

**N/13/0001**

**WINCHESTER**

WHITELEY CO--OWNERSHIP

AGENT: TERENCE O'ROURKE

DEVELOPMENT COMPRISING 9 SCREEN MULTIPLEX CINEMA AND 2633SQ METRES OF SUPPORTING GROUND FLOOR UNITS WITHIN USE CLASSES A3, A4, D1 AND D2; ADJUSTMENTS TO THE LANDSCAPING AND CAR PARKING PROVISION, INTRODUCTION OF AN ACOUSTIC FENCE AND ASSOCIATED ANCILLARY WORKS AT WHITELEY TOWN CENTRE

PROPOSED CINEMA SITE - WHITELEY WAY - WHITELEY HAMPSHIRE

***Report By***

Susannah Emery Ext 2412

***Introduction***

This authority has been consulted on a planning application comprising a nine screen multiplex cinema and 2633sq metres of supporting ground floor units within use classes A3, A4, D1 and D2; adjustments to the landscaping and car parking provision, introduction of an acoustic fence and associated ancillary works at Whiteley Town Centre. The site lies outside the Borough of Fareham within the administrative area of Winchester City Council.

***Site Description***

This application relates to an area of land immediately to the north west of the Whiteley Town Centre site. The site is currently partially laid out as car parking which would be brought into use when the centre reopens. The existing Tesco store and associated car park lies to the east of the application site, the petrol filling station to the north, with an area of public open space and the Meadowside Leisure Centre to the south and west. There are residential properties to the north of the application site accessed via Bluebell Way which are located a minimum of 62.5 metres from the proposed building.

***Description of Proposal***

This application comprises a second phase to the redevelopment of Whiteley Town Centre which is currently under construction and due to open in May 2013. The town centre includes a mix of retail and restaurant operators and this application seeks to expand the leisure component in the town centre through the provision of a nine screen multiplex cinema and additional restaurant space together with the option of other associated uses.

The ground floor units would provide 2633 square metres of leisure space within use classes A3 (Restaurants/Cafe), A4 (Drinking Establishments), D1 (Non residential Institutions) and D2 (Assembly & Leisure). This could include a creche, health club or childrens indoor play facility. There would also be scope for alfresco dining associated with the cafes and restaurants to the front of the building. The cinema would be located above at first floor level.

The building has been designed as a continuation of the retail frontage of the main street of the town centre. It would provide an active frontage overlooking the car park to the north making it clearly visible when entering the site from the existing access off Bluebell Way. It is suggested that the building has been designed with regard to the scale and mass of the surrounding town centre buildings and that it would not be out of context with the permitted scheme.

The site was included within the permitted scheme (10/02481/FUL) as surface level car parking to serve the town centre redevelopment. This proposal would reduce the number of parking spaces by 183, leaving 1,356 spaces to serve the town centre. The Transport Assessment submitted with the application concludes that the proposed parking provision would still be more than capable of accommodating the vehicle trips forecast to be generated by the entire site, suggesting that demand will typically only reach 70% at peak times.

Existing boundary planting would be retained and additional on site planting would be introduced immediately to the front and western side of the cinema. A new 3 metre high acoustic fence is proposed to screen noise impact from the development to residential properties to the west of the site. The existing western boundary is marked by hedgerow planting approx 3.5m in height which would be retained.

It is likely that the ground floor uses would have similar opening hours to the commercial and retail uses within Whiteley town centre. The cinema operator is seeking the flexibility to open the cinema between 8.30am and 00.30am on Sunday to Thursday; and on Fridays & Saturdays between 8.30am - 2 am.

### ***Relevant Planning History***

10/02481/FUL

Redevelopment of Whiteley town centre to provide:

1. 22,489 square metres of A1 retail shops, 5,000 square metres of a mixture of A2/A3/A4/A5 (financial and professional services, food and drink, public houses/wine bars/other drinking establishments and takeaways), D1/ D2 (non residential institutions/ assembly and leisure) uses, town centre managers office, public conveniences, associated public squares, plazas, car and cycle parking, servicing areas and landscaping;
2. Improvements to Whiteley Way to include a new roundabout, 2 x 2 bay bus laybys, bus shelter, pedestrian crossing point, footpath and cycleway; part provision of cycleway along Bluebell Way to link to facility to be provided by adjacent residential development;
3. Alterations and extensions to Meadowside recreation centre, including new entrance foyer and canopy

Permission 1 February 2011

### ***Representations***

Carried out by Winchester City Council

### ***Consultations***

Director of Planning and Environment (Planning Policy) - The main issues with this proposal is the impact it will have on Fareham Town Centre, and whether or not the proposal is of a suitable scale for its proposed location.

### ***Impact***

The supporting "Cinema Statement" agrees that there will be significant overlap with the catchment area of the cinema in Fareham Town Centre (80% is stated in appendix 2), but argues that the NPPF supports healthy competition. The statement quotes that cinema's can co-exist, offering Southampton as an example, but the city of Southampton is of a totally different scale with a much larger population and with far better public transport links that Whiteley and Fareham. It is also important to note that all three of the cinema's in

Southampton are located within easy walking distance of the City Centre, and therefore all three offer a supplementary offer to that Centre. The difference here is that Whiteley now offers a completely different draw from Fareham, and people will now visit the cinema here instead of Fareham thus lowering overall visitor numbers to Fareham Town Centre.

In terms of its impact on Fareham; the previously permitted scheme was purely retail led, and whilst it would undoubtedly impact upon footfall in Fareham Town Centre, there was little evidence that any "evening" or "night-time" economy would be present. This new proposal changes this position significantly and Whiteley will now not only compete for daytime shoppers, but will become a serious competitor in terms both leisure provision and an evening venue in the sub-region. The recent GVA Retail Study shows that the catchment area of Fareham Town Centre is not just Fareham, but the Western Wards, Portchester and the rural area north of Fareham as well. Given the location of Whiteley's new Centre so close to Junction 9, and that it offers free parking, the additional screens at the proposed cinema and the scale of "supporting uses" will unquestionably eat into Fareham's catchment area in terms of leisure provision in the short-term. In the medium-long term this could potentially have a detrimental effect on the viability of the cinema in Fareham, but also the vitality of the evening economy and the ability to attract new A3 uses in the Henry Cort area, as set out as an objective in Fareham's draft Development Sites & Policies Plan.

The new uses will turn Whiteley into an "all-day" attraction, similar in offer to Gunwharf, and will give more reason to visit it over and above other the Centres in the Borough as well. Whilst Locks Heath does not currently have much of an evening economy, the proposals at Whiteley may directly influence the viability of any future plans for Locks Heath to compete in this market, and to attract potential occupiers. This is also true of the new District Centre in the New Community North of Fareham, where any plans for including evening or leisure uses may become unviable in the face of such strong competition that is so close via the M27.

## Scale

Whilst it is conceded that Winchester is designated as a "Town Centre" in the Winchester Local Plan Review, however it cannot be considered to be of similar significance in the sub-region as Fareham Town Centre. Fareham Town Centre has around 90,000sq.m of commercial floorspace within its boundary and holds a 5 screen cinema, it is difficult, therefore, to argue that 29,000sq.m of commercial floorspace at Whiteley merits a 9 screen cinema. In essence this proposal is of a "city-scale" and will inevitably draw cinema goers from everywhere between Portsmouth and Southampton due to the variety of films it can show at one time, coupled with the attraction of free parking and adjacent restaurant facilities. This new proposal will make Whiteley even more of a draw to people, and will extend its "core" business hours into the evenings with people coming (or staying) to eat or watch a film.

The capacity analysis in the "Cinema Statement" is questioned as all the necessary data is not available. The "capacity for new screens" has been derived from the indicative catchment area, but there is no map of what this will actually be. This is important as the defined catchment area will show which areas (and cinemas) have been included and which have not, widening the catchment area to include Southampton and Portsmouth may show a reduced need due to increased numbers of screens, whilst reducing the catchment area will also reduce the need due to a smaller population base. Until a map of the catchment area used to create this table is produced it is difficult to attach any merit to the figures it

produces.

Whilst it is conceded that there is likely to be a need for some new screens in the general western part of Fareham/Whiteley/Bursledon/Hamble area it is considered unlikely that 9 screens will be necessary to serve this catchment area. Therefore the proposal is looking specifically to maximum trade draw from neighbouring centres, most noticeably Fareham Town Centre.

## Conclusion

Overall, this proposal significantly changes the offer of Whiteley, changing it from purely a shopping venue, to an "all-day" attraction. This poses a very real threat to the vitality and viability of the leisure offer and evening economy in Fareham Town Centre, but also any future plans to provide such uses in both Locks Heath and the New Community North of Fareham.

The supporting evidence submitted with the application makes it clear that the majority of the catchment area of this city scale proposal is the current catchment area of the cinema in Fareham. Given the larger number of screens available this proposal, over the long term, raises serious questions of the viability of the cinema in Fareham. This, in turn, has wider implications for the Centre as a whole. The evidence used to support the reasons behind the scale of development is considered incomplete as no visual representation of the catchment area used to define the need has been submitted.

In conclusion this proposal is considered to be out of scale with a settlement and Centre of the size of Whiteley and is based on incomplete evidence. Were this to be permitted it is likely to have a seriously detrimental impact on the long term viability of Fareham Town Centre's existing cinema and will have further ramifications on the night time economy of Fareham as well as any likely future proposals in all of the Borough's Centres.

### ***Planning Considerations - Key Issues***

Fareham Borough Council previously raised objection to the redevelopment of Whiteley Centre into a more traditional town centre on the following grounds:

- i) Would have a serious adverse impact upon the vitality and viability of Fareham Town Centre and undermine its ability to function as a Sub- Regional Centre in accordance with the South Hampshire strategy for main town centre uses.
- ii) Would severely undermine the delivery of an appropriately scaled and diverse district centre for the future North of Fareham Strategic Development Area as identified in the South Hampshire strategy for main town centre uses.
- iii) Was over-scaled with regard to the purpose and function of the centre to serve the needs of the local Whiteley population and is therefore contrary to the South Hampshire strategy for main town centre uses.

On two occasions the Council formally requested that the application be called in for a decision by the Secretary of State. Both requests were declined. This came as a considerable disappointment to this Council, in light of the likely significant harm which would arise from the scale of the redevelopment proposed at Whiteley Village.

It is considered that the current proposal to erect a 9-screen cinema together with additional leisure space will further undermine Fareham Town Centre and that it is not appropriate to serve the needs of the local Whiteley population.

Taking the above into account, Officers recommend that this Authority should object to the proposal as it is considered to be out of scale with a settlement and Centre of the size of Whiteley and is based on incomplete evidence. Were this to be permitted it is likely to have a seriously detrimental impact on the long term viability of Fareham Town Centre's existing cinema and will have further ramifications on the night time economy of Fareham as well as any likely future proposals in all of the Borough's Centres.

***Recommendation***

Fareham Borough Council objects to a nine screen multiplex cinema and 2633sq metres of supporting ground floor units within use classes A3, A4, D1 and D2; adjustments to the landscaping and car parking provision, introduction of an acoustic fence and associated ancillary works at Whiteley Town Centre, on the following grounds:

i) the proposal is considered to be out of scale with a settlement and Centre of the size of Whiteley and is based on incomplete evidence. Were this to be permitted it is likely to have a seriously detrimental impact on the long term viability of Fareham Town Centre's existing cinema and will have further ramifications on the night time economy of Fareham as well as any likely future proposals in all of the Borough's Centres.

In addition to the above recommendation, Officers recommend that in the event that Winchester City Council resolves to grant planning permission, Fareham Borough Council requests the Secretary of State to direct Winchester City Council to refer the application to him for decision.

***Background Papers***

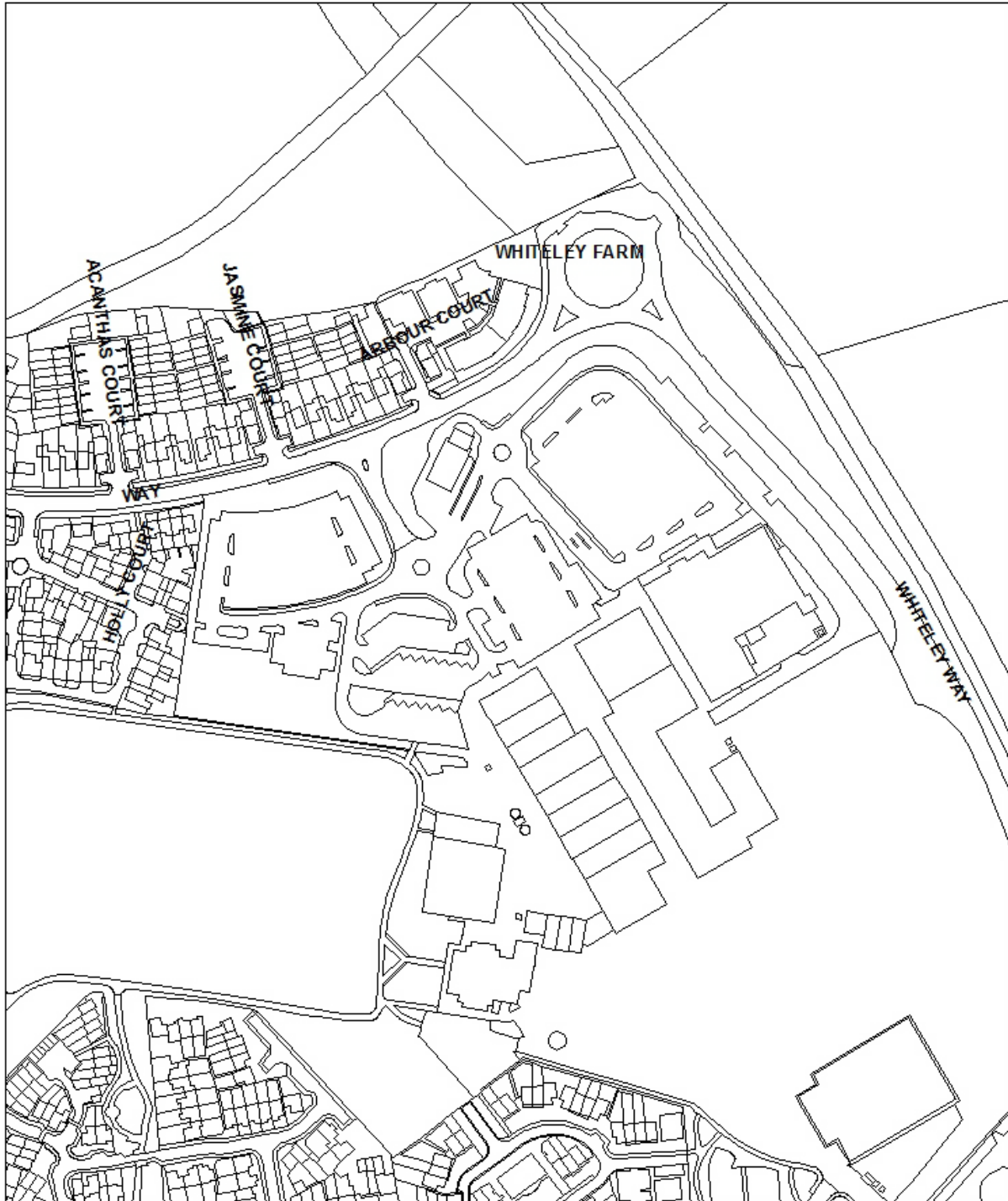
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***Updates***

Typing mistake: Page 7, first line of paragraph entitled 'Scale' - should read, 'Whilst it is conceded that Whiteley is designated as a .....

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL



Proposed Cinema Site  
Whiteley  
Scale 1:2500

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