



To the Planning Department
Stratford District Council

Re: Planning Application 21/00456/FUL – Observation Wheel

Address: Recreation Ground Car Park, Swans Nest Lane, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 7LS

Proposal: Installation and operation of an observation wheel with associated equipment for a period of six months in each calendar year

Date: March 2021

Nature of Submission: Objection to the application for the following planning reasons

I write on behalf of the Stratford Society – the civic society for the town of Stratford-upon-Avon. We exist to support the maintenance of the historic character of the Town Centre and surrounding environments of The Town. We have assisted both of the Councils based in The Town and many others with matters of historical note, and have encouraged planning policy guidelines intended to enable development, whilst preserving the best of the historic legacy which serves as a key draw for residents and visitors to The Town.

As the Local Neighbourhood Plan - endorsed by voters in 2018 - says, The Town is a picturesque and historic English market town in a beautiful riverside setting. Its character and individuality could be eroded by inappropriate development, and any proposals are subject to consideration of design, impact on the character of the area, infrastructure provision (including off-road parking) and impact on neighbouring land users. Furthermore, developments on designated Local Green Space (including the Recreation Ground) that would harm its openness or special character, or its significance and value to the local community, would not be permitted.

The proposal for an observation wheel in the Recreation Ground Car Park runs contrary to all the above criteria. Its prominence would be out-of-keeping with its location, adversely affecting the openness of this riverside site, and it would be intrusive for neighbouring properties such as the Boat Club and nearby flats and houses. Green spaces such as the Recreation Ground provide a range of environmental benefits to the community, enhancing the quality of life of residents and those who work in or visit The Town.

The proposed siting of the observation wheel would only exacerbate concerns expressed in the Local Neighbourhood Plan about existing pedestrian congestion on the Tramway Bridge, since visitors to the observation wheel could be expected to park their cars on the Recreation Ground Car Park and walk across Tramway Bridge to access The Town for its cafes, restaurants, shops and other facilities.

In its Core Strategy 2011-31 (4.4), the SDC designates the Avon Valley through The Town as an Area of Restraint, with the expectation that its generally open nature should be maintained. Open spaces are acknowledged as making an important contribution to the

physical and mental health and wellbeing of communities. Mitigating and adapting to climate change is described as intrinsic to the whole Core Strategy. Recognising the threat to critical biodiversity, the Strategy acknowledges the importance of creating and managing natural habitats.

It is notable that, in the Riverside Corridor proposals launched only last November, the SDC makes no mention of the installation and operation of an observation wheel anywhere along the site. Instead, the detailed concept design for a new riverside country park is described as “a long-term blueprint for the area”. This acknowledges that a key motivation for making big changes to the riverside is environmental: to create new green routes, reduce congestion and improve air quality.

Furthermore, the creation of a new outdoor green space is seen as a positive new attraction to draw visitors back to the Town, recognising that there is a growing interest in green, sustainable tourism. An observation wheel, such as is found at a fairground rather than in a country park, is entirely at odds with this, and would further add to congestion in and around Swan’s Nest Lane caused by traffic going to and from the Recreation Ground Car Park. The Riverside Corridor proposals specifically seek to alleviate this existing problem through the expansion and construction of car parks at both ends of the Corridor. By drawing additional traffic into the area, an observation wheel on the proposed site would have precisely the opposite effect.

In conclusion, taking account of all the points made above, the Stratford Society urges the SDC to withdraw its proposal for the installation and operation of an observation wheel in the Recreation Ground Car Park.

Margaret Cund
Planning Officer