year would be approved. It would interesting to know how this could happen.

Margaret Cund
Planning Officer