

Julian Wilson's submission to SBDC Planning Committee,
Oct 21st 2009

The representative of Pinewood Studios Ltd will shortly try to convince you of the merits of their application to build 1400 houses in the Green Belt in the Colne Valley Park.

I don't need to tell you that their plan is contrary to South Bucks policy GB 1 and PPG2 in every possible respect.

I do need to tell you of the effect of their plan on the whole of South Bucks and Iver in particular.

1400 houses would double the population of Iver Heath. It would, on Pinewood's own estimate, result in 3,300 more people. It would inevitably result in 3-4000 more cars in the area, 7-8,000 vehicle movements per day, in an area already clogged with traffic for about four hours each working day.

It would be sited at the highest point for miles around i.e. on the heath and there they would build 6 storey properties - as high as the current James Bond Stage! And built on land 15 metres higher.

It will dominate the landscape.

It will tower over the current housing estate of modest 2 storey semis and detached houses.

Most importantly it will be an inevitable precursor to other attempts to build in the Green Belt.

Pinewood will tell you that their plan will bring 600 jobs to the area – at the same time bring in 3,300 people to compete for those jobs. 600 jobs from 1400 homes is a difficult statistic to rationalise.

I am sure that like me you will have read the 105 pages of Very Special Circumstances for this development in the Green Belt.

I have to say I was not convinced and I trust that you weren't either. Nothing in those 105 pages told me of any special circumstances that would justify a development in the Green belt and in the Colne Valley Park. I can quote at least two cases where the combination of Green Belt and Colne Valley Park have resulted in a scheme being turned down.

By the time I got to the end of those 105 pages I was convinced of one thing. That this proposal is a Green Belt Housing development dressed up as film sets in an attempt to prove a special case for the film industry.

I found no testimonials in those pages stating that this was what the film industry needs. Indeed we have met many people in the film industry who tell us that this concept is not what the industry wants. If you were a film director would you want to use the same Venice scene that another director had used before - NO.

Pinewood tell us that Iver Heath is an urban area - But Iver Heath is 73.4% greenspace - Hardly urban!

Your policy L6 regarding the Colne Valley Park says that proposals will only be permitted if they safeguard existing areas of countryside from inappropriate development and don't result in urbanisation in the Park. This proposal would urbanise a huge swathe of green belt land which helps to prevent urban sprawl. It flies in the face of the South Bucks Green Belt policy with virtually no rational justification - a policy which will be maintained in the Core Strategy for South Bucks.

This application is an Outline Application. One eminent architectural body has stated that such a scheme is not suitable for an outline application. Indeed this application was submitted by Pinewood Studios Limited - not by Pinewood Shepperton PLC. Pinewood Studios Limited is a subsidiary of the PLC.

In its Annual Report it wrongly states that Pinewood Shepperton plc has submitted the plan - it hasn't Pinewood Studios Limited has. And in its report it says it will "consider all appropriate options to progress the development of this unique scheme including the introduction of suitable partners"

The UNIQUE scheme is untried, and untested. Who are suitable partners? I would suggest that suitable partners are developers and financiers - how else would Pinewood Studios finance the plan?

And how easy it would be for Pinewood Studios Limited to sell off their outline planning permission. How likely then would it be that the result was a live/work film set park?

This proposal by Pinewood Studios Limited can only be a way for Pinewood Studios Limited to maximise the value of Green Belt land they have bought. 1400 houses in this area will sell for, on my estimation, £420,000,000 - what a valuable outline planning permission to sell.

Pinewood also propose to make changes to the Five Points roundabout with 16 sets of traffic lights but no changes to the feeder roads and no improvement to Seven Hills road which will take all the additional traffic. Traffic that Iver could well do without - the problems of traffic in Iver are well known.

Pinewood Studios Limited does not make films; it is a provider of services to the media industries. It rents space to film and TV companies. It employs just 120 people. It could be looked at as a property company in a niche sector. What could be better for it than to build property on Green Belt under the guise of film sets.

I urge the committee to treat this application for what it is - a building project in Green Belt land and wholeheartedly reject it.