

REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL: 11th February 2016

Public Questions

Question by:	To be answered by:	Subject:
Mrs J. Barnett	Executive Member for Property and Regeneration (Councillor N. J. Bramhall)	Horley Business Park demand for office space
Patsy Coler	Executive Member for Property and Regeneration (Councillor N. J. Bramhall)	Bayhorne Fishers Farm 'Airport City' Business Park site
Mr B. Horne	Leader of the Council (Councillor V.W. Broad)	Communications in the New Council Chamber
Mr Bolton	Executive Member for Planning and Development (Councillor T. Schofield)	Congestion on the roads

Council Meeting: 11 February 2016

Mrs J. Barnett will ask the **for Executive Member for Property and Regeneration, Councillor Mrs N.J. Bramhall** the following question:

Horley Business Park – demand for office space

Would the Executive Member for Planning respond to the following question:

The Manor Royal business district is situated less than 3 miles from the proposed 'Airport City' business park site. It is well documented in the 'Manor Royal development plan 2010' that rental rates within Manor Royal have remained stagnant since 2005, at a level which is generally below that of other leading business locations for both office and industrial premises. Vacancy rates (as measured by current empty premises against total commercial stock) are also relatively high at approximately 19% of total office floorspace.

The Manor Royal development plan also highlights that "in total almost 90,000sqm of office space has been permitted since 2005; however it worth noting none has begun development, reinforcing wider indications of a lack of demand for office space within Manor Royal and the Crawley area more generally".

How can the Council justify submitting a proposal for a massive business park in the rural surrounds of Horley, which is already known and accepted by the Council to be contrary to many planning policies and the Council's own adopted core strategy, when the neighbouring Manor Royal business district just has had to implement its own development plan and has been forced to offer discounted rates to attract businesses to the area?

Observations

Thank you Mrs Barnett for your question.

The 'Manor Royal development plan 2010' to which you refer was prepared at the height of one of the worst recessions for many years, and the figures in it are now out of date.

Demand for business space in has been strong in Crawley and at Manor Royal since 2010. In 2010 there was space at Manor Royal, which there isn't now.

In addition Manor Royal is a very different offer to the proposed business park in Horley, where a state of the art, high quality office park is envisaged.

We believe that there is demand for high quality business space in this area and that a new business park could satisfy that demand, and bring jobs and opportunities to the Borough's residents.

Council Meeting: 11 February 2016

Patsy Coler will ask the **Executive Member for Property and Regeneration, Councillor Mrs N.J. Bramhall** the following question:

Bayhorne/Fishers Farm ‘Airport City’ business park site

Would the Executive Member for Property and Regeneration respond to the following question:

Considering the huge sums of public money being invested in the initial stages of the ‘Airport City’ business park proposal, I would like to know how many Councillors and members of the Executive have been and viewed the Bayhorne/Fishers Farm ‘Airport City’ business park site, prior to agreeing to move forward with the proposals. Would it be correct to say that none of the Executive Councillor's who made the decision to move forward with this development, committing tax-payers money and agreeing to compulsory purchase powers have actually seen the site and witnessed in person its severe flooding issues and the proximity of the floodwater to the neighbouring properties?

Observations

Thank you for your question.

Firstly, I would like to point out that the Council’s Executive decision-making process does not rely on the Executive making site visits. The Executive needs to evaluate the considerable amount of information presented by officers in an appropriate way. A Planning Committee assessing a planning application might take a different approach and include site visits, but we are not yet at a planning application stage.

Having said that, the Executive does include a number of Horley Councillors who are very familiar with the site, and who have spent a great deal of time there, including during the flooding unfortunately experienced there in 2012-13 when ward Councillors worked alongside officers to assist distressed residents. In addition, the Leader, Deputy Leader and other Executive Members have inspected the site to better understand the business park proposals.

The Executive is well aware of the concerns about flooding. Surveys will need to be undertaken and reports obtained from specialist engineers to accompany any planning application. Planning permission would not be given for a scheme that would present an increased risk of flooding to surrounding properties.

The Council is in the process of commissioning these reports and will undertake a public consultation on the findings.

Council Meeting: 11 February 2016

Mr B. Horne will ask the **Leader of the Council, Councillor V.W. Broad** the following question:

Communication Systems in the New Council Chamber

Would the Leader of the Council, Councillor Broad (the Member responsible for communications) please explain why the desk microphones and newly installed webcast system keeps failing?

On 7th January the webcasting was inoperable at the Executive meeting. On the 13th January the desk microphone system was defective at the start of the Planning meeting. A technician had to be called to repair the fault while the meeting was adjourned. Many visitors complain that they cannot hear the discussion. This state of affairs does not look good for the Council! Is this new digital system installed only last year 'fit for purpose'? Or has the wrong type of equipment been installed?

Observations

Thank you Mr Horne for your question.

I can reassure you that the equipment installed in the New Council Chamber is some of the most sophisticated installed in any Council Chamber. It has added impressive new facilities for use in this excellent debating Chamber and provides the community, for the first time, the opportunity to witness our meetings from the comfort of their homes through the webcasting facility.

We have completed our first full year of broadcasting which has recorded 27 meetings to date with over 1000 views. I expect that this facility will continue to grow in its popularity as more and more people become aware of it.

The facilities now allow the Planning Committee improved viewing facilities to examine the drawings and images considered as part of the applications being determined. The Chairman is also able to highlight particular aspects of applications on the drawings that further facilitate the Committee's consideration. The facility for the slides to be viewed on the webcast is another excellent facility.

The sound system works in two separate ways. Each microphone unit has a built in speaker so all Members in the chamber can hear the debate more clearly and a separate system links the sound into the public galleries to provide visitors a more

positive relay of the debate. It is a significant improvement on the outdated one that it has replaced.

Although it is always expected that some teething issues will occur with the installation of new equipment I'm delighted that it has, overall, been a successful addition to our democratic services.

Turning to the specific issues that you referenced:

- You are correct to mention that the Executive on 7 January 2016 could not be webcast. However this was due to a BT line issue that prevented our equipment broadcasting.
- There was a 'stepping out' user error at the Planning Committee on 13 January that led to the images temporarily not displaying. This delayed the meeting for a few minutes but was resolved quickly by our IT team. The microphone system was not defective at this meeting.
- There have been one or two occasions when the sound in the public gallery required servicing by engineers following our frequent checks of the system. However I'm not aware that this has led to any specific complaints.

Overall I'm delighted with progress on this work to the chamber and I believe that it has contributed to making the Council more open and transparent to the community, particularly through the webcasting facility and will be a great asset for the future.

Council Meeting: 11 February 2016

Mr. J. Bolton will ask the **Executive Member for Planning and Development, Councillor T. Schofield** the following question:

Congestion on the Roads

Everyone is aware of the growing traffic volumes in the Borough and highway obstructions due to parked cars, road works and public utilities undertakings, all resulting in a lower quality of life for our residents through noise, pollution and disturbance.

Is the Executive Member for Planning giving enough attention to movement for citizens in the face of ever increasing congestion and obstructions on our roads?

Observations

Thank you for your question Mr Bolton.

There are a number of transport responsibilities that rest with the Borough Council and within my portfolio.

Perhaps the most important of those is to ensure that the transport impacts of new development are properly understood and that the transport network is able to accommodate these.

The Council's Core strategy sets out the overall level of growth for the next 10-15 years. Transport modelling work was undertaken in support of the Core Strategy, and a detailed Infrastructure Delivery Plan was prepared. This provides a list of transport schemes that will support new development, and is available on the Council website.

We are currently preparing our Development Management Plan and supplementing this Infrastructure Delivery Plan with more detailed modelling to identify any additional measures that may be needed.

On a day to day basis the Borough Council does not have responsibility for highways, road maintenance or on-street parking. These powers rest with the County Council, and I, along with other members of the County's Reigate & Banstead Local Committee, work hard to shape County Council activities, policy and investment priorities on these things.

Working jointly with the County, our recent successes include delivering the Redhill Balanced Network Scheme, and securing funding towards the Greater Redhill Sustainable Transport Package which is currently being implemented.

In conclusion, I fully recognise the concerns that you, and many other residents, have about congestion. We all suffer from the issues you have raised in your question and this council is working hard to improve the situation.

I believe that the activities I have described - coupled with the adoption of the new Community Infrastructure Levy - put the Council in the best possible position to manage this ongoing challenge.