

FAO Claire Westwood  
Planning Department  
Three Rivers District Council  
Three Rivers House  
Northway  
Rickmansworth  
Hertfordshire  
WD3 1RL

2 February 2024

(By Email)

Our Reference: 224423

Dear Mrs Westwood,

**Full planning application for the extension of the existing Backlot Café kitchen and associated ancillary works at the Warner Bros. Studio Tour London *The Making of Harry Potter*, Leavesden**

On behalf of our client, Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden (WBSL), we have today submitted a full planning application for the above proposed works. The application has been submitted electronically via the Planning Portal (ref: PP-12773291).

Since opening in 2012, the Warner Bros. Studio Tour London – The Making of Harry Potter (Studio Tour) has welcomed over 16 million visitors and has quickly become one of the most visited paid-entry attractions in the UK. With its 98% overall satisfaction rate, the quality of its exhibits, excellence of its customer service and its range of supporting activities such as education, catering and retail, the Studio Tour has won outstanding reviews on TripAdvisor and been recognised with numerous national awards. To further enhance the Studio Tour's offering, new attractions and upgrades to existing facilities must be periodically added to keep it fresh and exciting for new and returning visitors alike.

The Studio Tour's popularity has meant a sustained, high level of visitor numbers, many of whom use the Backlot Café which has become an integral part of the visitor experience.

As a result of this popularity and given the current size of the kitchen, queues are common, leading to delays in service at peak times. The size of the food production and storage area itself is a very real issue, with insufficient cold room and freezer space to meet demand in the busy periods.

An extension of the facility is therefore necessary to keep up with demand and maintain the high standards required by WBSL across the Studio Tour as a whole.

The extension will accommodate an improved serving area to expedite the queuing process as far as possible, together with an increase in the number of service tills, further cutting down waiting times and thereby enhancing the visitor experience. An additional seating area is also proposed and new WC's to further alleviate pressure on the existing facilities.

In the food preparation area itself, additional cold rooms, freezers and storage areas are proposed, as well as an increase in the amount of available workspace. These improvements will enable improved food

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production and storage, enabling the café to better meet demand and reducing the potential for popular items to run out at peak times.

Given the increased size of the food preparation and service areas, an additional 22 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff will be employed as a result of these works.

The proposed extension to the Backlot Café will help to maintain the Studio Tour's attractiveness, its excellence in customer satisfaction ratings and the length of time visitors stay, as well as creating demand for new and repeat visits. This, combined with the increase in staff numbers and associated economic impacts for the local area will further underpin the considerable benefits which arise from the Studio Tour as whole.

#### Design, (Including Scale, Massing and Appearance)

The proposed extension is a single storey structure 6.1m tall to the highest point of the roof, 30.1m wide and 22.5m deep, which replicates the scale, massing, architectural language, colour and profile of the existing structure. The proposed extension will have a GEA of 713.8 sq. m.

External materials on the south-east elevation have been selected to match the existing café. Visible elements are predominantly double-glazed curtain wall and door system in Pure Grey (RAL 000 55 00) and roof sheeting in Pure Grey (RAL 000 55 00).

Materials on the north-east elevation will match the existing adjoining kitchen and J Stage. These consist of wall cladding in Straw (RAL 080 70 30), powder coated steel doors and louvres in Straw (RAL 080 70 30) and powder coated flashings in Pure Grey (RAL 000 55 00).

All gutters will be in Pure Grey (RAL 000 55 00) where they are on curtain walls and Straw (RAL 080 70 30) where they are on wall cladding, in keeping with the rest of the development.

Hard and soft landscaping in the vicinity of the extension remains unchanged by the proposal.

The proposals also include the relocation of existing and the installation of new mechanical service plant adjacent to the kitchen area close to the adjacent multistorey car park. The submitted Noise Assessment confirms that the noise generation arising from this relocation would be appropriate and suitable to ensure compliance with both TRDC and National Policy. However suggested condition wording is given which would bring any noise impacts from the proposals into line with that on the wider Studio site.

Additionally, as part of the proposals, Solar PV panels are proposed on the existing roof to ensure that the development accords with relevant local and national sustainability policy, whilst reducing the climate impact arising from the Tour's operations.

#### Site Access

Site access for deliveries will remain the same via the road between J stage and the multi-storey car park. The pedestrian kerb will be extended to wrap around the new café extension. Visitors will continue to access the extension through the existing Studio Tour.

## Planning History

Since purchasing the site in 2010, WBSL has undergone considerable expansion, improvement, and consolidation. This has led to a long and established planning history, with multiple planning applications being approved on site since that time.

### *Relevant Local Planning Policy*

The adopted local policy documents that apply to the proposed development are as follows:

the TRDC Core Strategy 2011, and  
the TRDC Development Management Policies Document 2013.

From the Core Strategy 2011, Policy CP6 – Employment and Economic Development, states that TRDC will support development that enhances the south-west Hertfordshire area's existing economic clusters. The proposed extension will enable the Studio Tour to better accommodate visitor demand and lead to an increased number of staff on site. As such the development is fully compliant with this policy.

Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy – Design of Development, reinforces the significance of efficient use of land with respect to the distinctiveness of the area within which the building is located. The proposed extension makes effective use of land whilst the style and materials of the extension match the buildings which surround it.

In the TRDC Local Development Document, Site GB2 is noted as being specifically allocated for 'Leavesden Studio Operations.' There is a strong connection between the Studio and the Studio Tour, with an exceptional synergy between the two operational areas of the Leavesden Studio site. This close association has created a distinct and unique business where the Studio Tour is intrinsic in demonstrating the level of high-quality filmmaking that occurs at the Studio.

TRDC also has an emerging local plan which is currently going through Part 4 of its Regulation 18 consultation, as such weight must be given to the policies in this plan when regarding development in the local area.

To ensure compliance with Local Policy DM4 and Building Regs 2021 Part L, Solar PV panels are also proposed on the existing roof to ensure that appropriate climate mitigation is established.

Section 2.48 of the emerging plan acknowledges that during the lifetime of the plan (2018 – 2038) there will be further expansion of WBSL. This proposal is a small part of the extension of the wider site.

Preferred Policy 7 states that *'Proposals for creative industries and the expansion of Leavesden Studios will be supported where they are in accordance with local and national policy.'* This application has been evidenced to be compliant with both local and national policies and subsequently should be supported by TRDC.

Preferred Policy 8 demonstrates that all development within WBSL will be supported for studio operations and uses. Given that the Studio Tour has long been an integral part of the WBSL site, there is a unique synergy between the Studio and the Studio Tour in promoting the wider UK film industry. As such the proposals are in compliance with this draft policy.

### *The Application*

The application fee of **£5,844** (including the planning portal fee of £64.00) has been paid to the Planning Portal directly.

The application comprises the following documents:

- Completed application form
- Relevant completed certificates and CIL liability forms
- This covering letter including details of design and access
- Three Rivers District Council Local Biodiversity Checklist
- 240131 Backlot Cafe Extension Energy Statement - Rev 01
- 20240101-0 R1 Noise Survey
- TRDC Biodiversity Checklist

and the following drawings and plans:

- 1442-PL-009 – Location Plan
- 1441-PL-010 – Existing Site Plan
- 1442-PL-013 – Proposed Site Plan
- 1442-PL-011 – Existing Ground Floor Plan
- 1442-PL-014 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- 1442-PL-012 – Existing Roof Plan
- 1442-PL-015 – Proposed Roof Plan
- 1442-PL-016 – Existing and proposed South-East Elevation
- 1442-PL-017 – Existing and proposed North-East Elevation
- 1442-PL-018 – Existing and Proposed South-West Elevation
- 1442-PL-019 – Existing and Proposed Sections
- Datasheet\_VertexS\_DE09R.05\_EU\_EN\_2023\_A – PV Panel Spec

We trust that the information submitted will enable the application to be validated and we look forward to discussing the application with you in due course.

If you have any questions pertaining to this submission, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Jack Higson**  
Planner

cc. David Bisoni

Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden